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## **Abbreviations**

Abako: *Alliance des Bakongo* (Alliance of the Bakongo)

ACEC: *Ateliers de constructions électriques de Charleroi* (Electric Construction Workshops of Charleroi)

ACP: *Agence congolaise presse* (Congolesse Press Agency)

AFDL: *Alliances des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre* (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire)

ANC: *Armée nationale congolaise* (Congolesse National Army)

AZAP: *Agence Zaïre presse* (Zairean Press Agency)

Balubakat: *Association des Baluba du Katanga* (Association of the Baluba of Katanga)

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

BEF: Belgian Franc

CAF: Central African Federation

CEDAF: *Centre d'Études et de Documentation Africaines* (Centre of African Studies and Documentation)

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

CFL: *Compagnie des chemins de fer du Congo supérieur aux Grands Lacs africains* (Company of Congolesse Railroads Above the African Great Lakes)

CIA: Central Intelligence Agency

CK: *Compagnie du Katanga* (Company of Katanga)

CNKi: *Comité national du Kivu* (National Committee of Kivu)

CNL: *Conseil national de la libération* (National Council of liberation)

CNR: *Conseil national de résistance pour la démocratie* (National Council of Resistance for Democracy)

CNS: *Conférence nationale souveraine* (National Sovereign Conference)

Conakat: *Confédération des associations tribales du Katanga* (Confederation of Tribal Associations of Katanga)

CRISP: *Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politiques* (Centre for Socio-Political Research and Information)

CSK: *Comité spécial du Katanga* (Special Committee of Katanga)

CVP: *Christelijke Volkspartij* (Christian People's Party)

CVR: *Corps des volontaires de la République* (Corps of Volunteers of the Republic)

Delperkat: *Délégation permanente du Katanga* (Permanent Delegation of Katanga in Brussels)

DRC: Democratic Republic of the Congo

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

FAA: *Forças Armadas Angolanas* (Angolan Armed Forces)

FAZ: *Forces armées zaïroises* (Zairean Armed Forces)

FAZA: *Force aérienne zaïroise* (Zairean Air Force)

FDF: *Front démocratique des francophones* (Francophones' Democratic Front)

FLNC: *Front de libération nationale congolaise* (National Congolese Libération Front)

Forminière: *Société internationale forestière et minière du Congo* (International Logging and Mining Company of the Congo)

FP: *Force publique* (Public Force)

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GDR: German Democratic Republic

Gécamines: *Générale des carrières et des mines* (General Quarrying and Mining Company)

GECOMINES: *Générale congolais des minerais* (General Congolese Mineral Ores Company)

IAF: Intra-African Force

IBRD: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development

IMF: International Monetary Fund

IPC: *Institut politique congolais* (Congoese Political Institute)

IR: International Relations

KIS: Katanga Information Services

MNC: *Mouvement national congolais* (National Congoese Movement)

MP: Member of Parliament

MPLA: *Movimento popular de libertação de Angola* (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola)

MPR: *Mouvement populaire de la Révolution* (Popular Movement of the Revolution)

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OAS: *Organisation de l'armée secrète* (Secret Armed Organisation)

OAU: Organization of African Unity

Ocekat: *Office culturel et économique* (Cultural and Economic Office)

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development

ONATRA: *Office national des transports* (National Transporting Office)

ONUC: *Opération des Nations Unies au Congo* (United Nations Operation in the Congo)

Otraco: *Office des transports au Congo* (Congoese Transporting Office)

PRC: People's Republic of China

PRP: *Parti de la Révolution du Peuple* (Party of the Revolution of the People)

PSA: *Parti solidaire africain* (African Solidarity Party)

RCD: *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie* (Rally for Congoese Democracy)

RPA: Rwandan Patriotic Army

RPF: Rwandan Patriotic Front

Sabena: *Société anonyme belge d'exploitation de la navigation aérienne* (Belgian Limited Company for the Exploitation of Aerial Navigation)

SAPs: Structural Adjustment Programmes

SDECE: *Service de documentation extérieure et de contre-espionnage* (External Documentation and Counter-Espionage Service)

SDRs: Special Drawing Rights

Sédéfi: *Société d'étude et de documentation économique et financière* (Economic and Financial Research and Documentation Company)

SG: *Société générale de Belgique* (General Company of Belgium)

SGM: *Société générale des minerais* (General Company of Mineral Ores)

SOBAKI: *Société belgo-africaine du Kivu* (Belgo-African Kivu Company)

SP: *Socialistische partij* (Socialist Party of Belgium)

SU: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

UAR: United Arab Republic

UDPS: *Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social* (Union for Democracy and Social Progress)

UK: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

UMHK: *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga* (Mining Union of Upper-Katanga)

UN: United Nations

UNECA: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNGA: United Nations General Assembly

UNITA: *União nacional para a independência total de Angola* (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola)

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

UNSCR: United Nations Security Council Resolution

UPS: *Union progressiste sénégalaise* (Senegalese Progressive Union)

US: United States of America

USD: United States Dollar

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

## **Abstract (English)**

The role of African agency has taken centre stage in scholarly discussions regarding the engagement of Africans with the international system. This thesis considers African agency through a case study on the agency of Congolese political elites in their engagement with the international system between the country's independence from Belgium in 1960 and the end of President Mobutu's tenure in 1997. Individuals are successfully exercising agency when their goals are realised as favourable outcomes through the structuring of their actions. This thesis applies the method of structured, focused comparison through an abductive research strategy in order to determine the goals and strategies of Congolese political elites. The empirical analysis identifies two sets of goals, namely goals related to legitimacy, and goals related to authority. Furthermore, the thesis develops a triad of strategies, namely accepting or rejecting institutions, making use of the performativity of speech, and instrumentalising real or perceived interests with international players. The triad of strategies is reformulated into hypotheses about African agency. The thesis makes a case for interdisciplinary basic research on African agency, in order to uncover goals and strategies of African political elites in their engagement with the international system. It contributes to the growing body of literature of Global South agency in the international system by putting theory into practice by doing empirical legwork on a challenging non-western case.

## **Résumé (français)**

Le rôle de l'agentivité (*agency, capacité d'agir*) africaine s'impose comme un élément clé dans les discussions académiques concernant l'engagement des africains avec le système international. Cette thèse analyse l'agentivité africaine en utilisant une étude de cas sur l'agentivité des élites politiques congolaises dans leur engagement avec le système international entre le jour de l'indépendance du pays en 1960 et la fin de la présidence de Mobutu en 1997. Un acteur réalise sa capacité d'agir avec succès lorsque ses objectifs sont atteints sous forme de résultats positifs grâce à la structuration de leurs actions. Cette thèse utilise la méthode de comparaison dite structurée et centrée par une stratégie de recherche abductive afin de déterminer les objectifs et les stratégies des élites politiques congolaises. L'analyse empirique identifie deux ensembles d'objectifs: des objectifs relatifs à la légitimité, et des objectifs relatifs à l'autorité. En outre, la thèse développe trois types de stratégies, l'acceptation ou le rejet des institutions, l'emploi de la performativité du discours, et l'instrumentalisation des intérêts réels ou perçus auprès des acteurs internationaux. La triade de stratégies est reformulée en différentes hypothèses concernant l'agentivité africaine. Cette thèse plaide en faveur de recherches

interdisciplinaires de base sur l'agentivité africaine, afin de découvrir les objectifs et les stratégies des élites politiques africaines de l'époque dans leur engagement avec le système international. La thèse contribue à la littérature de l'agentivité des pays du Sud en mettant en pratique les théories des relations internationales et des études africaines, à travers le travail empirique d'une étude de cas rigoureuse et non-occidentale.

### **Na mokuse (lingala)**

Ntina ya *agentivité* (*agency, mpifo na kosalisa*) na Afilika ezali eloko monene ebandi na masolo académiques etali boboto ya mokili. Thèse na ngai agentivité na Afilika ezali kosalela liteya ya ndakisa na agentivité baélites politiki congolaises bazali kosalisa mpo na kokela na mokili banda lipanda ya mboka Kongo tii na nsuka ya bokonzi ya Mobutu na 1997. Moto asaleli mpifo na kosalisa soki ntomo esalemi bongo bambano malamunsi ngolu ekokela mbongwana. Thèse na ngai esaleli bokeseni ya structure mpe katikati oyo elukeli abductive mpo na koluka ntomo mpe ndenge baélites politiki kongolaises. Boluki empirique eyebi elongo ntomo mibale: ntomo na légitimité, mpe ntomo na autorité. Thèse na ngai elobeli ndenge misato: endimeli to ebuakiseli bainstitutions, esali na performativité na lisukulu, mpe esaleli na bolamu solo to ekaneli epai ya bato mokili. Ndenge misato ezali maloba mosusu na makanisi etali agentivité na Afilika. Thèse na ngai elobeli likambo ya boluki interdisciplinaires ya libosoliboso na agentivité na Afilika, mpo na koyeba ntomo mpe ndenge baélites politiki na Afilika na mikolo bosangani na bango na mokili.

### **Abstract (Deutsch)**

Die Rolle der afrikanischen Handlungsfähigkeit (*Agency*) in internationalen Beziehungen steht im Mittelpunkt wissenschaftlicher Diskussionen über die Interaktion der Afrikaner im internationalen System. In dieser Dissertation wird die afrikanische Handlungsfähigkeit anhand einer Fallstudie über die Handlungsfähigkeit der kongolesischen politischen Eliten in ihrer Interaktion mit dem internationalen System zwischen der Unabhängigkeit des Landes von Belgien im Jahr 1960 und dem Ende der Amtszeit von Präsident Mobutu im Jahr 1997 untersucht. Individuen üben erfolgreich *Agency* aus, wenn ihre Ziele durch die Strukturierung ihrer Handlungen als vorteilhafte Ergebnisse realisiert werden. In dieser Dissertation wird die Methode des strukturierten, fokussierten Vergleichs mittels einer abduktiven Forschungsstrategie angewandt, um die Ziele und Strategien der kongolesischen politischen Eliten zu ermitteln. In der empirischen Analyse werden zwei Zielgruppen identifiziert, nämlich Ziele im Zusammenhang mit der Legitimität und autoritätsbezogene Ziele. Darüber hinaus wird

in der Dissertation eine Triade von Strategien entwickelt, bestehend aus der Akzeptanz oder Ablehnung von Institutionen, der Nutzung der Performativität von Sprache, und der Instrumentalisierung realer oder vermeintlicher Interessen gegenüber internationalen Akteuren. Diese Triade von Strategien wird in Hypothesen über die afrikanische Handlungsfähigkeit umformuliert. Die Dissertation plädiert für eine interdisziplinäre Grundlagenforschung zu afrikanischer Handlungsfähigkeit, um Ziele und Strategien afrikanischer politischer Eliten in ihrer Interaktion mit dem internationalen System aufzudecken. Sie trägt zur wachsenden Literatur über die Rolle/Handlungsfähigkeit des globalen Südens im internationalen System bei, indem sie die Theorie durch empirische Arbeit an einem anspruchsvollen nicht-westlichen Fall in die Praxis umsetzt.

## Note on Terms and Names

**Name of the country:** On 20 September 1960, the United Nations General Assembly admitted the *Republic of the Congo (Leopoldville)* (*République du Congo (Léopoldville)*) as a member to the United Nations.<sup>1</sup> The constitution of 1 August 1964, replacing the Fundamental Law (*Loi fondamentale*) of 19 May 1960, renamed the country to the *Democratic Republic of the Congo (République Démocratique du Congo)*.<sup>2</sup> On 27 October 1971, the *Bureau politique* of the state party MPR, together with the government and President Mobutu, decided to rename the country to the *Republic of Zaire (République du Zaire)*.<sup>3</sup> When Laurent-Désiré Kabila declared himself President of the country, he renamed it to the *Democratic Republic of the Congo (République Démocratique du Congo)*.

Note that the official name of the Congo contains the article *the*. The official French name also reads *République Démocratique du Congo* instead of *République Démocratique de Congo*. The thesis will use as a short name *the Congo* in order to stay close to the official name, although Congo without the article is commonly used in other publications as well.

**Zaire/zaire:** On 24 June 1967, the Congolese franc was devalued by 200%. At the same time, the currency was renamed to *zaire*, several years before the renaming of the country and river.<sup>4</sup> The word *Zaire* stems from the Portuguese distortion of the Kikongo word *Nzadi*, meaning river. The thesis will use the term *zaire* (with a lowercase ‘z’) to designate the currency whereas *Zaire* (with an uppercase ‘Z’) will be used to refer to the Republic of Zaire.

**Naming of cities:** On 2 May 1966, the Council of Ministers decided to change the names of Congolese cities which would enter into force on 1 July 1966. Several major cities were renamed as follows:

Bakwanga: Mbuji-Mayi

Banningville: Bandundu

Coquilhatville: Mbandaka

Elisabethville: Lubumbashi

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<sup>1</sup> Draft resolution by Tunisia: A/L.299; General Assembly resolution: A/RES/1480(XV).

<sup>2</sup> République Démocratique du Congo: Constitution du 1<sup>er</sup> août 1964. <mjp.univ-perp.fr/constit/cd1964.htm>, consulted on 15 March 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Langellier, *Mobutu*, 2017, 185.

<sup>4</sup> According to one of Mobutu’s advisers, Belgian banker Jacques de Groote, in an interview with Mobutu biographer Jean-Pierre Langellier, academic Jan Vansina came up with the term *zaire*. Langellier, *Mobutu*, 2017, 169.

Leopoldville: Kinshasa

Stanleyville: Kisangani<sup>5</sup>

**Naming conventions:** in addition to a given name and surname, Congolese citizens have a post-surname. Within the context of the *recours à l'authenticité*, European given names were dropped in favour of, in Mobutu's terms, authentic post-surnames. Joseph-Désiré Mobutu dropped his Christian given name, and renamed himself Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga. Other examples are Jean Nguza/Nguza Karl-I-Bond, and Leon Lubicz/Kengo wa Dondo.<sup>6</sup>

**Government structures:** The *Loi fondamentale*, preliminary constitution of 19 May 1960, was based on the Belgian constitution of 1831. It established a unitary state with a Chamber of Representatives and a Senate, a government led by a Prime Minister, and other institutions similar to the state institutions of the Kingdom of Belgium. The Luluabourg constitution of 1 August 1964 transformed the unitary state into a federal state. On 24 June 1967, a new constitution was promulgated under the new Mobutu presidency, establishing a unitary state with a strong presidency and provisions for only two political parties. Law 70-001 of 23 December 1970 revised the constitution and made the *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR) the sole political party of the Republic.

Article 28 of the constitution of 15 August 1974 made the MPR the sole institution of the Republic.<sup>7</sup> The constitution further adopted Mobutism as the doctrine of the MPR and made the Political Bureau (*Bureau politique*) its depository. The President of the MPR became *ex officio* (*de droit*) President of the Republic. Furthermore, it established several MPR organs: the Congress (*Congrès*), Political Bureau, Legislative Council (*Conseil législatif*, equivalent to a National Assembly), Executive Council (*Conseil exécutif*, equivalent to a government) with at its head a First State Commissioner (*Premier commissaire d'Etat*, equivalent to a Prime Minister, who was only first appointed after reforms in the wake of the First Shaba War on 6 July 1977), and Judicial Council (*Conseil judiciaire*). In 1980, the Political Bureau decided to restructure the MPR institutions and created the influential Central Committee (*Comité central*), and the Executive Committee (*Comité exécutif*). The Central Committee decided in 1982 to establish a General Secretariat (*Secrétariat général*). The position of First State

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<sup>5</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1966, 1967*, 112.

<sup>6</sup> Jean Nguza Karl-I-Bond recounted his family history, and his renaming, in Nguza Karl-I-Bond, "Mes origines et mon éducation", *Mobutu ou l'incarnation*, 1982, 5-7. Kengo wa Dondo talked about his family tree, and his renaming, in Kengo wa Dondo, *La passion de l'Etat*, 2019, 21-36, in particular 25.

<sup>7</sup> Kengo-wa-Dondo, "Le pouvoir judiciaire sous la Deuxième République zaïroise", 1975, 504-5.

Commissioner was changed to Prime Minister on 5 July 1990.<sup>8</sup> The Republic of Zaire would stay a one-party state until the protracted and stunted democratisation process during the early 1990s, when the multi-party system was reintroduced by the constitutional revision of 25 November 1990. This marked the start of many changes in Zairean public law, and the convocation of a National Conference (*Conférence nationale*) which would proclaim itself sovereign (*Conférence nationale souveraine*).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Article 98 of the constitution after amendments by law no. 90-002 of 5 July 1990 concerning the modification of certain provisions of the constitution. <[worldstatesmen.org/Zaire1990.pdf](http://worldstatesmen.org/Zaire1990.pdf)>, consulted on 30 March 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Regarding the institutions under Mobutu, see the overview in Mabi Mulumba, “Les institutions de la gouvernance du Zaïre pendant la Deuxième République”, *Congo-Zaïre: Les coulisses du pouvoir*, 2011, 25-31.

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## Introduction

For several decades, scholars from various disciplines have been addressing the relative absence of African countries in studies about world politics. In his seminal 2000 article considering Africa in the world, Jean-François Bayart lamented that sub-Saharan Africa is perceived to be the limbo of the international system.<sup>1</sup> Around the same time, Achille Mbembe described the “extraordinary poverty of the political science and economic literature on Africa”<sup>2</sup>, whereas Kevin Dunn observed that in some graduate-level International Relations (IR) courses, less attention is paid to Africa than Antarctica, the latter being a supposed hotbed of “meaningful politics”.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, scholars often made this point and its repetition motivated Amitav Acharya to write that the neglect or marginalisation of the world beyond the west by main theories, dominant centres of teaching and research, and the leading publications of IR represents no longer a novel argument that “requires proof or elaboration.”<sup>4</sup>

More interesting than repeating the well-known adage, then, is to look at how African countries and decision-makers relate to the international system. This study, therefore, contributes to the growing body of literature on Global South<sup>5</sup> agency in the international system with a case study on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The present thesis asks under what conditions Congolese political elites successfully exercised their agency in their engagement with the international system between 1960 and 1997. Here, the marker of success in exercising agency is when goals of individuals are realised as favourable outcomes, through the employment of strategies. This requires an analysis of the goals and strategies of actors. Congolese political elites mainly had two sets of goals, related to authority and legitimacy, and structured their actions through three different strategies, namely deciding to accept or refute institutions, making use of the performativity of speech, and instrumentalising real or perceived shared interests with external players. The actors in question, it is argued, had significant leverage towards their international counterparts, and had the possibility to develop strategies to obtain favourable outcomes. Furthermore, the analysis of this research is located at the level of individuals, as opposed to the state level or system

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<sup>1</sup> Bayart, “Africa in the World”, 2000, 217.

<sup>2</sup> Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 2001, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Dunn, and Shaw, *Africa’s Challenge to International Relations Theory*, 2001, 2; Dunn, “Tales From the Dark Side”, 2000, 61.

<sup>4</sup> Acharya, “Dialogue and Discovery”, 2011, 620.

<sup>5</sup> The term ‘Global South’ is used as a shorthand for developing countries, even when the term was not in use during the time period under discussion.

level, which stimulates further reflections on the entanglements between domestic and international politics.

This introductory chapter consists of two further sections. The first section identifies the case and within-case selections and provides the justification for those selections. The second section presents the general outline of the thesis, as well as the structure of the empirical chapters.

### 1. Presentation of the Congo



Figure 1: Chéri Samba, *La vraie carte du monde*, 2011 (Fondation Cartier pour l’art contemporain).

In the eyes of popular Congolese artist Chéri Samba, the truthful map of the world differs significantly from the common Mercator projection. The latter distorts the actual size of countries whereby those located near the equator seem much smaller than countries close to the poles. The text at the bottom of Samba’s work is a citation from footballer Lilian Thuram’s book *Mes étoiles noires* and describes how the Gall-Peters projection better represents the actual sizes of countries. “[W]hen the South stops placing itself at the bottom,” Thuram wrote, “it will be the end of stereotypes. Everything is but a question of habit.” Samba not only uses the Gall-Peters projection and turns around the usual North-South orientation, but also places himself at the centre of the map. During an interview about the painting, he described that the

centre of the world is located where one finds himself at a given moment.<sup>6</sup>

*La vraie carte du monde* defies common Eurocentric narratives that locate human progress uniquely in Europe and puts human agency at the forefront of the analysis. Being neither at the periphery nor at the core of the world, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the second green lung of the world after the Amazon, is the third-most populous country of Africa with 109 million inhabitants, and is famous for its important reserves of natural resources. The Congo has the world's largest reserve of coltan, two-thirds of the world's cobalt mining takes place in the country, and is the fourth-largest copper producer. At the political level, the region entailed many political entities with different degrees of organisational complexity that predate the arrival of Henry Morton Stanley by many centuries. The Kongo Kingdom, for instance, was a powerful and centralised state before the arrival of the Portuguese in the fifteenth century. During the seventeenth century, the King of Kongo intensified his diplomatic efforts and sent out ambassadors such as Emanuele Ne Vunda, who travelled to Brazil, Spain, and the Vatican, in order to resolve his problems with neighbouring Portuguese Angola.<sup>7</sup> Finally, Don Miguel de Castro, famously depicted on a 1643 Dutch portrait, was sent out by the Count of Sonho, his uncle, to the Dutch Republic to find a resolution to a conflict with the King of Kongo.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the importance of the country and its complex long-term political history, the DRC makes for an interesting but challenging case of elite political agency. Scholarly assessments of the Congolese/Zairean state did not improve after Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg referred to it as a prime example of a failed state in 1982.<sup>9</sup> In his conclusion to *States and Power in Africa*, for instance, Jeffrey Herbst asserted that the United States should have recognised Zaire during the Mobutu era “for what it was, or was not, and decertified it as a sovereign nation.”<sup>10</sup> Claude Kabemba wrote in his case study on the DRC that there is no debate about Congo's status and that consensus has been reached among scholars that “the DRC represents the stereotype of a collapsed state.”<sup>11</sup> It is a “dysfunctional state *par excellence*”, according to him,

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<sup>6</sup> Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, “Chéri Samba – La vraie carte du monde, 2011”. <[youtube.com/watch?v=JfAKah6dMJU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfAKah6dMJU)>, consulted on 11 June 2022.

<sup>7</sup> For a primer on political and diplomatic history of the Kongo Kingdom, see “The Kongo Kingdom: Long-Standing Diplomatic and Trade Connections With Europe”.

<[africamuseum.be/en/discover/history\\_articles/kongo-kingdom](https://africamuseum.be/en/discover/history_articles/kongo-kingdom)>, consulted on 12 June 2022.

<sup>8</sup> “Don Miguel de Castro”. <[smk.dk/en/highlight/don-miguel-de-castro-emissary-of-kongo-c-1643/](https://smk.dk/en/highlight/don-miguel-de-castro-emissary-of-kongo-c-1643/)>, consulted on 12 June 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Jackson, and Rosberg, “Why Africa's Weak States Persist”, 1982, 1-24.

<sup>10</sup> Herbst, *State and Power in Africa*, 2000, 265.

<sup>11</sup> Kabemba, “The Democratic Republic of Congo”, in Clapham, Herbst, and Mills (eds.), *Big African States*, 2006, 97.

and “a stereotype of an African state, rich in natural resources but poor in governance.”<sup>12</sup> William Reno wrote in 2006 that “[t]he present-day Democratic Republic of Congo is regarded as a paradigmatic case of state failure.”<sup>13</sup> At the level of individual politicians, Mwayila Tshiyembe noted that the country’s political class at the time of independence was “immature”, which allowed Belgian decision-makers to profit from the “ignorance” of the Congolese politicians.<sup>14</sup>

Other examples are legion, and there is perhaps a grain of truth in all these pessimistic visions of the Congolese state. The country consistently ranks low on many development and other indexes. According to World Bank data, the life expectancy at birth was 41.0 in 1960 (world average 52.6), 46.4 in 1980 (world average 62.8), and 49.0 in 1997 (world average 66.8).<sup>15</sup> The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in current USD was 220.314 in 1960 (world average 457.535), reached a peak in 1978 at 615.979 (world average 2 015.938), and fell to 138.979 in 1997 (world average 5 384.587).<sup>16</sup> Uncovering agency within the political elite of a *prima facie* highly weak and agency-deprived state, then, makes a strong case for the incorporation of African agency at the centre of the debates on Africa’s engagement with the world and within the continent.

With the specific case now identified, the question arises how to construct a robust framework to discuss agency of Congolese political elites. In his guidebook to the historical study of international politics, Marc Trachtenberg proposed to tackle an issue by identifying the most important works and reading them by putting questions to the works through a method borrowed from the discipline of history: outlining core arguments and key claims, examining those claims by paying particular attention to the evidence that backed them up.<sup>17</sup>

In his overview work of Congolese political history, Gauthier de Villers argued that one must carry out multiple case analyses to shed light on the variability of the power relations of the interactions between domestic and international political actors.<sup>18</sup> In order to make a methodologically sound case study using structured, focused comparison, the agency of

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>13</sup> Reno, “Congo: From State Collapse to ‘Absolutism’, to State Failure”, 2006, 43.

<sup>14</sup> Tshiyembe, *La politique étrangère de la République Démocratique du Congo*, 2009, 70.

<sup>15</sup> “Life expectancy at birth, total (years) – Congo, Dem. Rep.  
<data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?locations=CD>, consulted on 20 March 2022.

<sup>16</sup> “GDP per capita (current US\$) – Congo, Dem. Rep.”.  
<data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=CD >, consulted on 20 March 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Trachtenberg, *The Craft of International History*, 2006, 79.

<sup>18</sup> De Villers uses the term “*analyses de cas*” rather than “*études de cas*”. de Villers, *Histoire du politique*, 2016, 49.

Congolese political elites is divided into three topics of particular importance: epistemic contestation, security, and economy. This tripartite classification will be further explained in the next chapter. Nevertheless, there is an inevitable degree of subjectivity to this partition, given the different characteristics of this agency. As a trade-off, the loss of analytical clarity by abandoning the quantification of the data acquired during the research is counterbalanced by the advantages of a case study. Alexander George and Andrew Bennett rightly pointed out that case studies serve as a heuristic tool to inductively identify additional variables, while not being limited to easily quantifiable variables or well-defined data sets that already exist. Moreover, by discussing a topic in-depth, the researcher generates more contextual validity to her claims and takes the complexities and contingencies of social reality into account.<sup>19</sup>

To study all aspects of agency within political thought, conflict, and economics in the Congo from 1960 to 1997 would be unworkable. In order to conduct a workable inquiry into the three topics, several episodes of Congolese political elites' engagement with the international system have to be singled out and studied in an in-depth manner. These episodes could extend over a few years, or could only be brief instances of engagement. Every episode, however, should meet three conditions. First, they have to be significant episodes in Congolese political history where one could observe considerable engagement with the international system. Second, for practical and heuristic reasons, these episodes have to be well-documented by sources and literature. Third, the episodes within one topic combined have to cover more or less the whole time period from 1960 to 1997.

Since epistemic contestation between Congolese political elites shapes the actors under both the First Republic and the Republic of Zaire under Mobutu as a whole, both the First Republic and Mobutu's Zaire are considered episodes in their own right. Phambu Ngoma-Binda structured his study of Congolese political thought around four influential politicians (cf. *infra*).<sup>20</sup> Likewise, the thesis will not consider the episteme of Congolese political elites, but rather the epistemic contestation between those elites in a struggle to obtain external legitimacy. During the era of the First Republic, this translated into a clash between different visions of the Congolese state of individuals and their factions. Under Mobutu's Zaire, political thought manifested itself as Mobutist thought and its contestations by other Congolese political elites. Within the topic of security, the Congo Crisis broke out right after independence. In the middle of the time period under discussion, the two Shaba Wars were major conflicts that resulted in

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<sup>19</sup> George, and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, 2005, 31 and 45.

<sup>20</sup> Ngoma-Binda, *Construire notre République*, 2019.

foreign intervention to save Mobutu from his virtually inevitable downfall. During the final years of Mobutu's time in office, the First Congo War showed intense engagement by some of Zaire's eastern neighbours and was eventually responsible for Mobutu's flight into exile. At the level of economics, the most pressing issue for the central government right after independence was the outstanding financial dispute with Belgium regarding the so-called colonial portfolio and colonial public debt. Later, at the height of Mobutu's rule in the 1970s, the Zairianisation of the national economy was another episode of an important economic controversy with an international dimension. After Zairianisation and the Shaba Wars, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) installed a team of experts at the Zairean National Bank, which marked the start of a tumultuous relationship between Zairean leaders and the IMF. The process of debt restructuring talks, including a significant showdown with Belgium towards the end of the 1980s, serves as a final episode of a Zairean economic issue with an international dimension.

### *Epistemic contestation*

The Congo's state actors have forged relationships with external actors by looking for areas of political agreement between them. E.H. Carr wrote that “[p]ower over opinion is [...] not less essential for political purposes than military and economic power, and has always been closely associated with them.”<sup>21</sup> Although the quotation mainly referred to mass mobilisation, it corresponds to elite interactions as well. Joseph S. Nye discussed the semantically similar ‘soft power’, namely “getting others to want the outcomes that you want”, which co-opts rather than coerces people.<sup>22</sup> According to Nye, the soft power of a country is based on three resources, namely its culture, political values, and foreign policies.<sup>23</sup> In the Congolese case, the enactment of political thought of individual state actors differs more than just slightly from Nye's initial conception. First, the level of analysis shifts from the state to the individual political actors and the factions they are embedded in. Second, episteme is different from political values in that thought is more variable over time than values. Finally, it is more appropriate to talk about agency than power, since the former concept corresponds more to the actor-driven design of this research.

Kevin Dunn historicised and contextualised the construction of Congo's identity in order to analyse its political implications in *Imagining the Congo: The International Relations*

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<sup>21</sup> Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, 1939, 132.

<sup>22</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*, 2004, 5.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

*of Identity*.<sup>24</sup> He argued that mostly external actors authored this, but right away expressed his hope that future research be done on local-level identity constitution and contestation to complement his work.<sup>25</sup> Congolese political thought constructed by domestic actors is often studied by examining the speeches and writings of individual political practitioners. *La pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba*, translated by Helen Lane as *Lumumba Speaks*, is a collection of speeches, telegrams, letters, and other sources of Lumumba's political thought compiled by his adviser Jean Van Lierde and prefaced by Jean-Paul Sartre.<sup>26</sup> Phambu Ngoma-Binda also focussed on individuals in his introduction to Congolese political thought. He discussed the reflections of Kasa-Vubu, Lumumba, Mobutu, and Laurent-Désiré Kabila and concluded that, despite some convergences, notably between Lumumba and Kabila, many divergences existed between the prominent Congolese politicians.<sup>27</sup> This topic focuses on the confrontation between different strands of political thought. The word 'contestation' puts emphasis on the intersubjective character of political thought. I contend that epistemic contestation lays the groundwork for the right to rule, or legitimacy, of individuals and their political factions.

### *Security*

Arguably the most discussed in the literature on Congolese politics is the occurrence of violent conflict within the state boundaries. The two periods which are most discussed in the literature, mostly the work of non-historians, are the Congo Crisis and the Great Lakes Crisis.<sup>28</sup> The political situation in the Congo is often considered from a perspective of security issues in the literature as if politics at the often-repeated 'Heart of Darkness' only exist in a militarised form. Although Congolese political dynamics are multi-faceted and go well beyond the common trope of conflict, the occurrence of violent conflict stays as an integral part of those political dynamics. Congolese political elites have oftentimes had to negotiate and, more broadly, communicate with external actors regarding foreign military support.

Although the Zairean politicians under Mobutu considered themselves peacemakers, ruling during a calm era bookended by two periods of intense conflict, Isidore Ndaywel è Nziem convincingly showed that Zaire was periodically plagued by armed conflict, even between the Congo Crisis and the First Congo War.<sup>29</sup> I argue that exercising agency in matters of security

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<sup>24</sup> Dunn, *Imagining the Congo*, 2003, 7.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>26</sup> Van Lierde (ed.), *La pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba*, 1963; Van Lierde (ed.), *Lumumba Speaks*, 1972.

<sup>27</sup> Ngoma-Binda, *Construire notre République*, 2019, 219.

<sup>28</sup> de Villers, *Histoire du politique*, 2016, 7-8.

<sup>29</sup> Ndaywel è Nziem, "Du Congo des rébellions au Zaïre des pillages", 1998, 417-39.

solidified the legitimised rule, or authority, of Congolese political elites. A prerequisite to gain military support, however, was to be accepted as a legitimate ruler in the first place. Although the three strategies were employed by actors, the performativity of speech was singled out as the most important one.

### *Economy*

The discussed time period in Congolese political history has often been typified as an enduring legacy of colonialism. Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo, for instance, placed ‘independence’ in quotation marks when he wrote that the “persistence of colonial structures in the period of Congolese/Zairian ‘independence’” has been particularly remarkable in the political and economic relations between Belgium and Congo/Zaire, including “linkages between elites in Zaire and Belgium”.<sup>30</sup> Even when abandoning neo-colonial explanatory patterns of the Congolese elites’ engagement with international stakeholders, this persistent structure permeated any discussion on the topic. To name one example, the parastatal *Comité Spécial du Katanga* (CSK) was dissolved by Belgium only a few days before independence, which led to the deprivation of many mining assets from the Congolese state. This engendered the *Contentieux belgo-congolais*, a dispute which would form the backdrop of Congo’s international economic policy during the whole discussed time period. The uneven division of the colonial portfolio at independence resulted in its renegotiation between Moïse Tshombe (as the Congo’s Prime Minister) and Paul-Henri Spaak, its reconsideration under Mobutu, nationalisation of many companies including the Anglo-Belgian *Union Minière*, and threat of reopening the discussions of the portfolio during the debt restructuring talks towards the end of the 1980s. With regard to the topic of economy as well, all three strategies for exercising agency were used in order to achieve goals of authority and legitimacy.

## **2. Added Value**

As mentioned before, the Congo is a challenging case for African political agency. The empirical research, combined with theoretical considerations rethinking agency to cater to African political dynamics, forms a stepping stone towards more studies on political agency by African elites. This means to look out for agency, even in unfavourable circumstances for political elites, for instance in cases where the state disintegrates. From a rational choice perspective, Robert Bates studied the behaviour of governments to think about the origins of

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<sup>30</sup> Lumumba-Kasongo, “Zaire’s Ties To Belgium”, 1992, 24.

political disorder in Africa.<sup>31</sup> Although his rather cynical focus on state failure and violence paints a too one-sided picture of African politics, his usage of individuals' goals as a unit of analysis reveals some similarities with the present thesis' conclusions.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the Congo/Zaire features prominently as a case in Bates' *When Things Fell Apart*.

Furthermore, a study on the ways in which Congolese political elites engage with the international system complements studies on Congolese politics which predominantly analyse relations between the country's state and society.

Finally, at the empirical level, this study makes use of an integrated approach. Epistemic contestation, economy, and security are discussed within one study, although every single topic could be singled out. Linking those vast topics with one another results in a comprehensive overview of political agency. The temporal scope is broad enough to look at medium-term processes but manageable enough to allow discussions of particular events.

### **3. Organisation**

The remaining part of the thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter one outlines the methodology of the thesis. It puts the discussion on agency in the context of broader scholarly debates on agency and African agency. Furthermore, it will elaborate further on the working definition of agency, specifically African political agency, and define other key concepts. Four guiding questions are identified that structure the empirical analysis. The conceptual framework, coupled with the chosen research strategy, provides the frame of analysis for the three empirical chapters. These chapters all contain an introduction, empirical analysis, and conclusion. Finally, the methodological part of the chapter discusses the concept of a case study, the research strategy, as well as the type of temporality, in Sewell's words.

Chapter two, immediately preceding the three empirical chapters, justifies the selection of the sources – mainly egodocuments and archival sources – and actors – namely Congolese political elites. Afterwards, the next sections put the themes of the dissertation in the context of the broader academic literature. First, the literature on the state in the Congo is discussed, before embarking on discussions of Cold War literature, and North-South relations. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the significance of the thesis for existing research gaps.

Chapter three analyses the agency of Congolese political elites with regard to their epistemic contestation. The different factions during the Congo Crisis are juxtaposed to show

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<sup>31</sup> Bates, *When Things Fell Apart*, 2008, 6-7.

<sup>32</sup> Focusing on Zambia, Bates argued for instance that “[p]olitical sycophancy replaced constituency service as the best strategy for those with ambitions for office” after the banning of party competition. Bates, *When Things Fell Apart*, 2008, 43.

different strategies of the political elites in exercising their agency vis-à-vis international actors in order to become accepted as a legitimate representative of the Congo by those same actors. Mobutu's time in office is discussed by looking at his balancing of different international audiences. Furthermore, since some political elites were confronted with the impossibility to advance their own political thought on the international stage within the confinement of a tightly Mobutu-controlled Zairean state, a discussion of the diplomacy of elite political exiles finalises chapter three's empirical part.

Chapter four analyses the security issues Congolese actors had to deal with between 1960 and 1997. It starts with an examination of domestic political actors, grouped in different and ever-changing political factions and how they dealt with foreign actors. They ranged from UN decision-makers to US-American, Belgian, French, and other politicians. Subsequently, the Shaba Wars of 1977 and 1978 are discussed through the lens of the ways in which Zairean politicians exploited their international partners' sensitivities by emphasizing the alleged threat of Cuban and Soviet intrusion at the centre of the African continent, as opposed to orthodox Cold War explanations. Finally, the First Congo War of 1996-7 heralded the end of the Mobutu era. Although the war is often discussed within the context of the Rwandan genocide and its aftermath, this part of chapter four focusses on how Zaireans were able – or unable – to exercise agency over international actors.

Chapter five analyses the political agency of Congolese elites in economic issues in their engagement with international partners. In the immediate aftermath of independence, the economic and financial dispute known as the Belgo-Congolese *contentieux* saw different Congolese decision-makers apply different strategies in order to obtain favourable outcomes. The quest to attain economic independence was continued in the 1970s with the three-stage process of Zairianisation, radicalisation, and retrocession or deradicalisation. Finally, during the 1980s and early 1990s, the debt restructuring talks between Zaire and multilateral and bilateral partners demonstrated the strategies of Zairean elites to obtain favourable outcomes by, at times, playing the model pupil of the International Monetary Fund and, at times, hardening their stance by trying to break the front of creditor countries by frontally attacking the former colonising country Belgium.

Finally, chapter six concludes the analysis of the thesis. It reflects on some consequences of methodological choices and concludes the analysis of the agency of Congolese political elites in their engagement with the international system. Furthermore, it explicates the common threads of the three topics of the thesis and looks at the three main strategies of Congolese political elites, who are reformulated into three hypotheses for further research.

## Chapter One: Concepts and Methodology

This chapter outlines the concepts and methodology used in the present research. Firstly, the concept of African agency within the international system is discussed. Secondly, this conception is transposed to the specific case of the agency of Congolese political elites and forms the working definition used in this thesis. Thirdly, the main guiding questions of the thesis are formulated. Finally, the methodological framework is presented, namely George and Bennett's method of structured, focused comparison through an abductive research strategy.

### 1. African Agency: Sewell Revisited

The study of African actors in IR theory has been slow in taking off. Neither the realist approaches of balance-of-power, hegemony, or the security dilemma nor the liberal approaches of democratic peace theory proved to be sufficiently applicable to the political realities on the African continent. Studies on African IR were mostly published on an ad hoc basis, with no clear research programmes behind the lines of inquiry.

An early example is Zartman's 1967 article *Africa as a Subordinate State System in International Relations*.<sup>33</sup> Some of the author's conclusions have a long tenability, such as the focus on Pan-Africanism, which is still debated,<sup>34</sup> and the preference for African solutions to African problems.<sup>35</sup> More recently, however, the study of non-western actors in IR knows a remarkable upsurge. The dominance of American scholarship is explained by Ole Wæver.<sup>36</sup> Non-western actors, however, are not necessarily African actors. Acharya, for example, mainly focuses on Asian dynamics. World-systems and dependency theorists like Immanuel Wallerstein and Andre Gunder Frank focus more on Latin America. In the last two decades, Amanda Coffie and Lembe Tiky argued, there has been a

“steady growth of works criticising, rejecting, or scorning the notion of centre and periphery – a deliberate attempt to end the marginalisation of Africa and the Global South in the study and practice of international affairs.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Zartman, “Africa as a Subordinate State System”, 1967.

<sup>34</sup> See for instance Bareebe, “The Pan-African Solidarity Norm”, in Coleman, and Tieku (eds.), *African Actors in International Security*, 2018, 73-92.

<sup>35</sup> Zartman, “Africa as a Subordinate State System”, 1967, 559.

<sup>36</sup> Wæver, “The Sociology of a Not So International Discipline”, 1998, 687-727.

<sup>37</sup> Coffie, and Tiky, “Exploring Africa's Agency in International Politics”, 2021, 244. The article is the introduction to a special issue of *Africa Spectrum*, based on the August 2019 International Studies Association (ISA) conference *Exploring the agency of the Global South in international studies (practices)* in Accra, Ghana.

The recent upsurge in African IR allows for the differentiation of several areas of inquiry. A first strand discusses Africa as a region and part of the international system. Most prominently, Christopher Clapham's 1996 monograph is a starting point for the study of Africa in international politics and its engagement with external actors.<sup>38</sup> His tacit rejection of dependency theory offers a nuanced, but far from Afro-optimist account. "The evident weakness of African states did not reduce them to a state of inertia," he wrote, "in which their fate was determined by external power. On the contrary, it impelled them to take measures designed to ensure survival, or at least to improvise their chances of it."<sup>39</sup> Other authors emphasised the agency of African individuals in international relations. Katharina Coleman and Thomas Tiekou argued that African actors, ranging from government officials to private citizens have helped to shape major norms in international peace and security politics. African actors are not merely norm-takers, they argued, "nor is Africa just a laboratory where others develop, test, and implement their norms."<sup>40</sup> Despite important publications such as the Coleman and Tiekou volume, the literature dealing with the leverage of African actors over external actors is still in its infancy, but growing steadily.

Similarly, there are still many aspects of the study of agency in IR that can be expanded. With the important exception of Buzan, Wight wrote in 2004, no substantial body of literature on the agency concept exists in IR.<sup>41</sup> Criticising Wendt, who argues that "states are people too",<sup>42</sup> Wight perceived the state more as a *structure* than an *agent*. While accepting that the state is not just the sum of individuals in the state system, he concludes that the state as such is not exercising power, but rather facilitates the exercise of power by agents.<sup>43</sup>

Both Wight and Wendt conceptualised political agency as a *social* phenomenon. The current study about the political elites of the DRC will also develop a social conception of political agency. This should go beyond a conception of human behaviour as a purely rational phenomenon since individuals are not automatons. Therefore, in order to make sense of the actions of individuals and, ultimately, agency, political psychology could provide some pointers. Kornprobst departed from narrow or rigid scholarly categories to inquire into how

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<sup>38</sup> Clapham, *Africa and the International System*, 1996.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Coleman, and Tiekou, "African Agency in Theory and Practice", in Coleman, and Tiekou (eds.), *African Actors in International Security*, 2018, 242.

<sup>41</sup> Wight, "State Agency", 2004, 273.

<sup>42</sup> Wight states that Wendt believes that "it is not that the state 'is like' a person; it literally is a person"; Wendt however, was more nuanced, arguing that "states are also purposive actors with a sense of Self – "states are people too" – and that this affects the nature of the international system." Wight, "State Agency", 2004, 269; Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 1999, 194.

<sup>43</sup> Wight, "State Agency", 2004, 279.

individual actors “figure out what to do”.<sup>44</sup> He defined an actor’s judgement as “subsuming particulars under universals.” More specifically, concrete ideas (particulars) become intelligible when an actor interprets them to be instances of more universal taken-for-granted ideas (universals).<sup>45</sup> In his definition of judgement, Kornprobst demonstrated the salience of linking structure with agency and the reflective and contingent character of informed human action.

This conception uses William H. Sewell Jr.’s effort to explain human agency and the potential of change in the concept of structure as a starting point. Structure does not leave enough room for what Sewell called the “efficacy of human action”.<sup>46</sup> He further explained this approach to agency by defining it as “entailing the capacity to transpose and extend schemas to new contexts”.<sup>47</sup> Just like Anthony Giddens’ duality of structure, Sewell acknowledged that agency and structure presuppose, rather than oppose each other.<sup>48</sup>

Adding to his conception, agency also relies on the consequences of human action. Indeed, the very performance of transposing and extending schemas to new contexts is motivated by the ambition to achieve a desirable outcome. Applied to Congolese political elites’ engagement with the international system, agency manifests itself in their ability to adequately act in a predominantly unfavourable context. The ‘schemas’ in Sewell’s definition are not concrete or codified rules, but “generalizable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social life.”<sup>49</sup>

To Giddens, mutual knowledge used by social actors to negotiate their interactions with others lies at the heart of the social sciences.<sup>50</sup> In order to make sense of intersubjective encounters, the researcher needs to uncover the memory traces orienting the “conduct of knowledgeable agents.”<sup>51</sup> Actors are thus reflexive about their actions. Unfortunately, in Giddens’ own notion of sociology, he did not understand it to be a “generic discipline to do with the study of human societies as a whole, but that branch of social science which focuses particularly upon the ‘advanced’ or modern societies.”<sup>52</sup> The challenge of discussing African agency lies then partly in countering this rather unreflexive stance. After all, the notion that

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<sup>44</sup> Kornprobst, “The *Agent’s* Logics of Action: Defining and Mapping Political Judgement”, 2011, 70.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>46</sup> Sewell Jr., “A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation”, 1992, 2.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>50</sup> A point summarised by Norman Blaikie in *Approaches to Social Enquiry*, 2017, 95-7.

<sup>51</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 1984, 17.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii [My emphasis].

agency is both informed by structure and reproduces social structures itself has more universal implications.

The pursuit of goals and the taking into account of enabling factors and constraints is reminiscent of rational choice approaches. Not so much a theory as a broad enterprise, Duncan Snidal summarised that it is “usually viewed as a methodological approach that explains both individual and collective (social) outcomes in terms of *individual goal-seeking under constraints*.”<sup>53</sup> Similar to this thesis, Snidal underlined that goal-seeking necessitates an explanation based on “relevant actors, the goals they seek, and their ability to do so.”<sup>54</sup> The present research provides an answer to common objections of rational choice theory. Snidal identified several internal and external critiques, although he pointed to the flexibility of rational choice and refuted aspects of those critiques. First, rational choice is highly formalistic and uses mathematical modelling to simplify the social world and represent theoretical arguments.<sup>55</sup> Second, rational choice is understood to be not sufficiently attuned to empirical research.<sup>56</sup> Empirical analysis of the agency of Congolese political elites as clarified in the next section presents an antidote to these critiques.

The growing awareness of African agency in IR emphasises the ‘unusual’ character of African agency in several ways, including the kind of actors and the particular spaces where agency is exercised. Brown, for instance, argued for a “flexible conceptualisation of agency”,<sup>57</sup> whereas Coleman et al. proposed to look at alternative actors as well as alternative spatial realities, since “borderlands of orders, whether geographic or functional or both, are spaces in which agency flourishes.”<sup>58</sup> Despite the pluralist turn in IR,<sup>59</sup> African agency in IR remains limited to rather traditional notions of the term. The kind of agency that is exercised by (un)conventional players in (un)conventional spaces is one of shaping regional or global orders and creating norms. Many kinds of agency are therefore running the risk of being overlooked by scholars of the pluralist turn.

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<sup>53</sup> Snidal, “Rational Choice and International Relations”, 2013, 87 [Emphasis in the original].

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>57</sup> Brown, “A Question of Agency”, 2012, 1890.

<sup>58</sup> Coleman, Kornprobst, and Seegers (eds.), *Diplomacy and Borderlands*, 2020, 1.

<sup>59</sup> Eun, *Pluralism and Engagement in the Discipline of International Relations*, 2016.

## 2. Working Definition of Agency

In order to create a working definition of agency for the present thesis, this section specifies how the different essential features of agency relate to one another, namely the goals of actors, strategies, informed actions, and, eventually, favourable outcomes. This section is divided into three parts, corresponding to the three features of agency. First, the section explains the concept of goals, as well as the two main sets of goals, namely goals related to authority, and goals related to legitimacy. This is followed by an explanation of the concept of strategies. Finally, a third major feature of agency consists of informed human actions.

### 2.1. Goals

The realisation of a set of goals is an element of agency that recurs in most definitions of agency. Goals are mental dispositions of favourable outcomes. Before taking action, Congolese political elites have ideas about the desired consequences of their actions. These goals are thus not yet actions, let alone tangible outcomes of those actions. Rather, they are ideas about what the desired outcomes of their prospective actions would be. Throughout this thesis, it will become clear that political elites did not always have the intention to shape regional or global order, but rather to reach out to international actors for their domestic concerns. The emphasis on goals resonates with Coffie and Tiky's definition of agency as

“the ability of states, intergovernmental organisations, civil society, and individual actors to exert influence in their interactions with foreign entities to maximise their utilities and achieve a set of goals.”<sup>60</sup>

IR theorists often explain the roles of states in the international political and economic world. Peter Gourevitch noted that “the international system may itself become an explanatory variable.”<sup>61</sup> He reversed the “arrows that flow from domestic structure toward international relations.”<sup>62</sup> In the context of the present study, it is important to note that the actors often react to international events. Dependency, as Jean-François Bayart argued, is a mode of action for African actors. This is a clear example of the international system influencing domestic politics. The question is not whether the international system influences domestic policy or the other way around. Instead, Gourevitch's arrows that flow from the international to the domestic make

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<sup>60</sup> Coffie, and Tiky, “Exploring Africa's Agency”, 2021, 245.

<sup>61</sup> Gourevitch, “The Second Image Reversed”, 1978, 881-912. The second image reversed is a reference to Kenneth Waltz's second image in Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, 1959.

<sup>62</sup> Gourevitch, “The Second Image Reversed”, 1978, 881.

a round trip. Congolese political elites namely sought to instrumentalise international actors (domestic to international) in order to achieve a set of goals at the domestic level (international to domestic).<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, as the empirical chapters will demonstrate, many issues become entangled between domestic and international levels. Robert Putnam elaborated on Gourevitch's second image reversed and reconciled the second image and its reverse in a discussion on the negotiations during the Bonn Summit of 1978. He argued that "we need to move beyond the mere observation that domestic factors influence international affairs and vice versa, and beyond simple catalogs of instances of such influence, to seek theories that integrate both spheres, accounting for the *areas of entanglement* between them."<sup>64</sup> The abandonment of clear-cut unidirectional vectors of influence might engender relative analytical opacity, but it will also result in more fine-grained and substantial findings. Applied to African politics, Herbst argued that many IR scholars are reluctant to accept the idea that domestic politics affects the designs of state systems and that domestic politics can only be understood by looking at the international political and economic context, a point of particular importance to scholars studying the developing world.<sup>65</sup>

The actors of the present thesis predominantly formulate two related sets of goals, namely goals related to legitimacy, and goals related to authority. Max Weber's discussion of the terminology in *Politik als Beruf* remains an influential take on both concepts. Regarding authority, he developed a triad of ideal types in great detail, namely traditional, charismatic, and legal authority. He did not, however, establish a formal definition of the concept.<sup>66</sup> A simple definition of authority as "legitimized power"<sup>67</sup> comprises two main features: power and its legitimation. Bealey linked both concepts together by referring to an occupying army. Although it could have power over an occupied population, it does not have authority over that population which does not accept the legitimacy of its rule.<sup>68</sup> It is more appropriate, however, to talk about

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<sup>63</sup> Peiffer and Englebert flagged that "there is a theoretically rich body of scholarship on the extent to which African regimes instrumentalize their external relations and dependence for domestic benefits", and cited Chabal and Daloz, Bayart, and Cooper. Peiffer, and Englebert, "Extraversion, Vulnerability to Donors", 2012, 356.

<sup>64</sup> Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games", 1988, 433 [My emphasis].

<sup>65</sup> Herbst, *State and Power in Africa*, 2000, 256-57.

<sup>66</sup> Weber, "Politics as a Vocation", in Gerth, and Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, 1946, 78-9; Eckstein, "Authority Patterns", 1973, 1153.

<sup>67</sup> Hurd, "Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics", 1999, 400; Bealey, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Political Science*, 1999, 188; cf. Milner, "The Assumption of Anarchy in International Relations Theory", 1991, 67-85.

<sup>68</sup> Bealey, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Political Science*, 1999, 22.

authority as legitimised rule instead of power. In exerting authority over a population and territory, political actors not only have power over the population, but are governing over this population and territory more broadly. On the legitimacy part, Helen Milner explained that “[a]uthority is often tied to the notion of legitimacy; it implies a belief in the validity or bindingness of an order.”<sup>69</sup> Finally, the link between authority as a goal and the instrumentalisation of foreign actors was clearly articulated by Peiffer and Englebert, who posited that “many African regimes rely on strategies of extraversion, converting their dependent relations with the external world into domestic resources and authority.”<sup>70</sup> One’s rule over a population and territory is not only potentially legitimised by the population in question. The current thesis looks at the legitimisation of Congolese actors’ rule by external actors. The Katangese government, for instance, strove to extend its authority by building up the military and civil state apparatus, including the establishment of pseudo-diplomatic representations. A second example was the Congolese government’s call for external help which helped the government to regain the full Congolese territory during the Kwilu and Simba rebellions. Thus, as a working definition, this thesis understands authority as legitimised rule over the Congo’s territory (or its secessionist states) and its population.

The second set of goals is grouped under the heading of legitimacy. Max Weber elaborated on the notion of legitimacy as well. His influential definition of a state considered it a “human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory.”<sup>71</sup> The concept was also the object of a political science study on Congolese politics. In Frances Dalmolen’s *Legitimacy: An Investigation of the Concept’s Usefulness for Political Inquiry*, the author critiqued Weber’s inadequate equation of legitimacy with legality.<sup>72</sup> Half of the PhD thesis was dedicated to the empirical study of legitimacy and the United Nations Operation in the Congo in 1960 and 1961.<sup>73</sup> Dalmolen affirmed that legitimacy “has been inadequately defined and explained”<sup>74</sup>, but failed to coin a clear-cut definition of the concept. Bas van der Vossen, on the other hand, attractively and parsimoniously defined legitimacy as the “right to rule”.<sup>75</sup> The question who of could bestow

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<sup>69</sup> Milner, “The Assumption of Anarchy”, 1991, 74.

<sup>70</sup> Peiffer, and Englebert, “Extraversion, Vulnerability to Donors, and Political Liberalization in Africa”, 2012, 355. Contrary to the present thesis, Peiffer and Englebert’s study discussed political liberalization.

<sup>71</sup> Weber, “Politics as a Vocation”, 1946, 78 [Emphasis in the original].

<sup>72</sup> Dalmolen, *Legitimacy: An Investigation of the Concept’s Usefulness*, 1972, 31-44.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 138-280.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>75</sup> van der Vossen, “The Asymmetry of Legitimacy”, 2012, 576.

the right to rule on state officials traditionally has an internal and external component. Van der Vossen expanded on this division, stating that internal legitimacy by a state is formed by “its domestic right to rule, held *vis-à-vis* its subjects.”<sup>76</sup> This goes to the heart of state-society relations, which is a vast field of research and falls outside the scope of the current thesis. Here, we consider the instrumentalisation of external actors for domestic benefits, which is linked to external legitimacy. Henceforth, legitimacy is used in this thesis as a shorthand for external legitimacy. Van der Vossen defined external legitimacy of a state as “its international right to rule, held *vis-à-vis* other states.”<sup>77</sup> To him, a state’s right to rule is formed by “its moral right against outsiders that they not interfere with its domestic acts of making and enforcing law.”<sup>78</sup> Van der Vossen’s definition and emphasis on non-interference is, however, hardly distinguishable from the concept of sovereignty. Furthermore, it is restricted to a negative conception of legitimacy, which overlooks the active support of external actors at the invitation of state officials. This is especially pertinent in the case of countries of the Global South. Therefore, external legitimacy should be expanded with a notion of positive external legitimacy, which entails the readiness of external actors to support the domestic actors’ right to rule. Accordingly, negative external legitimacy is a necessary but not sufficient condition for positive external legitimacy.

Finally, it is possible to bestow the right to rule on actors without them actually exercising legitimised rule over a population or territory. An example of legitimacy without authority is governments in exile, which are accepted by external actors as entailing the right to rule, without actually ruling over a population or territory. In some cases, such as the Congolese central government during both phases of the Congo Crisis, actors only controlled part of the territory and population they claimed to represent. Similarly, external actors can accept exiled politicians and diplomats as rightful representatives of the Congolese population or, at least, the Congo’s ruling class, without holding office at a certain point in time.

To summarise, this thesis considers legitimacy as the right to rule bestowed upon political elites by external actors, either only through non-interference or with active support of their right to rule.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 565.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 566.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 568.

## 2.2. Three topics

Epistemic contestation, security, and economy are the three topics singled out for the research and hang together with goals related to legitimacy and authority. Epistemic contestation concerns the struggle among Congolese political elites to be recognised by foreign players as the legitimate rulers over Congolese territory or its secessionist states and its population. This deeper-seated layer of exercising agency thus relates to legitimacy and lays the groundwork for exercising agency in security and economic matters. In order to successfully exercise agency in those matters, for instance by asking international partners to militarily intervene or to negotiate a favourable restructuring of the country's national debt, one has to be recognised as a legitimate representative of the Congo in the first place. Security and economics relate to authority, since the safeguarding of the country's territory and management of the country's finances and economy concerns legitimised rule, with emphasis on the second word. Nevertheless, the distinction between epistemic contestation relating to legitimacy, on the one hand, and security and economy relating to authority, is not entirely clear-cut. Elites could gain legitimacy as well as authority, for instance through exercising economic agency by rejecting agreements favourable to Belgium with regard to the colonial portfolio.

The three topics correspond to E.H. Carr's classification in his 1939 monograph *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, which introduced the distinction between power over opinion, military power, and economic power.<sup>79</sup> He converted Bertrand Russell's classification in *Power: A New Analysis* from the general social science perspective of power to the particular case of political power. Both Carr's and Russell's works were written well before the advent of the agency concept in the social sciences and humanities. Russell's definition of power as "the production of intended effects", however, shares a lot of similarities with current-day notions of agency (cf. *infra*).<sup>80</sup>

## 2.3. Strategies

When Congolese political elites have set their goals, they have to convert these mental dispositions into actions. Concretely, they are structuring their actions in order to attain their goals. Informed by broader structural factors like the position of the Congo in regional and global order, and more immediate factors like the evolution of bilateral relations between the Congo and partner countries, or an ongoing military conflict, political actors assess the situation

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<sup>79</sup> Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, 1939, 108.

<sup>80</sup> Russell, *Power: A New Social Analysis*, 2004, 23.

and try to obtain favourable outcomes through the structuring of actions. This dynamic is here defined as strategies. Although sharing some aspects of the well-established concept of grand strategy, the two must not be confused with one another. One definition of grand strategy referred to “the purposeful use of military, diplomatic, and economic tools of statecraft to achieve desired ends.”<sup>81</sup> Actively structuring actions is what makes them purposeful, in other words driven by human intent. Additionally, grand strategy is equally goal-oriented, or to “achieve desired ends”, in Trubowitz’s words. The fundamental difference with this thesis’ conception of strategy is that grand strategy is located at “the broadest level of foreign policy”<sup>82</sup>. Strategies, on the other hand, are located at the microlevel, or agential level, of decision-making. At the aggregate level, the present thesis identifies common strategies of Congolese political elites and groups them into common threads. As the concluding chapter shows, the three overarching common strategy concern the use of institutions, use of speech, and instrumentalisation of shared interests.

#### 2.4. Informed Human Actions

In order to create a workable conception of agency based on Sewell’s definition of agency as the ‘efficacy of human action’, it is necessary to spell out the relation between actions, the efficacy of human action, and the outcomes of those actions. Agency is only indirectly observable since the capacity to transpose and extend schemas to new contexts is a process that depends on actions of humans as observable phenomena. These are external manifestations of human intent, a phenomenon that distinguishes the social sciences and humanities from the natural sciences. Human intent, constitutive element of strategies and its ensuing actions, is not directly apparent from the sources that are used. Therefore, behaviour is necessarily characterised by a certain degree of unpredictability. Descriptions of actions, on the other hand, are presented in the available sources and even when they can be interpreted in many different ways, these descriptions are easily verified by the reader by tracing the references in the footnotes and assessing the validity of the drawn inferences. Since specific actions made in the past cannot be reproduced in the present and randomised control groups are no option for this kind of research, the traceability of the references is a crucial element to ensure falsifiability.<sup>83</sup>

Congolese political elites could experience a variety of restraints from domestic factors such as their domestic political colleagues and representatives of civil society, or from foreign

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<sup>81</sup> Trubowitz, *Politics and Strategy*, 2011, 9.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Wamba-dia-Wamba, “How Is Historical Knowledge Recognized?”, 1986, 334.

factors such as conflicting interests from political and other actors. Giddens has been criticised for not doing justice to the importance of structural constraint when emphasising the enabling character of structure.<sup>84</sup> Since agency implies that an individual could have acted otherwise, having only one option would prevent an individual from becoming an actor. Giddens refuted this critique by suggesting a distinction between ‘option’ and ‘feasible option’. Even a gagged and bound prisoner in solitary confinement remains an agent, Giddens argued, for she or he can still go on a hunger strike or commit suicide.<sup>85</sup> As presented in the next empirical chapters, none of the Congolese political actors would be in a position where no alternative options were at their disposal. Even under Mobutu’s authoritarian rule, actors still had the choice to continue some political activities in exile.

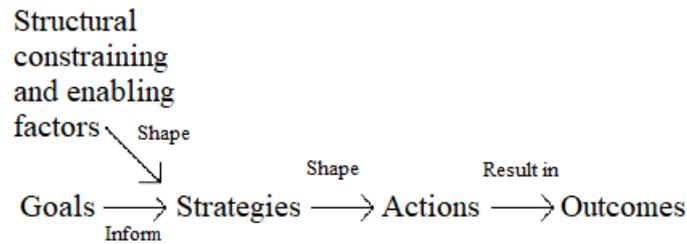
Similarly, Congolese political elites could benefit from enabling factors, either from domestic allies and resources, or foreign factors such as political allies and geopolitical tensions that could be instrumentalised. Finally, the Cold War context could either enable or restrain agency. Indeed, every usage of the term should be contextualised, given the ever-changing nature of that context over time (cf. chapter two). In a case study, these contextual factors have an increased importance, since they give empirical density and conceptual validity to the phenomenon under study.

To summarise, individuals are successfully exercising agency when their goals are achieved as favourable outcomes through the employment of strategies. They are informed human action because individuals have to be cognisant of their position in the social world and the structural constraining and enabling factors it entails. To uncover the agency of Congolese political elites in their engagement with the international system for the period from 1960 to 1997, the thesis will examine how they structure their actions to obtain favourable outcomes. In other words, it will determine what strategies Congolese political elites follow based on the information at their disposal and awareness of their position, in order to obtain favourable outcomes through their interactions.

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<sup>84</sup> Thompson, “The Theory of Structuration”, in Held, and Thompson (eds.), *Social Theory of Modern Societies*, 1990, 72.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.



*Figure 2: Process of agency.*

The methodological focus on the correspondence between the goals and actual outcomes of elites' engagement with the international system conspicuously leaves out one major set of actors, i.e. the broader Congolese population. Absent in this analysis is the domestic desire to strengthen institutions and develop the economy beyond the needs of a very select set of actors. The reader ought not to misconstrue the emphasis on elites as a cynical take on African politics. Students of European politics, Latin American politics, or other regions and fields could embark on research projects similar to the current one and analyse how, for example, German or Brazilian political elites exercise their agency in their interaction with international partners. Political agency is therefore considered an amoral form of agency since it looks at actions of individuals and their consequences without assigning moral value to either their actions, goals, or consequences.

### **3. Guiding Questions**

Four main questions guide the research with a view to answering the overarching question of Congolese political elites' agency. First, the thesis investigates how elites are structuring their actions to obtain favourable outcomes. In other words, what are their strategies in order to exercise agency? Second, which strategies are infrequently or occasionally used by elites and which ones are regularly used? Specifically, this will separate the incidental strategies from the overarching strategies that could be generalised to hypotheses for further research (cf. *infra*). Third, what are the sources considered by elites to inform themselves about the manner in which to structure their actions? This refers to the context in which they navigate themselves and make decisions on the ways in which to exercise agency. Finally, how do these strategies identified during the research relate to existing strands of literature on African politics? The conclusions will confirm, complement, or challenge existing approaches to African or, specifically, Congolese politics.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Case Study

The case study as a method of social inquiry can be approached by the researcher from a variety of viewpoints, ranging from positivists who use rigorous methods borrowed from exact sciences to interpretivists who abandon claims of objective knowledge in favour of subjective aspects of human behaviour. John Gerring dubbed the term ‘case study’ a “definitional morass” and maintained a positivist approach to case studies.<sup>86</sup> Contrastingly, George and Bennett explicitly criticise positivist approaches such as King et al.’s *Designing Social Inquiry*.<sup>87</sup>

The current study attempts to strike a balance between positivism and interpretivism. An unequivocal adoption of positivist approaches to the subject matter would oversimplify the social reality – something a case study ought to avoid – and hamper the construction of a refined conception of agency, given the impossibility to quantify every instance of agency. This shows similarities with Coffie and Tiky’s view on African agency, which to them is not a quantitative question to see how much agency actors could enact, but rather what kind of agency is enacted, building on previous empirical and theoretical analyses.<sup>88</sup> On the other hand, a fully interpretivist approach would prevent the making of generalisable inferences and would pave the way for the writing of a mere chronicle, equal to any other number of writings about agency and/or Congolese politics.

George and Bennett have developed a heuristic approach to case studies. This is an inductive approach, enabling the identification of new variables, hypotheses, and causal mechanisms and paths.<sup>89</sup> A pitfall to be avoided is to make a heuristic case study a ‘blind’ endeavour that would result in the creation of a mere inventory or chronicle of singular events. After all, research needs to be question-driven and is situated in a larger epistemic field. The findings of the present study connect to pertinent literature from African studies, political science, and other disciplines. Instead of creating an exhaustive theory of political agency, the conclusions of the present study will be more similar to a middle-range theory, in Merton’s sense of the word, lying “between the minor but necessary working hypotheses that evolve in abundance during day-to-day research and the all-inclusive systematic efforts to develop a

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<sup>86</sup> “[D]efinitional morass”: Gerring, “What Is a Case Study”, 2004, 341-2; “this book adopts what might be called (if one can stomach the term) a “positivist” approach to case study research”: Gerring, *Case Study Research*, 2017, xxi.

<sup>87</sup> George, and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, 2005, 10-6; King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, 1994.

<sup>88</sup> Coffie, and Tiky, “Exploring Africa’s Agency”, 2021, 247.

<sup>89</sup> George, and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, 2005, 75.

unified theory that will explain all the observed uniformities of social behavior, social organization and social change.”<sup>90</sup>

Finally, George and Bennett’s approach is a good fit for the present thesis due to its emphasis on individuals. When studying the social rather than the purely physical world, one has to take into account that “human agents are *reflective* – that is, they contemplate, anticipate, and can work to change their social and material environments and they have long-term intentions as well as immediate desires or wants.”<sup>91</sup>

#### 4.2. Research Strategy

As a research strategy, or a “[process] required to answer research questions, to solve intellectual puzzles, to generate new knowledge”<sup>92</sup>, the characteristics of an abductive research strategy go together well with George and Bennett’s approach to case studies. This strategy, in Norman Blaikie’s words, aims at discovering actors’ “constructions of reality, their ways of conceptualizing and giving meaning to their social world, their tacit knowledge.”<sup>93</sup> Although Blaikie distinguishes inductive, deductive, abductive, and retroductive research strategies as separate ones, the abductive strategy is an empirical endeavour guided by *inductive* reasoning. Through the close examination of, say, archival documents and other primary sources, the researcher can approximate the constructions of reality that drives the actions of individuals which is, in essence, an endeavour based on inductive reasoning. In other words, inductive reasoning and an inductive research strategy are not synonymous, since both abductive and inductive research strategies use inductive reasoning.

The constitutive part of abduction, Blaikie clarified, lies in the “process of moving from lay descriptions of social life, to technical descriptions of that social life”.<sup>94</sup> Without having necessarily a degree in the social sciences, actors are reflexive about their behaviour and actions in daily life. Most of this mutual knowledge, in Giddens’ words, is “not directly accessible to the consciousness of actors”<sup>95</sup>, namely tacit knowledge. Through the abductive strategy, the researcher describes these forms of knowledge in specialised language.

Trying to uncover the background knowledge that orientates the actions of people also

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<sup>90</sup> Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 1968, 38.

<sup>91</sup> George, and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, 2005, 129.

<sup>92</sup> Blaikie, *Approaches to Social Enquiry*, 2017, 2.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 2017, 10.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, *Designing Social Research*, 2011, 90.

<sup>95</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 1984, 4.

dovetails with Giddens' structuration theory, who made the "most significant contemporary contribution to the establishment of the [abductive research strategy]."<sup>96</sup>

Although the densely empirical study of Congolese political actors is worthy to be studied in itself, the resulting claims about their agency will also pursue more generalisable knowledge about the agency of political elites. George and Bennett's method of structured, focused comparison prescribes that research be conducted through general questions that reflect the objective of the research (structured or standardised) and that it only examines the relevant parts of the historical case or cases (focused).<sup>97</sup> In my within-case analysis, political agency exercised by Congolese political elites within the three selected topics will be compared to one another. This can only be carried out coherently when agency is defined in a similar manner in all three topics. The political agency, manifested in the approach of elites to epistemic contestation, remains political agency in the topics of conflict and economics.

Change over time is an important aspect, but equally important are the potential continuities in a changing context. Continuities are more important than the proverbial 'dog that doesn't bark'<sup>98</sup> would assume, since generalising also means distinguishing structural factors from irrelevant idiosyncrasies.

#### 4.3. Type of Temporality

Within the social sciences and humanities, different perceptions of temporality are used in order to draw different inferences. Working at the intersection of sociology, political science, and history, Sewell concluded that historians are mostly upholding "multi-stranded but ultimately causally diffuse accounts", whereas social scientists are more singling out what they perceive to be the "most causally important features of the world" and "elaborate their dynamics systematically."<sup>99</sup> The many distinct perspectives on social processes, according to Sewell, depend on the conceptualisation of temporality. He discerned three kinds, namely teleological, experimental, and eventful temporality.<sup>100</sup> In short, teleological temporality, espoused by the likes of Marx and Durkheim, refers to the explanation of history as moved by transhistorical

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<sup>96</sup> Blaikie, *Approaches to Social Enquiry*, 2017, 95.

<sup>97</sup> George, and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, 2005, 67.

<sup>98</sup> After the Sherlock Holmes short story *The Adventure of Silver Blaze* by Arthur Conan Doyle, the 'dog that doesn't bark' refers to events that *did not* happen but were hypothesised or expected to happen. See for instance Gerring, *Case Study Research*, 2017, 140.

<sup>99</sup> Sewell Jr., *Logics of History*, 2005, 14.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 83. "Eventful temporality" closely dovetails with Braudel's *histoire événementielle*, despite the latter's unfavourable assessment of the temporality. First rehabilitated by Marshall Sahlins, who used the neologism *evenemential*, Sewell argued in favour of this perspective of history.

processes leading to a more or less inevitable future state. On the other hand, many social scientists who are sensitive to broader explanatory patterns espouse experimental temporality, based on a more scientific methodology as a means to create a universal and ahistorical temporality in order to produce lawlike or quasi-lawlike statements. Sewell used Theda Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions* to illustrate this type.<sup>101</sup>

Finally, Sewell identified eventful temporality as a viewpoint of history that perceives events as having the capacity to transform structures. In this regard, the historical and spatial context of events do matter. This is opposed to the experimental perspective, which attempts to disregard the contingencies of individual events as well as the path-dependent nature of history.<sup>102</sup> The current research attempted at retaining the particular context of the Congo's political history and affirmation of its contingent nature in order to make *generalisable* instead of *generalised* claims about political agency. A detailed historical account of instances where Congolese political elites exercised their agency in their interaction with their international interlocutors was therefore necessary in order to strengthen the contextual validity of the drawn inferences.

This research thus applies George and Bennett's method of structured, focused comparison through an abductive research strategy. Since the present case study only discusses political actors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the outcomes relate only tentatively to other cases. Following Merton's understanding of sociological theory, the inferences made in this study will develop "special theories from which to derive hypotheses that can be empirically investigated."<sup>103</sup> In the concluding chapter, the conclusions made about the agency of Congolese political elites will be reformulated into hypotheses for further research on political agency in other contexts.

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<sup>101</sup> The three temporalities are explained in-depth in Sewell Jr., "Three Temporalities: Toward an Eventful Sociology", *Logics of History*, 2005, 81-123.

<sup>102</sup> Sewell regarded "radical contingency" as "fundamental to eventful temporality." *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>103</sup> Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 1968, 51.

## Chapter Two: Sources and Literature

### 1. Sources and Actors

The selection of data for a research project is inevitably partial and can include practical, ideological, political, and purely intellectual considerations. At the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) founding meeting in 1963, decades before the debates on decolonising the curricula of schools and universities, the OAU asked UNESCO to work on a 'General History of Africa' to replace western-centric curricula of African schools.<sup>104</sup> Editor of the first of nine volumes of the History, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, emphasised in the introduction of the methodology the difficulty of sources on Africa such as the uneven distribution of written sources on the continent, or the issues pertaining to oral traditions.<sup>105</sup> Some of these problems are not only present in older sources, but also relate to recent and contemporary African politics. Daly pointed out that scholars of the period after independence often have to look beyond state archives, since they often contain few or no records of their subject matter.<sup>106</sup>

Both conventional and less conventional 'Congolese political elites' are identified in the present thesis. One group of conventional political elites can be easily identified. These include in the first place the politicians and diplomats who engaged with the international system between 1960 and 1997: Presidents Kasa-Vubu and Mobutu, the Prime Ministers and First State Commissioners, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Ambassadors and other diplomats. They were all state officials and Congolese nationals. Other officials also dealt with the international system, such as other government ministers, civil servants of political parties<sup>107</sup>, and formal and informal advisers of Presidents and politicians. The identification of actors in this category is less clear-cut, but includes other nationals and people with different degrees of loyalty to the Congolese state or individual politicians. Although the large majority of advisers and civil servants had the Congolese citizenship, a small number of influential power brokers were foreigners. Lumumba's Chief of Protocol Andrée Blouin was born in Ubangi-Shari, but most other foreign advisers were Belgian, such as Lumumba's adviser Jean Van Lierde, Kasa-Vubu's Jef Van Bilsen or Mobutu's Hugues Leclercq. The particular position of these external actors on the payroll of the Congolese state illustrates the necessity of un-blackboxing the state as an entity, the importance of the social and personal dimensions of politics, and the relevance of

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<sup>104</sup> Vansina, "UNESCO and African Historiography", 1993, 337.

<sup>105</sup> Ki-Zerbo, "General Introduction", *General History of Africa I*, 1981, 5-16.

<sup>106</sup> Daly, "Research Note: Archival Research in Africa", 2017, 311-320.

<sup>107</sup> In particular the ideologues of the state party *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR) under Mobutu.

areas of entanglement between domestic and international politics.<sup>108</sup>

Van Bilsen was a prominent example of an actor that was not entirely defined by his Congolese alliance, nor by his attachment to a foreign government. When Kasa-Vubu asked Van Bilsen to become his political adviser, the latter made clear to the Belgian Minister of Education that his position also meant loyalty to the Congolese president.<sup>109</sup> Nevertheless, when writing to the Belgian Minister Charged with Finance and Economy in Congo, Raymond Scheyven, Van Bilsen motivated his absence from his previous teaching position in Antwerp by stating that, although he made clear to dismiss every characterisation of a mission, the Belgian government always considered this kind of advisory function for a foreign government served the general interest and needed to be encouraged by the government of his country.<sup>110</sup>

Among Congolese political elites, there are actors of the aforementioned categories whose allegiance was with a secessionist state of Congo, notably the State of Katanga (1960-3). Analogous to the Congolese state, the Katangese state had a president – Moïse Tshombe –, government ministers such as Évariste Kimba and Godefroid Munongo, diplomatic representatives abroad such as Dominique Diur and Jacques Masangu, and Katangese and international advisers such as Tshombe’s *Chef de cabinet* Jacques Bartelous.

The current study does not intend to ‘look into the heads’ of the relevant actors. Intentions of individuals are only considered in function of how it shapes their actions. Following Anthony Giddens’ structuration theory and the ensuing abductive research strategy (cf. chapter one), the sources have to be selected based on how it informs us – the researcher and the readers – on the actions of individuals guided by mutual knowledge. Accordingly, pertinent sources show how and why actors are making decisions, including “the meanings and interpretations, the motives and intentions, that people use in their everyday lives, and which direct their behaviour”, in

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<sup>108</sup> To a much lesser extent, the opposite is also true. Évariste Kimba, later Minister of Foreign Affairs of Katanga and Prime Minister of the Congo, became a *Deputy Chef de cabinet* to Walter Ganshof van der Meersch, Belgian Resident Minister without Portfolio in Leopoldville. Jean Bolemba, allegedly a future Katangese spy who would set up a Katangese intelligence network at the Congolese embassy in Brussels at the time of the secession, became an attaché to the same minister. See AfricaMuseum, Tervuren, Archives de particuliers – Histoire colonial, *Fonds Moïse Tshombe* [FMT], HA.01.0643, Box 12, Letter Jean Bolemba to Dominique Diur, 23 November 1962; Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, *Parlementair onderzoek met het oog op het vaststellen van de precieze omstandigheden*, Boekdeel II, 2001-2, 911.

<sup>109</sup> Van Bilsen, *Kongo 1945-1965*, 1993, 156.

<sup>110</sup> Anton A. Jozef (Jef) Van Bilsen Archive [JVB], Leuven, KADOC, BE/942855/654, 6.4.1./1, Letter A.A.J. Van Bilsen, *chargé de cours*, to Raymond Scheyven, *Ministre des Affaires économiques et financières du Congo*, 18 August 1960.

Blaikie's words.<sup>111</sup> According to Mbembe, scholars of political science and development economics neglect exactly that part of African politics and economics:

“The criteria that African agents accept as valid, the reasons they exchange within their own instituted rationalities, are, to many, of no value. What African agents accept as *reasons for acting*, what their claim to *act in the light of reason* implies (as a general claim to be right, *avoir raison*), what makes their action intelligible to themselves: all of this is of virtually no account in the eyes of analysts. Since the models are seen as self-sufficient, history does not exist.”<sup>112</sup>

Two types of sources are particularly useful for the study of the abovementioned actors, namely egodocuments and archival sources.

Dutch historian Jacques Presser coined the term egodocument, defining it as “those historical sources in which the researcher is faced with an ‘I’, or occasionally [...] a ‘he’, as the writing and describing subject with a continuous presence in the text.”<sup>113</sup> Within the corpus of egodocuments, memoirs are the most accessible and interesting subtypes. Several politicians and diplomats have published their memoirs, autobiographies or other published personal accounts.<sup>114</sup> They give valuable insights in the Congolese/Zairean state from the standpoint of state officials. These accounts can be roughly divided into three subtypes.

A first type comprises the classic genre of the political or diplomatic memoir. Some were written by elder or retired statesmen, such as former First State Commissioner Léon Kengo wa Dondo or former Ambassador Jean-Pierre Kimbulu Moyanso wa Lokwa. They experienced no major fall out with the government they were once associated with and wrote down their experiences several years after the end of their professional lives. Some, like Kengo wa Dondo, collaborated with third parties.

Other memoirs were written by political or diplomatic actors who went into exile and often dealt with the excesses of the political leadership they once were part of, such as former First State Commissioner Jean Nguza Karl-I-Bond or Ambassador Emmanuel Dungia. These memoirs served as political pamphlets and do not look trustworthy at face value, since they were conceived more to persuade than inform the readers. François Maspero, editor of former Foreign Affairs Minister Cléophas Kamitatu's *La grande mystification du Congo-Kinshasa*,

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<sup>111</sup> Blaikie, *Approaches to Social Enquiry*, 2017, 90.

<sup>112</sup> Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 2001, 7 [Emphasis in the original].

<sup>113</sup> Jacques Presser quoted in Dekker, “Jacques Presser's Heritage”, 2002, 14.

<sup>114</sup> To name a few: Gizenga, *Ma vie et mes luttes*, 2011; Kengo wa Dondo, *La passion de l'Etat*, 2019; Nguza Karl-I-Bond, *Mobutu ou l'incarnation du mal zaïrois*, 1982; Tshombe, *Mémoires de Moïse Tshombe*, 1975.

included a warning (*avertissement*) for the partial nature of the book as a preface. The omission of the popular uprisings in 1964-1965 made Maspero add that a lacuna of this nature is meant to distort (*fausser*) or prevent the full comprehension of the “Congolese drama”.<sup>115</sup> Obtaining purely factual information from memoirs is, however, not the primary reason to use this source type. Rather, they display the motivations and justifications of the authors’ actions. In the preface of Colonel Kisukula Abeli Meitho’s memoir, Bogumil Jewsiewicki warned the reader not to look for historical truths, but “loyalty to the experience, the general feeling of the time, of the characters.”<sup>116</sup> In this regard, the biases of these sources have to be regarded as more advantageous than detrimental to this research.

The final subtype consists of publications that rely heavily on literature and published sources about the events. Katangese representative in Brussels Jacques Masangu-a-Mwanza, for instance, relied on books from the *Centre de recherche et d’information socio-politiques* (CRISP) and Belgian and Congolese newspapers, to write his memoir. His account, Masangu wrote, was based on memories and personal notes. His personal documentation was lost during the looting of his Kinshasa home in 1993, which obliged him to consult the aforementioned books.<sup>117</sup>

Some memoirs were written by white foreign mercenaries in Congo or Katanga. Their oftentimes colourful careers featured prominently in their own memoirs and studies about them. Those books are to be read with a lot of caution. Belgian and French mercenaries especially had a number of bones to pick with one another after the secession and their mock battles were mostly fought out in their publications of limited release. Vandewalle’s *Une ténébreuse affaire ou Roger Trinquier au Katanga* directly addressed *Notre guerre au Katanga*, a richly illustrated coffee table book written by Trinquier and Jacques Duchemin.<sup>118</sup> Vandewalle attacked the accounts of Trinquier and Duchemin, writing for instance that “Duchemin has retained from his stay in Katanga, the memory of a fantasiser [*farfelu*].”<sup>119</sup> *Notre guerre* is indeed a notoriously exaggerated and deceptive collection of accounts of mercenary warfare in Katanga, but Vandewalle’s reaction is anything but balanced and impartial either.

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<sup>115</sup> “On peut à cet égard ne pas partager ce point de vue, et même, juger qu’une telle lacune serait de nature à fausser, ou empêcher, la compréhension du drame congolais.” Maspero, “Avertissement de l’éditeur (première édition)”, in Kamitatu, *La grande mystification*, 1971, 8.

<sup>116</sup> Jewsiewicki, “Préface”, in Meitho, *La désintégration de l’armée*, 2001, VII-VIII.

<sup>117</sup> See Masangu-a-Mwanza, *Mémoires d’un Baobab*, 2021, 11-3.

<sup>118</sup> Van Doal [Frédéric Vandewalle], *Une ténébreuse affaire*, 1979; Trinquier, Duchemin, and Le Bailly, *Notre guerre au Katanga*, 1963. Vandewalle’s booklet had a circulation of 400 copies.

<sup>119</sup> Van Doal, *Une ténébreuse affaire*, 1979, 3.

A second type of sources, namely governmental sources such as documents from state archives and releases from the official press agencies ACP (Agence Congolaise Presse) and AZAP (Agence Zaïre Presse) are not the only roads to salvation, since they also come with their biases. If former secret agent and diplomatic adviser to Nguza, Emmanuel Dungia, wrote a scathing account of corruption under Mobutu and included the infamous *Blumenthal Report* with its 12 annexes in his book, this means that corruption was indeed rampant under Mobutu's time in office and is a factor to take into account. The solution to strengthen the internal validity of claims made during the research, therefore, is to compare different sources with one another.

As mentioned before, archives are another important corpus of sources for the present research. Problems with the available archival collections are mostly of a heuristic and an analytical nature. From a heuristic concern, it is difficult to locate often fragmentary state and non-state archives, which are often "closed off to their putative publics."<sup>120</sup> The colonial archives of Congo were relocated to Brussels between 1960 and 1961 during the Belgian state's *Opération Archives*,<sup>121</sup> but archival collections of the independent Congo are more preserved in a piecemeal way. Perhaps the largest number of displaced archives<sup>122</sup> of the independent Congo are kept at the AfricaMuseum in Tervuren, Belgium. Some important collections are namely not inventorised, or only in a superficial way, such as the *Moïse Tshombe Papers*.<sup>123</sup> Personal archives of several Belgian advisers can be found throughout the country, from the collection of Lumumba's adviser Jean Van Lierde at the Research- and Documentation Centre for the History of the Second World War (CegeSoma) in Brussels, to the collection of Jef Van Bilsen, adviser to the first Congolese President, at the KADOC Documentation and Research Centre on Religion, Culture, and Society in Leuven.<sup>124</sup>

## 2. The State in the Congo: Between Existence and Non-Existence

On several occasions, Herbst and Mills repeated their controversial statement that the Democratic Republic of the Congo does not exist.<sup>125</sup> Recognising this state of affairs, they claim, would be a starting point to think about alternative scenarios such as a division of the Congo into several states, or even more responsibilities for the international community in the

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<sup>120</sup> Daly, "Research Note: Archival Research in Africa", 2017, 313.

<sup>121</sup> Hiribarren, "Hiding the Colonial Past?", in Lowry (ed.), *Displaced Archives*, 2017, 76.

<sup>122</sup> A term developed in Lowry, "Introduction: Displaced Archives", in *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>123</sup> FMT, HA.01.0643.

<sup>124</sup> Jean Van Lierde Archives, Brussels [JVL], CegeSoma, AA 1643; Anton A. Jozef (Jef) Van Bilsen Archive, Leuven, KADOC, BE/942855/654.

<sup>125</sup> For instance Herbst, and Mills, "The Invisible State", 2013, 79.

security and services sector.<sup>126</sup> Other authors oppose this view and, instead, highlight the coercive character of the Congolese state. Peta Ikambana even called Congolese politics under Mobutu a ‘totalitarian political system’.<sup>127</sup> It is not well explained, however, why Zaire was a *totalitarian* political system, despite some authors arguing the opposite, namely that it was a failed state.

Beyond this controversy, several authors have discussed the Congolese state in their overview works. One of the most ambitious overviews of the Congolese state and society is Isidore Ndaywel è Nziem’s *Histoire générale du Congo*.<sup>128</sup> The 955-page book succeeded in summarising the vast topic of a general history of the Congo from ancient history until its publication in 1998, while treating several aspects of the country’s history in an in-depth way. Although less ambitious in its size and scope, Jacques Depelchin’s *De l’Etat indépendant du Congo au Zaïre contemporain (1885-1974)* is an insightful work that discusses the intersection of Congolese economic history with its politics in a long-term perspective.<sup>129</sup> Throughout his career, Depelchin combined academic activities with political and politico-military activism. Despite working for Laurent-Désiré Kabila’s AFDL, the organisation that toppled Mobutu, he later became a member of the anti-Kabila rebel group RCD during the Second Congo War. Similarly, one of the proof-readers of *De l’Etat indépendant*, Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, was a leader of the Kisangani faction of RCD. His career equally consisted of academic and (militant) political activities. *Chef de cabinet* of Minister Sophie Lihau Kanza during the 1960s, he went on to study in the US and taught at the University of Dar es Salaam, thereby choosing the path of political exile. His arrest in Zaire in 1981 gave rise to the Free Wamba Campaign, which saved his life.<sup>130</sup> Both Depelchin and Wamba dia Wamba were thus engaged in politics besides their critical scholarship on Congolese/Zairean politics and used Marxist approaches in their writings. Wamba dia Wamba’s writings on democracy, for instance, placed the emphasis on popular modes of democratisation instead of democracy as a form of state.<sup>131</sup> Another author who made a dual career in academia and politics was Mulumba Lukoji. Notable for writing a detailed study on Congolese state succession from Belgium in 1960 and problematic transfer of the colonial portfolio and public debt to the new state, Mulumba became the Prime Minister of Zaire for six months in 1991. Finally, Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, author of *The Congo From*

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>127</sup> Ikambana, *Mobutu’s Totalitarian Political System*, 2004.

<sup>128</sup> Ndaywel è Nziem, *Histoire générale du Congo*, 1998.

<sup>129</sup> Depelchin, *De l’Etat indépendant du Congo au Zaïre contemporain*, 1992.

<sup>130</sup> Campbell, “The Journey of Wamba dia Wamba”, 2020, 150.

<sup>131</sup> Wamba-dia-Wamba, “Beyond Elite Politics of Democracy in Africa”, 1992, 30.

*Leopold to Kabila: A People's History*, presented his credentials as the Congo's Permanent Representative to the UN in January 2022.

Crawford Young and Thomas Turner's *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* is a standard work from 1985.<sup>132</sup> Thomas Callaghy's *The State-Society Struggle: Zaire in Comparative Perspective* was published around the same time.<sup>133</sup> Next to US-based scholars, there is a sizeable 'Belgian school' of history and politics of the independent DRC, including scholars such as Jean Stengers, Jean-Claude Willame, Benoît Verhaegen, and Jean-Luc Vellut. Their nuanced approach on many aspects of the Congolese state and society, including the legacy of Belgian colonialism, led to criticisms by engaged authors in- and outside of Belgium.<sup>134</sup> One of the Belgians, de Villers, admitted that during the Mobutu era, the leading publication series on academic research on Congo/Zaire in Belgium called *Cahiers du CEDAF* (pocket books of the African Study and Documentation Centre), barely tackled the question of the political regime in place in order to maintain the possibility of doing research in Congo/Zaire and collaborate with local researchers.<sup>135</sup> De Villers, who can boast a long academic career in Algeria, DRC, and Belgium, wrote his highly specialised *Histoire du politique au Congo-Kinshasa* in 2016 as a comprehensive overview of his expertise on the DRC, borrowing many theories and concepts from historical sociology.<sup>136</sup> The monograph is a welcome compendium and alternative to what he calls the 'CRISP method'. The African sector of the Belgian research institution CRISP mostly published facts-based works, approaching an *histoire événementielle* instead of a more analytically substantiated body of work.<sup>137</sup> The major advantage of these works is the preservation and distribution of factual knowledge about Congolese politics. As a consequence, they can be considered primary sources in some regards.

Most of the above-mentioned authors considered the Congolese state from a perspective of domestic politics. Different standards apply whether or not a state exists when its engagement with the international system is discussed. Regardless of the supposed western-centredness of political science and IR theory, Congolese political actors naturally engage with the international system.

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<sup>132</sup> Young, and Turner, *The Rise and Decline*, 1985.

<sup>133</sup> Callaghy, *The State-Society Struggle*, 1984.

<sup>134</sup> For instance Adam Hochschild's review of an exhibition at the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium, published in the *New York Review of Books*, Jean-Luc Vellut's critique on his review, and Hochschild's answer to Vellut. Hochschild, "In the Heart of Darkness", 6 October 2005; Vellut, and Hochschild, "'In the Heart of Darkness', In Response To: 'In the Heart of Darkness'", 12 January 2006.

<sup>135</sup> de Villers, *Histoire du politique*, 2016, 16.

<sup>136</sup> See also Hendrickx, "Histoire du politique", 2017, 101-3.

<sup>137</sup> de Villers, *Histoire du politique*, 2016, 21.

### 3. Cold War

The Cold War occupies a peculiar place in the present research, since the rivalry between the two major powers between 1945 and 1991 seems to put the ‘African agency’ narrative in a different perspective. Authors can write *about* the Cuban missile crisis, the American Vietnam war, or the Congo Crisis, by looking at policy strategies by the US and the Soviet Union without truly scrutinising the local realities of Cuban, Southern and Northern Vietnamese, or Congolese decision-makers. The emphases of orthodox and revisionist Cold War scholars are mostly the origins of the rivalry with particular attention to the war conferences and immediate post-war conferences and particular cases during ‘hot’ moments of the Cold War.<sup>138</sup> Many early Cold War scholars were also personally involved in the US Department of State or other American decision-making bodies, such as Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., Herbert Feis, and Graham Allison. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons of their US-centred views.

Certain scholars do however succeed in surmounting the unidirectional narrative of hegemony when discussing the Third World. John Lewis Gaddis, seminal Cold War scholar at times associated with the post-revisionist and the orthodox schools, wrote in *We Now Know* that although a “kind of dependency arose” between Moscow and Washington, on the one hand, and the Third World countries on the other, at the time of the Cold War in the Third World, influence flew in both directions.<sup>139</sup> Decision-makers from the Third World, according to Gaddis, “learned to manipulate the Americans and the Russians by laying on flattery, pledging solidarity, feigning indifference, threatening defection, or even raising the specter of their own collapse and the disastrous results that might flow from it.”<sup>140</sup> As regards the Cold War in the Third World, Odd Arne Westad is arguably the most influential current scholar on the subject. He lamented that the literatures about superpower interventions and Third World revolutionary movements are “enormous”, but “have so far been mostly unconnected in an intellectual sense; they seem to speak past each other rather than engage across intellectual boundaries in addressing issues that are of consequence to both.”<sup>141</sup> Westad maintains a middle ground between the global Cold War tensions and the specificities on the ground in Global South countries. During his research on *The Global Cold War*, he claimed, “[w]hat had started out as

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<sup>138</sup> Examples are legion. For causes of the Cold War, see for instance the works of Herbert Feis, John Lewis Gaddis. For specific cases, see for instance Allison, “Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis”, 1969, 689-718; Gleijeses, “Flee! The White Giants are Coming!”, 1994, 207-37. Kolko, *Anatomy of a War*, 1994, is an example of a Cold War case study that does focus on local realities.

<sup>139</sup> Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 1997, 154.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 2007, 7.

a book about interventions increasingly became one about Third World processes of change. Its perspective shifted south.”<sup>142</sup>

Since the Cold War consists of specific events which can be interpreted in various ways, it is an explanandum rather than an explanans. The Cold War in itself is not an independent variable. It should be avoided to use the term in this research as a blanket term. Brooks Marmon, for instance, suggested to complement Cold War evaluations of the Congo Crisis with other lenses, in his case the decolonisation imperative.<sup>143</sup> Integrating Congolese political elites’ interactions with the outside world in the Cold War matrix and demonstrating that they were not always at the receiving end of that rivalry, is an explicit goal of this research.

#### 4. North-South Relations

Marxist-inspired schools of thought stand out as particularly influential ones in the discussion on north-south relations. Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* provided an actor-based analysis on the relations between coloniser and colonised subjects. Decolonisation, according to him, is an intrinsically violent phenomenon, since it is an “encounter between two congenitally antagonistic forces”.<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, he uncovered the collaboration between the colonialist bourgeoisie and local elites in colonial territories. In contrast to this account, most Marxist-inspired works are all-encompassing accounts on core-periphery models, such as the world-systems theory. They have a broad temporal and spatial scope. Immanuel Wallerstein, for instance, is clearly influenced by the French historiographical *Annales*-school, which already emphasised long-term and comprehensive explanations over factual or event-based history (*histoire événementielle*). Fernand Braudel’s history of the Mediterranean world in Philip II’s time is an example of this comprehensive approach. Philip II has a secondary role in Braudel’s narrative. Instead the book ventures into climate and environmental history, communication and cities, the Mediterranean economy broadly speaking, all embedded in a *longue durée* perspective.<sup>145</sup> Similarly, Wallerstein uses a broad scope in his world-systems theory, emphasising economic processes in the structuring of early modern society. Although his argument borders on economic determinism, the scope of his book makes it a good basis for discussion.

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>143</sup> Marmon, “Operation Refugee”, 2022, 131-52.

<sup>144</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 2004, 2.

<sup>145</sup> Not to be confused with a mere long-term perspective, *longue durée* is a concept with specific meanings about structural processes throughout history as opposed to a history written by chroniclers, showing again the influence of Marxism. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen*, 1949.

The economic nature and core-periphery model of Wallerstein's analysis reveals a heavy reliance on another influential Marxist school on North-South relations, namely dependency theory. The (inevitable) expansion of the capitalist model to the whole world, it is postulated, leads to the exploitation of the periphery by the core capitalist countries. In the words of Andre Gunder Frank, "present [1966] underdevelopment of Latin America is the result of its centuries-long participation in the process of world capitalist development."<sup>146</sup> Although Wallerstein started out his academic career as an Africanist, his subsequent seminal works on the world-system and Frank's focus on Latin America did not place the spotlight on Africa. Walter Rodney filled this gap in dependency theory literature in his 1972 book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. In this essay, Rodney claims that most authors on underdevelopment and who are read in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, "are spokesmen for the capitalist or bourgeois world. They seek to justify capitalist exploitation both inside and outside their own countries."<sup>147</sup> As G.T. Mishambi noted, African history was analysed by Rodney through structural explanations.<sup>148</sup> Although the book's Manichean perspective between the imperialists and the exploited leaves little room for agential aspects of underdevelopment, the obvious lasting influence of the book shaped the thinking of many subsequent authors either agreeing or disagreeing with Rodney.

Since this body of works mostly considers the economy as engine of north-south relations, economists further elaborated or refuted the arguments of the Marxist-inspired scholars. Writing from a non-Marxist viewpoint, Dambisa Moyo identifies international aid as the single most important cause of underdevelopment in Africa. In her book *Dead Aid*, she asks and answers "[w]hat is it about Africa that holds it back, that seems to render it incapable of joining the rest of the globe in the twenty-first century? The answer has its roots in aid."<sup>149</sup> The aid business is so deeply-ingrained in the African experience that "aid-dependency only further undermines the ability of Africans, whatever their station, to determine their own best economic and political policies. Such is the all-pervasive culture of aid-dependency that there is little or no real debate on an exit strategy from the aid quagmire."<sup>150</sup> Diametrically opposed to Moyo stood aid-optimist Jeffrey Sachs, whose 2005 book *The End of Poverty* is grist for the mill of

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<sup>146</sup> Frank, "The Development of Underdevelopment", in Chew, and Lauderdale (eds.), *Theory and Methodology of World Development*, 2010, 8.

<sup>147</sup> Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 1972, 32.

<sup>148</sup> Mishambi, "The Mystification of African History", 1977, 208.

<sup>149</sup> Moyo, *Dead Aid: Why Aid is not Working*, 2009, 22.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

the ‘glamour aid’ actors of the ONE Campaign and other aid-optimists.<sup>151</sup> In short, Sachs claims that “our generation” can choose to end extreme poverty by 2025. Rich countries have to help the poorest “onto the ladder of development, at least to gain a foothold on the bottom rung, from which they can then proceed to climb on their own.”<sup>152</sup> The book suffers from the common problems with such ‘high economic’ literature: overgeneralisation, lack of familiarity with realities on the ground, neglecting aspects that defy the large models such as corruption, and too much optimism that things will happen the way it is predicted to happen.

Virtually all of the abovementioned books have one aspect in common: they emphasise a broad structural inequality between north and south and the nefarious role of the Global North. Critiques on Eurocentrism often spend a large amount of time explaining European dominance. Marxist scholar Samir Amin elaborated the notion of Eurocentrism, but placed Europe right at the centre of his analysis in his influential book on the subject, since he wanted to demonstrate that “Eurocentric capitalist barbarism” is a reality.<sup>153</sup> Several authors tried to contain the “forces of ‘Otherization’ in North-South relations”, in Mazrui’s words.<sup>154</sup> Mudimbe, for instance, abandoned structural explanations of the African condition, favouring the individual subject in social sciences in the invention and reproduction of Africa, which was at times internally and externally constructed.<sup>155</sup> Although he strayed away from overly political discussions, contrary to unidirectional dependency narratives, one of Mudimbe’s main theories was that “nobody is at the center of human experience, and there is no human who could be defined as the center of creation.”<sup>156</sup> His rejection of binary opposites such as underdevelopment against development, provided a way out of the aforementioned unidirectional explanations. Building on both Mubimbe’s thought and Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, Mazrui theorised a triple heritage of Africa. Made famous by his three-part BBC documentary, the theory put forward the idea that the African continent was a convergence of Africanity, Islam, and westernisation.<sup>157</sup> His take generated much controversy, but also many interesting questions. Is colonialism and resistance against colonialism, for better or for worse, part of Africa’s heritage? Or how to consider both Arab and transatlantic slave trade in his triad? In any case, Mazrui succeeded in avoiding to think in terms of a supposed ‘authentic’ African core and shifted towards an entangled history

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<sup>151</sup> Sachs, *The End of Poverty*, 2009. U2 singer Bono, one of the foremost ‘glamour aid’ actors, wrote a foreword to the book.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>153</sup> Amin, *Eurocentrism: Modernity, Religion and Democracy*, 2009, 216.

<sup>154</sup> Mazrui, “The Re-Invention of Africa”, 2005, 68.

<sup>155</sup> Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, 1988, 23.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>157</sup> Mazrui, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*, 1986; Mazrui, “The Re-Invention of Africa”, 2005, 76.

of the continent. Wole Soyinka touched on a sore point in his highly critical account of Mazrui's triple heritage. According to him, Mazrui was "by both blood and vocal identification part Arab", making *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* "not a series made by a black African, even as no black African scholar (I hope!) would proudly proclaim the tag of an Albert Schweitzer Professor."<sup>158</sup> Mazrui responded to Soyinka that "[m]y African identity is not for you to bestow or withhold".<sup>159</sup> Although the debate between Mazrui and Soyinka might be *ad hominem*, Ndlovu-Gatsheni rightfully pointed out that it "raised the sensitive and inconclusive questions of who is an 'authentic' African and how 'Africanity' should be defined."<sup>160</sup> The abandonment of unidirectional North-South explanations, in other words, does not automatically provide an alternative framework to interpret international linkages within and beyond the African continent.

Authors who are looking at the agency of African elites in North-South relations and state formation in Africa are oftentimes more political scientists and Africanists than Marxist or non-Marxist economists. "The school of dependency, to use the questionable terminology which has entered academic parlance," Bayart recounted, "originated in the observation of Latin American economic patterns. Its application to Africa has given rise to an increase in dogma and hypocrisy rather than to a careful study of political dynamics."<sup>161</sup> His theorising considered "the fact of dependency while eschewing the meanderings of dependency theory."<sup>162</sup> Strategies of extraversion used by Africans, Bayart argues, do not contradict the active involvement of the same actors in their *mise en dépendance*.<sup>163</sup> In general, he portrayed African people as active agents who have always been connected to the outside world. In a more radical way, James Ferguson's *Declarations of Dependence* article highlighted the deliberate nature of Africans' *mise en dépendance*.<sup>164</sup> In liberal thought, he argued, dependency has often been perceived to be the opposite of freedom. Nevertheless, as his example of southern Africa shows, dependency on others is often desired. To be integrated in such a network means that you are actually someone. In order to substantiate his point, Ferguson offered several cases which are unclearly linked, ranging from the voluntary surrendering to the Ngoni state by neighbouring chiefdoms in the 1820s to an anecdote about Ferguson's American acquaintance who was puzzled by the

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<sup>158</sup> Soyinka, "Triple Tropes of Trickery", 1991, 181 [Emphasis in the original].

<sup>159</sup> Cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Ali A Mazrui on the Invention of Africa", 2015, 209.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Bayart, *The State in Africa*, 2017, 5.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., "Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion", 2000, 219.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., *The State in Africa*, 2017, xii.

<sup>164</sup> Ferguson, "Declarations of Dependence", 2013, 223-42.

subservience of black Johannesburg residents after apartheid, an anecdote which he mentioned several times and used as an empirical finding.<sup>165</sup>

Neopatrimonialism is an influential framework predominantly used by non-African authors to explain political dynamics in Africa. According to Thandika Mkandawire, a critic of the framework, neopatrimonialism claims to restore agency to Africans because it entails the existence of choice by them, as opposed to dependency literature, but “its approach is predisposed to downplay ideas.”<sup>166</sup> Neopatrimonialism is based on patrimonialism, one of three types of Max Weber’s authority types. Jean-Claude Willame transformed the Weberian concept to the Congolese case in his PhD thesis *Patrimonialism and Political Change in the Congo*, to explain politics under the First Republic.<sup>167</sup> Neopatrimonialism was defined by Clapham as “a form of organisation in which relationships of a broadly patrimonial type pervade a political and administrative system which is formally constructed on rational-legal lines. Officials hold positions in bureaucratic organisations with powers which are formally defined, but exercise those powers, so far as they can, as a form not of public service but of private property.”<sup>168</sup>

Inspired by neopatrimonial frameworks, Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz created a controversial analysis of African politics in *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*.<sup>169</sup> Their counterintuitive account almost reversed the dependency narrative. For Chabal and Daloz, dependence was “one of the chief instruments which enabled African elites to obtain the means to continue to feed the patrimonial systems on which their power rested.”<sup>170</sup> Structural adjustment, for instance, has “been instrumentalized politically with quite some success in two important ways. It has provided the African elites with a new external cause, or scapegoat, for the economic crisis which their countries suffer.” On the other hand, it was “a blessing in disguise for African rulers for it provides them with the means by which to extract a level of foreign aid which otherwise would not be available to them.”<sup>171</sup> It is difficult to disregard the cynical character of the book, leading some thinkers to criticise the book. Thandika Mkandawire was categorical in his assessment: the authors were culturalists and/or essentialists. Their writing “takes historical continuity and cultural relativism to absurd

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid, 224.

<sup>166</sup> Mkandawire, “Neopatrimonialism and the Political Economy”, 2015, 598.

<sup>167</sup> Willame, *Patrimonialism and Political Change in the Congo*, 1972.

<sup>168</sup> Clapham, *Third World Politics*, 1985, 48.

<sup>169</sup> Chabal, and Daloz, *Africa Works*, 1999.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 123.

extremes, to say the least, and in its journalistic rendition attains racist proportions.”<sup>172</sup> Other authors are more sympathetic towards Chabal and Daloz’s argument. Eghosa Osaghae, for instance, predicted the backlash, writing that “[m]any African Africanists and critical non-Africanists are likely to contest, or even reject, what might appear to be an attempt to reinvent the Tarzan image by profiling the pathological and the exceptional as the essence, but I think interpreting the book that way misses the point altogether.”<sup>173</sup>

## 5. Significance

This thesis will address three research gaps in particular. First, literature on African agency has gained momentum in the past few years, both in African studies and political science, but not every time period has received an equal amount of attention. The period before the era of colonisation has been extensively researched. Although some, including Hugh Trevor-Roper, regarded that time period as “unhistorical Africa”<sup>174</sup>, an atemporal place without any meaningful events, few to no historians make the argument of an Africa without history.<sup>175</sup> Similarly, acts of resistance during the colonial era such as the Kenyan Mau Mau Uprising and political participation of Africans in notably the French colonial territories by Africans such as Léopold Sédar Senghor, Félix Houphouët-Boigny and Félix Éboué<sup>176</sup> has been documented. Other founding fathers of the independent African nations are also discussed in the literature, such as Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, and Julius Nyerere, to name but a few. Next to these historical subjects on African agency, current research also focuses on the current upsurge of African agency.<sup>177</sup> In political science and IR, many edited volumes discuss African agency in international relations and international affairs.<sup>178</sup> My research wants to bridge these two time periods, by proposing a timeframe which goes from 1960 until 1997, an under-researched period in terms of agency.

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<sup>172</sup> Mkandawire, “The Terrible Toll of Post-Colonial ‘Rebel Movements’”, 2002, 184. Mkandawire further criticised the authors in more detail in Mkandawire, “Neopatrimonialism and the Political Economy”, 2015, 563-612.

<sup>173</sup> Osaghae, “Reviewed Work(s): Africa Works”, 2000, 195.

<sup>174</sup> Trevor-Roper, “The Past and the Present”, 1969, 6.

<sup>175</sup> Bogumil Jewsiewicki and Valentin-Yves Mudimbe made a similar point: Jewsiewicki, and Mudimbe, “Africans’ Memories and Contemporary History of Africa”, 1993, 1.

<sup>176</sup> Éboué was French-Guyana born, but of African descent.

<sup>177</sup> For instance this *South African Journal of International Affairs* 2018 special issue on EU-Africa relations from a reciprocal perspective: Kotsopoulos, and Mattheis (eds.), *South African Journal of International Affairs*, Broadening the Debate on EU-Africa Relations, 2018, 445-591. See also the 2021 *Africa Spectrum* special issue: Coffie, and Tiky (eds.), *Africa Spectrum*, Exploring Africa’s Agency in International Politics, 2021, 243-332.

<sup>178</sup> For instance Dunn, and Shaw (eds.), *Africa’s Challenge to International Relations Theory*, 2001; Brown, and Harman (eds.), *African Agency in International Politics*, 2013; Coleman, Kornprobst, and Seegers (eds.), *Diplomacy and Borderlands*, 2020.

Second, the period after colonialism has been researched by scholars of several disciplines such as political science, African studies, economics and development economics, who stay within the confines of their own disciplinary boundaries. African agency, however, can best be researched through an integrated approach, using the strengths of several disciplines. Moreover, historical scholarship has only recently ‘discovered’ the period after colonialism. Congo has witnessed two major periods of political and armed crisis, namely the Congo Crisis and the crisis from the 1990s until the early 2000s. These two periods have sparked a lot of scholarly interest, but this interest has been mostly present by non-historians.<sup>179</sup> The themes and arguments driven by political scientists and African studies scholars should also be addressed from a historical perspective as well.

Third, the discipline of International Relations Theory is a predominantly Anglo-Saxon affair and has traditionally left little space for narratives outside the scope of major power politics. Certain IR Theory scholars are exploring more and more the Global South as an object of study, such as the works of Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, or Siba Grovogui show.<sup>180</sup> This study will build on this growing body of literature. Furthermore, a significant part of the Anglo-Saxon scholars do not peruse francophone literature, a weakness when writing an in-depth study of a country which has French as the official language.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> de Villers, *Histoire du politique*, 2016, 7-8.

<sup>180</sup> Acharya, and Buzan (eds.), *Non-Western International Relations Theory*, 2009; Grovogui, *Beyond Eurocentrism and Anarchy*, 2006.

<sup>181</sup> French is the official language of the DRC (the legislation, for instance, is written in French). Lingala, Kikongo, Swahili, and Tshiluba are recognised national languages according to the first article of the constitution of 18 February 2006. In practice, however, Kikongo ya Leta (Kituba language) is in use in the state administration instead of Kikongo.

## Chapter Three: Epistemic Contestation

### Introduction

All throughout the history of the independent Congo, political elites had to convince domestic and international audiences of the legitimacy of their rule over the Congo and its population, as demonstrated by Herbst and Mills' *Foreign Policy* articles 'There is No Congo' and 'The Invisible State'.<sup>182</sup> This already started right after independence. There was namely a rapidly deteriorating security situation and a complicated showdown between domestic and foreign political actors, and between the different domestic political factions. This was a political and politico-legal conflict regarding the legitimacy of the different factions during the crisis. Kevin Dunn argued in his *Imagining the Congo* that the crisis was rooted in the "conflicts over Congolese identity" and asked who had the "authority to author that identity."<sup>183</sup> This is a crucial aspect of epistemic agency. Several fracture lines run through domestic Congolese politics during the crisis, and also translated to the international level.

After Joseph-Désiré Mobutu's second coup d'état, he tried to neutralise his enemies, but also ideologically align with western and African countries through a careful balancing act of different international audiences. At the same time, political elites were confronted with the impossibility to advance their own political thought on the international stage within the confinement of a tightly Mobutu-controlled Zairean state. They therefore found ways to circumvent the President's influence by abandoning their positions as state-actors while at the same time maintaining their claims of representing the Zairean people.

This chapter is divided into three parts. First, the epistemic agency at the time of the First Republic is discussed (1960-1965). This part is subdivided into a first half, which discusses the central government's agency as well as secessionist and other dissident entities' agency during the first part of the crisis (1960-1963). The second half discusses the agency of the central government as well as the Kwilu and Simba rebellions (1963-1965). The second part of the chapter is concerned with Mobutu's Zaire (1965-1997). It will first discuss the elites' agency over Global South partners. Then, the attention is directed towards their engagement with western actors. The part of Mobutu's Zaire then concludes with a discussion on the diplomacy

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<sup>182</sup> Herbst, and Mills, "The Invisible State", 2013, 79; Herbst, and Mills, "There Is No Congo", 18 March 2009. <[foreignpolicy.com/2009/03/18/there-is-no-congo/](http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/03/18/there-is-no-congo/)>, consulted on 9 July 2022.

<sup>183</sup> Dunn, *Imagining the Congo*, 2003, 64.

of elite political exiles. Finally, the third part is a conclusion which completes the analysis of epistemic agency.

## 1. First Republic

### 1.1. Overview

At the time of the First Republic, Congolese political elites sought to extend their authority over the territory and population they claimed to represent. Concurrently, they tried to gather support for their view on the Congo's politics. In order to reach those goals, they built up institutions, formulated discourses that resonated with international audiences, and instrumentalised shared interests between certain international actors and themselves.

Five days after independence day on 30 June 1960, the *Force Publique* military forces mutinied as a consequence of the persistence by Belgian officers to stay in power. Reports of rape of Belgian women reached Belgian politicians, who decided to invade the country without the permission of the central Congolese government on 10 July.<sup>184</sup> One day later, head of the provincial government of Katanga, Moïse Tshombe, unilaterally declared Katanga's independence from Congo and received Belgium's support, but without diplomatic recognition. The central government lost its authority over a large part of the country's territory. The Katangese governments tried to extend its authority, whereas the central government tried to restore its authority over Katanga. Similarly, on the level of legitimacy, the several fathers of independence<sup>185</sup> such as Kasa-Vubu, Lumumba, and Tshombe, tried to put forward their vision for the Congo, ranging from centralism and positive neutralism in the case of Lumumba, to a federal or confederal Congo with strong regions coupled with intense cooperation with Belgium in the case of Tshombe.

A UN operation was deployed in the country (ONUC) but with a restricted mandate preventing the use of force to settle domestic disputes. The unwillingness of the UN to settle the Katangese dispute led Congolese Prime Minister Lumumba and President Kasa-Vubu to ask the Soviet Union for support.

On 5 September, President Joseph Kasa-Vubu decided that his Prime Minister could not

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<sup>184</sup> The term 'invade' is used to emphasise that the operation was conducted without the permission of the central Congolese government, and in violation with the Treaty of Friendship of 29 June 1960 and international law.

<sup>185</sup> 'Fathers of independence' is the common name given to the most influential politicians of the early independent Congo. The highest level of the Congo's politics was male-dominated, although several women such as Andrée Blouin were significant actors in formal or informal roles. The first woman to hold a ministerial portfolio was Sophie Lihau Kanza, who became Minister of Social Affairs in 1966 after Mobutu's second coup d'état.

control the situation and dismissed the Lumumba government through a constitutionally questionable demarche. The same day, Lumumba dismissed Kasa-Vubu without much practical implications. A few days later, the army's Chief of Staff Joseph-Désiré Mobutu profited from the precarious political situation to carry out his first coup d'état, thereby installing a *College of Commissioners-General* which fulfilled the executive tasks of the government. Antoine Gizenga tried to revive Lumumbism by forming a rival government while Lumumba was put under house arrest by Mobutu and protected by UN forces. The rival government extended its authority over a sizeable part of eastern Congo and gained some formal international recognition. While trying to escape his house arrest, Lumumba was caught by the Congolese security services *en route* to Stanleyville and was eventually transferred to Katanga where he was assassinated together with two allies in January 1961 by Belgian mercenaries and Katangese officials.

After Lumumba's murder, the Security Council resolutions extended ONUC's mandate further and further in order to militarily put an end to the Katangese secession through *Operation Grand Slam* in January 1963.

At that time, all secessionist movements and rival governments were defeated and Cyrille Adoula was the Prime Minister of the reunified Congo. Attempts at national reconciliation failed, because former minister in Lumumba's government Pierre Mulele started a rebellion in the Kwilu province towards the end of 1963. Concurrently, the larger Simba rebellion under the lead of Christophe Gbenye succeeded in capturing Stanleyville and attracting Argentine revolutionary Che Guevara. In the meantime, the central Leopoldville government was led by Tshombe, who returned from his Spanish exile. He pragmatically restored his old mode of governance, attracted several external partners in order to regain authority over the whole territory. The Tshombe government mobilised Belgians one last time for its cause, resulting in ANC's *Operation Ommegang*, led by Frédéric Vandewalle. The US-Belgian international operations *Dragon Rouge* and *Dragon Noir* broke the spine of the rebellion. Tshombe was dismissed by Kasa-Vubu and an increasingly powerful Mobutu. After the defeat of the Kwilu and Simba rebellions, the political crisis was not solved and Mobutu carried out his second coup d'état in November 1965. This ended the Congo Crisis and launched his authoritarian rule over the country.

## 1.2. First Part of the Congo Crisis (1960-1963)

### 1.2.1. Central Government

The most straightforward position to cement one's legitimacy in the eyes of international audiences was to be a member of the internationally recognised Congolese government, even when the central government of the immediate period after independence was marred by intense internal struggles. Based on ideology and differing views of the state, these struggles continued from the short lived but influential Lumumba government until the dismissal of the Kimba government during Mobutu's second and final coup d'état. While engaging with international actors, political individuals promoted their respective political and ideological agendas in their attempts to shape the degree of interference of various international actors in the Congo, and demonstrate their political standpoints to several international audiences.

Politicians such as Lumumba, Mobutu, and Tshombe could count on journalists, academics, and other authors sympathetic to their respective political faction. According to Ndaywel è Nziem, the first impetus to the scholarly debate on the Congo Crisis was given by the African section of the *Centre de Recherche et d'Information Socio-Politiques* (CRISP), by the likes of Benoît Verhaegen, Jean Van Lierde, and Jules Gérard-Libois.<sup>186</sup> Belgian Marxist scholar Verhaegen, for instance, held senior positions at the cabinets of two members of the Lumumba government and elaborated the qualitative methodology of *Histoire immédiate*.<sup>187</sup> Jean Van Lierde, Belgian pacifist activist, was a notable adviser of Lumumba.

Kasa-Vubu's 'moderate' leadership was accepted by domestic as well as international audiences. As will be made clear, during the accreditation crisis at the UN, no one questioned the President's authority, which was one of the reasons to accept his delegation instead of the deposed Lumumba's delegation to represent the Congo at the UN. On the other hand, Lumumba's political thought did not appeal to western audiences, since they believed his leadership to be a slippery slope towards communism. Neither did it appeal to most non-Congolese African audiences, since many African leaders avoided frontal attacks directed towards Hammarskjöld. This would have jeopardised their position vis-à-vis a UN Secretary-General who was convinced of the growing importance of the newly independent states.

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<sup>186</sup> Ndaywel è Nziem, "L'historiographie congolaise", 2006, 243.

<sup>187</sup> *Histoire immédiate* is a methodology rather than a time period. Therefore, it could be translated to 'immediate history' instead of 'recent history' or 'current history'.

### *State of Affairs at Independence: Conflicting Narratives*

The independence ceremony at the *Palais de la Nation* in Leopoldville was the ideal moment for Congolese political actors to showcase the legitimacy of their vision of an independent Congo to an eminent international audience. On the Belgian side, as well, the King wanted to highlight specific features of Belgian colonialism and omit others. When speaking, for instance during the speeches at the independence ceremony, an orator has to consciously select aspects and neglect others, in order to advance a certain position. This, in turn, creates a certain discursive reality. Speaking, in other words, is a performative act. Kasa-Vubu, Lumumba, and Baudouin engaged in framing. A standard definition by Robert Entman reads that framing means “selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution.”<sup>188</sup> Throughout the time period under discussion, political elites attempted to promote their agenda through framing of certain issues.

Belgian King Baudouin was the first one to take the stage and made an undiplomatic and archaic speech condoning Belgium’s involvement in the Congo since 1885. Independence, the King claimed, was the conclusion of a work conceived by the “genius of King Leopold II” and continued “with perseverance” by Belgium. Leopold II did not come as a “conqueror”, but as a “civiliser”.<sup>189</sup> Obviously provocative towards the Congolese who fought for their country’s independence, the King’s speech could not go unanswered. Freshly appointed President Joseph Kasa-Vubu, however, treaded carefully not to provoke any irritation on the Belgian side, thanking the Congolese, specifically mentioning the Congolese women, for their struggle for national emancipation. No other speeches were initially planned, but a few days before the ceremony, Lumumba convinced his ally, President of the Chamber of Representatives Joseph Kasongo, to invite him to the stage, where he made a speech which would become one of the most celebrated anti-colonialist speeches:

“For while the independence of the Congo has today been proclaimed in agreement with Belgium, a friendly country with whom we deal on an equal footing, no Congolese worthy of the name will ever be able to forget that that independence has only been won by struggle, a struggle that went on day after day, a struggle of fire and idealism, a struggle in which we have spared neither effort, deprivation, suffering or even blood. [...] We have experienced contempt, insults and blows, morning, noon and night,

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<sup>188</sup> Entman, *Projections of Power*, 2004, 5.

<sup>189</sup> Speech quoted in Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo*, 1972, 155.

because we were negroes [*nègres*]. We shall never forget that a black was called *tu*, not because he was a friend, but because only the whites were given the honour of being called *vous*.”<sup>190</sup>

The Africans in the audience applauded enthusiastically after Lumumba finished and welcomed the message which was at times critical to the Belgians and hopeful towards the future. It did not, however, reflect the standpoint of the whole political caste of the country. While looking back, Thomas Kanza, political ally of the Prime Minister<sup>191</sup> who would become the delegate to the UN, was “wondering who should really take the blame for Lumumba’s speech, which the Belgians considered so appallingly arrogant.”<sup>192</sup> Congolese politicians who criticised the speech were mostly focused on the frank and undiplomatic phrasing. Justine M’Poyo Kasa-Vubu, Joseph’s daughter, called his speech a “grave diplomatic error”.<sup>193</sup>

*Fracture lines: Federalism versus Centralism, Neutralism versus Western Alignment*

Dunn explored in his *Imagining the Congo* how and by whom the country was imagined, through “historicizing and contextualizing the construction of Congo’s identity in order to analyze its political implications”<sup>194</sup> over a period of more than one hundred years. In his chapter on the Congo Crisis, he looked at how especially Belgium, the US, and the Congo shaped the identity of the country. On the Congolese side, however, he almost exclusively focused on Lumumba’s political thought.<sup>195</sup> Nevertheless, during the five years of the crisis, Congolese politics was not just marked by Lumumba and his Lumumbist legacy, but rather an internal struggle for legitimacy, to establish who could speak for the Congolese nation. Two fracture lines in particular run through the political landscape and the actors’ engagement with foreign actors.

Firstly, the tension between federalists and centralists was visible between Kasa-Vubu and Lumumba. Kasa-Vubu’s *Alliance des Bakongo* (Abako) dated back to 1950 when it was founded as a social and cultural organisation for the Bakongo people in the westernmost part of the country.<sup>196</sup> Their allegiance remained to their own Bakongo people and advocated for a

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 161-2. Helen Lane provided an alternative translation to English in Van Lierde, *Lumumba Speaks*, 1972, 220-5.

<sup>191</sup> According to Van Bilsen: Van Bilsen, *Kongo 1945-1965*, 1993, 168.

<sup>192</sup> Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo*, 1972, 164.

<sup>193</sup> Kasa-Vubu, *Kasa-Vubu et le Congo indépendant*, 1997, 48.

<sup>194</sup> Dunn, *Imagining the Congo*, 2003, 7.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., “Chapter Three: Congo as Chaos, Lumumba as *Diable*”, *Imagining the Congo*, 2003, 61-103.

<sup>196</sup> Nzeza-Nlandu, “Vers l’unification de la langue KiKongo”, cited in CRISP, *A.B.A.K.O. 1950-1960*, 1962, 10-8.

Central Congo Republic, including the western parts of the Congo, to become independent on 1 January 1960, whether Belgium agreed or not.<sup>197</sup> They would later evolve toward a party advocating an independent Congo with strong regional entities. In 1955, Jef Van Bilsen, future political adviser to Kasa-Vubu, presented his *Thirty-Year Plan for the Emancipation of Belgian Africa*. Several Congolese intellectuals welcomed Van Bilsen's plan to grant the Congo political emancipation in 1985 and wrote the manifesto *Conscience africaine* in 1956. Abako welcomed the manifesto, but wrote their own *Studies and Commentaries of Abako of the manifesto conscience africaine*, Abako's 'counter-manifesto'. To the Abako members, their patience "has already gone too far."<sup>198</sup> During the first part of the 1950s, Abako went the farthest in its call for political emancipation.

Next to the western part of the country, the southern part of the country was the home region to another federalist stronghold, namely Moïse Tshombe's *Confédération des associations tribales du Katanga* (Conakat), dominated by the Lunda people of southern Katanga. This was a reaction to the foundation in 1957 of the *Association des Baluba du Katanga* (Balubakat) by Jason Sendwe which would group all tribal associations with the exception of Balubakat.<sup>199</sup> They advocated for a federal system which would join a Belgo-Congolese community, as opposed to Abako's rejection of a Belgo-Congolese community.

On the other hand, Lumumba's *Mouvement National Congolais* (MNC), founded in 1958, was the principal movement in favour of a Congolese nationalism that superseded regional and ethnic interests. Belgium was troubled about possible separatist movements during the final years of the Belgian Congo and did not oppose the MNC and Lumumba. The Belgians let the political leader participate at the All-African People's Conference in Accra. His encounter with Ghana's leader and leading Pan-Africanist Kwame Nkrumah would durably shape his and the MNC's political direction.<sup>200</sup> The MNC was particularly successful in Stanleyville, where Lumumba has lived for several years, and the Kasai region, Lumumba's home province where Albert Kalonji was the party's strongman. Kalonji's branch would break with Lumumba's party and form MNC(K), a faction that advocated federalism and would join a cartel including Abako. MNC(K) became increasingly xenophobic against non-Baluba-Kasai and would sow the seeds of the later secessionist Mining State of South Kasai. Lumumba's

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<sup>197</sup> Hoskyns, *The Congo Since Independence*, 1965, 23-4.

<sup>198</sup> CRISP, *A.B.A.K.O. 1950-1960*, 1962, 41.

<sup>199</sup> Hoskyns, *The Congo Since Independence*, 1965, 25. Balubakat would join Conakat in 1959, but the alliance did not last.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

MNC(L) became the major victor of the May 1960 national elections and was one of very few political parties representing the whole nation.

Secondly, the fracture line between following a pro-western course or one of neutrality drastically shaped the political situation during the Crisis. This is often simplified to a clear-cut antagonism between allegedly anti-westerners such as Lumumba and Gizenga against allegedly pro-westerners such as Kasa-Vubu and Tshombe.

Kasa-Vubu did ensure a close contact with western partners, often to the detriment of Lumumba's own political course. The dismissal of the Lumumba government by Kasa-Vubu through a radio address on 5 September 1960 is a signifier of this strategy. A report by the US embassy in Brussels mentions three factors identified by Kasa-Vubu's adviser Van Bilsen which led to the dismissal: the arrest of an armed Lumumbist Member of Parliament, guarantees by Hammarskjöld's representative Andrew Cordier that the UN would protect Kasa-Vubu after he made his move, and the pressure by French advisers of Youlou.<sup>201</sup> These advisers were more specifically Christian Jayle, former President of the Congo-Brazzaville Assembly, and Maître Jacques-Arnold Croquez, a lawyer at the Paris bar. Similarly, Tshombe undeniably propagated an anti-Communist and pro-Belgian course. To typify the political thought of Congolese actors in such categorical terms, however, would be mistaken. Lumumba blended positive neutralism with pan-Africanism and has emphasised several times that he was neither anti-white nor anti-Belgian.<sup>202</sup> Tshombe was not pro-western, but pro-Belgian, a position that was not shared by every member of his secessionist government. Kasa-Vubu remains somewhat enigmatic and was sometimes wrongfully portrayed as a weak figurehead. His dismissal of the Lumumba government on 5 September 1960 showed a more proactive Head of State.

### *Constitutional Crisis*

In an attempt to solve the domestic fracture lines, Kasa-Vubu tried to purge the central government of Lumumbism by undertaking a constitutionally questionable move on 5 September. This was the beginning of a crucial month of the Congo Crisis, which would see the dismissal of the Lumumba government, creation of the Iléo government, and the establishment of the College of Commissioners-General after the first coup d'état of Colonel Mobutu.

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<sup>201</sup> JVB, BE/942855/654, Leuven, KADOC, 6.4.1./2, Report US Ambassador in Brussels [after 22 September 1960].

<sup>202</sup> Cf. Lumumba quoted in Aundu Matsanza, *Politique et élites en R.D. Congo*, 2015, 71; Blouin, *My Country Africa*, 1983, 257.

The decision by Kasa-Vubu to dismiss Lumumba from his position as Prime Minister was the result of a complex combination of circumstances, including both domestic and foreign pressure on the president. He dismissed the Prime Minister through a speech on the Leopoldville radio in the evening and motivated his decision by arguing that Lumumba has betrayed his task entrusted to him and is plunging the country into an atrocious civil war.<sup>203</sup> The mention of civil war was a reference to the ongoing campaign by the ANC in the Mining State of South Kasai. The sheer violence of the campaign which started on 27 August, was a welcome argument for Kasa-Vubu to dismiss Lumumba, who cumulated the offices of Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence. The international attention to the campaign amplified the President's authority. A few days after Lumumba's dismissal, UN Secretary-General Hammarskjöld said the killings by the ANC "involve a most flagrant violation of elementary human rights and have the characteristics of the crime of genocide since they appear to be directed toward the extermination of a specific ethnic group, the Balubas."<sup>204</sup>

The ill-fated South Kasai campaign was not the only reason that sparked Kasa-Vubu's action. Lumumba's increasingly autonomous course frustrated Kasa-Vubu. Moreover, his own Abako party urged him to proceed with Lumumba's revocation after a meeting on 27 August.<sup>205</sup>

Foreign pressure on Kasa-Vubu to distance himself from Lumumba mounted as well. In August, Van Bilsen remembered, Jacques-Arnold Croquez appeared a few times at the side of Kasa-Vubu. Maître Croquez successfully represented members of the Abako-party, including Kasa-Vubu, in 1959 when they were arrested on suspicion of inciting racial hatred.<sup>206</sup> He was therefore regarded as an authoritative voice by Abako-members in August 1960, when he portrayed Lumumba as a dangerous man to get rid of "before it is too late".<sup>207</sup> Belgian Prime Minister Gaston Eyskens exerted pressure on Kasa-Vubu's environment when Van Bilsen made a visit to Belgium that same month. "Don't you think", Eyskens asked Van Bilsen, "that Lumumba has to go?" He made a reference to the article in the Belgian constitution replicated in the Congo's *Loi fondamentale*, about the head of state appointing and dismissing ministers.<sup>208</sup>

Faced with these pressures, the President dismissed Lumumba and six other ministers and state secretaries. He appointed Joseph Iléo as the new Prime Minister without notifying him

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<sup>203</sup> Radio speech cited in CRISP, *Congo 1960*, Tome II, 1961, 818-9.

<sup>204</sup> Testimony of Hammarskjöld, *896<sup>th</sup> Meeting*, 9 September 1960, paragraph 101, 18 [S/PV.896]. The actions, however, are not consistent with article 2 of the Genocide Convention.

<sup>205</sup> Kamitatu, *La grande mystification*, 1971, 61.

<sup>206</sup> Excerpts of Croquez's pleading are cited in CRISP, *Congo 1960*, Tome II, 1961, 191-3.

<sup>207</sup> Van Bilsen, *Kongo 1945-1965*, 1993, 159.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

beforehand of his appointment. A few hours later, Lumumba spoke twice on Radio Leopoldville, stating that Kasa-Vubu “is not the head of state anymore; the government sovereignly assumes the prerogatives of our republic.”<sup>209</sup> Clearly to the detriment of Lumumba’s position, special representative of the UN Secretary-General Andrew Cordier ordered the closure of airports throughout the Congo save for UN planes, in order to prevent Soviet planes to fly over soldiers from Stanleyville and Kasai to Leopoldville.<sup>210</sup> The deep constitutional crisis was discussed in several sessions in both houses of parliament in a confusing and undemocratic way, resulting in a deadlock. Kasa-Vubu then adjourned both houses for one month, in compliance with the *Loi fondamentale*.<sup>211</sup> It would take much longer to convene the houses again.

In the evening of 14 September, ANC’s Chief of Staff Mobutu announced on the radio his “neutralisation” of Kasa-Vubu, the Lumumba government and the parliament until the end of the year. In a later press conference he announced the closure of the USSR and Czechoslovak embassies and clarified the establishment of a body of technicians, the College of Commissioners-General, to replace the politicians in their executive functions.<sup>212</sup> At the outset, the College met with broad support, even by the Lumumbist faction. Kanza and Jacques Lumbala, the latter being dismissed by Kasa-Vubu on 5 September, were cited in *La Libre Belgique* as saying that Mobutu greatly served the nation by avoiding the bloodshed of innocent people.<sup>213</sup> Soon, however, the Lumumbists were disappointed by the College’s inclination towards the President and ceased their participation. The Iléo government recognised the College on 20 September.<sup>214</sup>

The coup d’état was certainly staged with the knowledge of the CIA. Chief of Station in Leopoldville Larry Devlin wrote in his – admittedly coloured – memoirs that Mobutu told him that he will stage a coup in one week and needed five thousand dollars from him for his senior officers.<sup>215</sup> “The question was”, Devlin recounted, “whether Washington was prepared to recognize a government installed by means of a coup to achieve its goal. Yet the more I considered Mobutu’s plan, the better it sounded. After all, I had not been able to come up with

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<sup>209</sup> Radio speeches cited in CRISP, *Congo 1960*, Tome II, 1961, 820-1.

<sup>210</sup> Hoskyns, *The Congo Since Independence*, 1965, 202.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>212</sup> Radio speech and press conference cited in CRISP, *Congo 1960*, Tome II, 1961, 869-70.

<sup>213</sup> *La Libre Belgique*, 23 September 1960.

<sup>214</sup> “Evolution de la crise congolaise de septembre 1960 à avril 1961”, 1961, 569.

<sup>215</sup> Devlin, *Chief of Station*, 2007, 80.

a solution to the Lumumba problem.”<sup>216</sup> Thus, according to Devlin, the idea of the coup originated by Mobutu, but was supported by the CIA.

Devlin’s account should not be taken at face value. Nevertheless, many reviewers do trust Devlin’s account. Herbert Weiss, for instance, called *Chief of Station* a “highly credible account of Devlin’s perceptions and actions at the time.”<sup>217</sup> Anna Roosevelt diverged from this view, writing that “[l]ike CIA groupies, reporters promote as highly truthful the self-exculpating memories of CIA chief Devlin, despite clear investigative recognition of the obvious inaccuracies of his accounts of his roles in Lumumba’s assassination.”<sup>218</sup> In short, Lacunae continue to exist on the covert actions by the American, Belgian, French, and other governments. In 2020, Roosevelt published a study aimed at filling this empirical gap.<sup>219</sup> According to her, western governments undertook a “rampant disinformation program” to conceal the facts about their involvement in Congo.<sup>220</sup> This has

“deeply tainted the scholarly record on the Congo crisis because officers of the anti-Lumumba program were able to create the majority of the literature on the crisis without being exposed as disinformation agents who had been western government functionaries involved in the political and physical violence.”<sup>221</sup>

Among the targeted scholars are Crawford Young, a “long-time CIA agent under several of the CIA/State Department fronts”,<sup>222</sup> and Benoît Verhaegen, “Belgian secret agent [...] secretly paid millions during the crisis to help eliminate Lumumba and other nationalists.”<sup>223</sup> The CRISP was characterised as a “CIA-funded Belgian institute”.<sup>224</sup>

Although Roosevelt rightfully tabled some rarely mentioned aspects of Congo Crisis literature – Young, for instance, was linked to the CIA via the National Student Association<sup>225</sup> – she overstretched her academic conspiracy argument and made some factual and interpretative mistakes. Many allegations are left without footnote, or are poorly sourced. The CRISP has received a financial contribution from the Ford Foundation to establish the *Institut*

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<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>217</sup> Weiss, “Inside the CIA: Congo in the 1980s”, 2008, 144.

<sup>218</sup> Roosevelt, “Culpability for Violence in the Congo”, 2020, 108.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 2020, 105-74.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 109n4.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 109n4.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>225</sup> Cf. Garman, “Making it in L.A.”, 10-16 October 1969, 11. Roosevelt further cites Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 2015.

*politique congolais* (IPC) in Leopoldville in 1960,<sup>226</sup> but this hardly proves any direct affiliation between CRISP, led by Lumumba's adviser Jean Van Lierde, and the CIA. In short, the several character assassinations were too harsh compared to the superficial evidence she presented. Her chapter is a welcome reminder that the Congo Crisis scholarship should not be taken at face value.

September was a confusing time with crucial events following one another at a fast pace. No single actor, however, was given free rein. Although the rule of law was violated, every political actor had to justify their actions. They still had to heed and make use of the country's institutions. The dismissal of Lumumba on 5 September has the appearance of a legally sound decision, but is in fact disputed. Article 22 of the *Loi fondamentale* stated that the Head of State appoints and dismisses the Prime Minister and the ministers.<sup>227</sup> Furthermore, article 19 stipulated that the person of the Head of State is inviolable; the Prime Minister and the ministers are responsible.<sup>228</sup> In practice, this means that the political responsibility of every decision of the Head of State lies on the Prime Minister and the ministers. Kasa-Vubu's ordinance had to be countersigned by at least one minister who assumed political responsibility. Articles 19 and 22 are closely based on similar provisions of the Belgian constitution of 1831. The presidential ordinance is indeed countersigned by two pro-Belgian ministers: Resident Minister in Belgium Albert Delvaux and Foreign Affairs Minister Justin Bomboko. Yet, as the Head of State, Kasa-Vubu could not ignore the confidence of Parliament entrusted upon the Lumumba government on 23/24 June 1960, making the ordinance unconstitutional.<sup>229</sup>

Neither was the annulment of the President's ordinance in accordance with the *Loi fondamentale*. After all, it did not foresee the right to annul a presidential ordinance by a simple vote.<sup>230</sup> A joint session, such as the one on 13 September, could not be convened to pass the resolution to grant full powers to Lumumba, since such joint sessions could only be convened in specific cases such as certain rules of procedure. Finally, in Belgian practice, after the dismissal of a government and before the full installation of a new government, the outgoing government retains its responsibilities as a caretaker government. Although the *Loi*

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<sup>226</sup> The correspondence between the CRISP and the Ford Foundation is kept at the Jean Van Lierde archive: JVL, 208 Briefwisseling Ford Foundation aan Gérard-Libois over financiering IPC via CRISP; JVL, 295 Onderwerpsmap betreffende de subsidiëring door The Ford Foundation 1974-1976; Cf. CRISP, "L'institut politique congolais (IPC)", 1960, 11.

<sup>227</sup> "Le chef de l'État nomme et révoque le Premier Ministre et les ministres." Article 22 *Loi Fondamentale*.

<sup>228</sup> "La personne du chef de l'État est inviolable; le Premier Ministre et les ministres sont responsables." Article 19 *Loi Fondamentale*.

<sup>229</sup> Cf. Beke, "De afzetting van Lumumba door Kasavubu", 2000, 67.

<sup>230</sup> Hoskyns, *The Congo Since Independence*, 1965, 209.

*fondamentale* is strongly based on Belgian constitutional provisions, this fact does not bind the Congo to Belgian usage.<sup>231</sup>

A more radical violation of Congolese public law and Congolese institutions was Mobutu's first coup d'état. He effectively imposed a body of technicians to the detriment of a body of elected officials, in contravention to the *Loi fondamentale*. A constitutional decree-law establishing the "Council [sic] of Commissioners-General" regulated the legal justification for the coup d'état.<sup>232</sup> The pro-Abako members persuaded Commissioner-General of Justice Marcel Lihau to justify the coup d'état through legal means.<sup>233</sup> He justified the "peaceful coup d'état by colonel Mobutu" by writing at the end of October that the people are sovereign and do not prefer famine and unemployment over national restoration, that institutions are made for the state and not the other way around. In addition to this, the disorder in the country led to the inapplicability of the *Loi fondamentale*, for instance with regard to the appointment of magistrates. Finally, Lihau also mentioned Turkey and Egypt, countries where the United Nations interacts with governments who effectively exercised authority after coups d'état.<sup>234</sup> The decree-law and legal commentary were issued to provide a legal justification, albeit a thin one, to the coup d'état. Additionally, the commentary was meant to advocate *de facto* recognition as the executive and legislative body by the United Nations.<sup>235</sup> The thin justification shows that Mobutu could not put the legal order aside in its entirety.

The importance of institutions was once more underlined when Hammarskjöld decided to specifically emphasise the recognition of institutions identified by the *Loi Fondamentale*.<sup>236</sup> The only two institutions whose foundations are still standing, Cordier's replacement Rajeshwar Dayal argued, "are the office of the Chief of State and the Parliament."<sup>237</sup> He would implement ONUC's decision by not recognising the College of Commissioners-General, but ONUC maintained its policy of "dealing, in routine matters, with whatever authority it finds in the ministerial chairs."<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Cf. for instance Young, *Politics in the Congo*, 1965, 326-7.

<sup>232</sup> Cited in *Congo 1960*, Tome II, 1961, 875-6.

<sup>233</sup> Kamitatu, *La grande mystification*, 1971, 73.

<sup>234</sup> "Commentaire de M. Lihau sur le décret-loi", cited in *Congo 1960*, Tome II, 1961, 876-7.

<sup>235</sup> *Congo 1960*, Tome II, 1961, 877.

<sup>236</sup> Hoskyns, *The Congo Since Independence*, 1965, 248.

<sup>237</sup> "Second Progress Report to the Secretary-General", 2 November 1960, paragraph 127, 39 [S/4557].

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, paragraph 29, 14.

### *Accreditation Crisis at the United Nations*

The discussion between politicians who wanted to be internationally recognised as the legitimate spokespeople of the Congo manifested itself at the United Nations as well. Besides the purely legal dimension, claiming juridical statehood has a social and political side. Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg commented on the difficulty to convince political scientists of the limitations of an “exclusively sociological conception of statehood.”<sup>239</sup> In line with the constitutive theory of statehood, juridical statehood refers to the recognition of the international community of a state. At the UN, the Westphalian principle of sovereign equality of states prevails.<sup>240</sup> Jackson and Rosberg suggested that discussions of juridical statehood be approached from a legalistic point of view. But the competition by Congolese political actors to claim legal authority and thence to be accepted by the international community as legitimate representatives of the Congolese state defies this approach. The example of the accreditation crisis brings juridical statehood into a primordially political discussion.

After debating whether Justin Bomboko or Thomas Kanza should become the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Lumumba government decided to grant Bomboko the position and make Kanza the Ambassador to the UN in New York. When Lumumba was dismissed, the Congo’s Ambassador stayed loyal to him. The newly appointed Iléo government, however, sent out a delegation headed by Bomboko, still Minister of Foreign Affairs, to New York.<sup>241</sup>

The accreditation question was tackled during the Security Council meetings on 14 and 15 September. This is not a unidirectional political and legal imposition of foreign powers on Congolese politicians. In reality, the debates at the Security Council, General Assembly, and UNESCO, were the result of intense bargaining between national Congolese politicians. Since the discussion specifically concerned the recognition of a delegation, the choice between an approach to the Congolese state by Lumumba or Kasa-Vubu (a question of substance) was considered a question of procedure by the Council.

In a telegram to Hammarskjöld on 11 September, Kasa-Vubu explicitly asked that the Security Council does not receive any delegation other than Bomboko’s.<sup>242</sup> Lumumba notified Hammarskjöld the same day of the composition of the Kanza delegation.<sup>243</sup> Eventually, the

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<sup>239</sup> Jackson, and Rosberg, “Why Africa’s Weak States Persist”, 1982, 4.

<sup>240</sup> Article 2 of the United Nations Charter stipulates that “[t]he Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its members” and that “[n]othing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state”.

<sup>241</sup> “Evolution de la crise congolaise de septembre 1960 à avril 1961”, 1961, 583.

<sup>242</sup> Telegram Kasa-Vubu to Hammarskjöld, 11 September 1960 [S/4504].

<sup>243</sup> Telegram Lumumba to Hammarskjöld, 11 September 1960 [S/4504].

Council voted on inviting Kanza to the Council table. Three countries voted in favour, none against, eight abstained. The only African country, Tunisia, abstained, arguing that deciding on which delegation to pick constitutes “interference in a constitutional issue”.<sup>244</sup> The absence of a firm support of African countries for Lumumba demonstrated their concern to remain on good terms with the UN and its Secretary-General.

At the General Assembly, the Republic of the Congo (Leopoldville) was admitted to membership in the United Nations on 20 September 1960.<sup>245</sup> At the plenary meeting, the unclear constitutional and political position of the newly admitted country was already flagged by the Assembly President and referred it to the Credentials Committee.<sup>246</sup> The Afro-Asian group was divided on the issue of accreditation. Guinea’s Sékou Touré argued that Lumumba’s delegation should seat in the General Assembly, invoking Rule 29 of the Rules of Procedure stating that if objection was made to the admission of a representative, that representative shall be provisionally seated until the Credentials Committee has reported and the General Assembly made its decisions.<sup>247</sup> On 12 October, several other countries including Ghana and Morocco sponsored a revised version of the resolution. After a third revision presented by even more countries favourable towards Lumumba, the resolution was again presented towards the end of October.<sup>248</sup>

Kasa-Vubu, still an uncontested legitimate representative of the Congolese state as its Head of State, personally went to the General Assembly to plead for his case on 8 November. He stated that “you can no longer tolerate that our young Republic, jealous of its independence and its sovereignty, should have no right to speak here.”<sup>249</sup> On 10 November, the Credentials Committee decided to favour Kasa-Vubu’s delegation.<sup>250</sup> Finally, the Assembly accepted the credentials of the Head of State and thus let Justin Bomboko seat as the accepted representative of the Republic of the Congo.<sup>251</sup>

As a last-ditch effort by the pro-Lumumbist countries to obtain legitimacy at the international level, the credentials of Kasa-Vubu’s proposed delegation to UNESCO, headed by Ignace

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<sup>244</sup> 900<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 14 September 1960, paragraph 89, 16 [S/PV.900].

<sup>245</sup> Draft resolution by Tunisia: A/L.299; General Assembly resolution: A/RES/1480(XV).

<sup>246</sup> 864<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, 20 September 1960, 6 [A/PV.864].

<sup>247</sup> Meeting record: 896<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 10 October 1960, 569 [A/PV.896]; draft resolution: A/L.319. The non-aligned movement was founded in September 1961. Before that time, the terms *Afro-Asian bloc* or *Bandung powers* are used.

<sup>248</sup> A/L.319/Rev. 1; A/L.319/Rev. 2.

<sup>249</sup> 912<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 8 November 1960, paragraph 12, 821 [A/PV.912].

<sup>250</sup> “Document 48: Statement by Mr. J. W. Barco”, 1961, 837-9; “Credentials of Representatives to the Fifteenth Session of the General Assembly”, 17 November 1960 [A/4578].

<sup>251</sup> Resolution: A/RES/1498(XV); Meeting records: 924<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 22 November 1960, 961-80 [A/PV.924].

Makuta, was debated on 3 December 1960.<sup>252</sup> Most delegates emphasised their willingness to refrain from political discussions on the matter, but the meeting soon became exceptionally heated.<sup>253</sup> When the representative of New Zealand asked for the closure of the debate, since the meeting has “done enough harm to Unesco’s reputation for one afternoon”<sup>254</sup>, the delegates voted in favour of closing the debate. Directly afterwards, they voted in favour of the credentials of Makuta.<sup>255</sup>

The central power in Leopoldville effectively removed the Lumumbist faction with the help of foreign backing. The anti-Lumumbist elites rejected some institutions, but used others such as the accreditation at the UN in order to assert their authority at the central power. This did not entail a legitimate rule. According to Morgenthau, “Legitimate power, which can invoke a moral or legal justification for its exercise, is likely to be more effective than equivalent illegitimate power, which cannot be so justified.”<sup>256</sup> Soon, however, the authorities in place after the first coup d’état looked for strategies to legitimise their rule.

On 10 October 1960, Lumumba, still in his Prime Minister’s residence, was surrounded by forces of the ANC under the command of Mobutu. In the gardens of the residence, UN forces secured the safety of Lumumba, thereby fending off any attempt by Mobutu’s forces to arrest Lumumba. At the end of November, Lumumba’s ally Gizenga established a government in Stanleyville, rivalling Leopoldville in claiming to be the legitimate Congolese government. Lumumba fled his residence and attempted to gain Stanleyville. He was caught and would be transferred to Katanga where he would be assassinated together with his two allies, Maurice Mpolo and Joseph Okito.

### 1.2.2. Katanga

Besides the central government, other platforms were used by political elites to strengthen their claims of legitimacy. Eleven days after the independence of the Congo, the southern and mineral-rich province of Katanga seceded from the country. The Head of the Provincial Government turned President of the State of Katanga, Moïse Tshombe, was one of the key political figures in his region and at the national level. His southern Katangese and Lunda-dominated Conakat party won 25 out of 60 directly elected seats in the Katangese provincial

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<sup>252</sup> Meeting records: “Twenty-First Plenary Meeting”, 3 December 1960, 331-43.

<sup>253</sup> *Chronique de politique étrangère* described the meeting as “un débat houleux sans précédent dans les annales de l’Organisation”. “Evolution de la crise congolaise”, 1961, 585.

<sup>254</sup> “Twenty-First Plenary Meeting”, 3 December 1960, 342.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, paragraphs 55.1 and 57.1, 3 December 1960, 343.

<sup>256</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 1993, 34.

assembly at the May 1960 elections. The northern Katangese and Luba-Katanga-dominated Balubakat under the lead of Tshombe's childhood friend Jason Sendwe won 18 seats.<sup>257</sup> Emizet Kisangani's main argument in his study on civil wars in the Congo was that the larger population followed excluded elites in their conflicts "only if they believe the conflict is legitimate." He further made the argument that although those mobilised masses supported seemingly legitimate conflicts in their eyes, they would only discover later that "their leaders are seeking nothing more than state spoils and are thus waging wars of replacement or convenience."<sup>258</sup> Leaders could, however, aspire to both state spoils and more legitimate goals. Nicknamed '*Monsieur tiroir-caisse*' ('Mister cash drawer'),<sup>259</sup> Tshombe was also concerned with the promotion of his federalist views.

The government of the State of Katanga was accepted by certain western circles as a legitimate authority because of economic and ideological reasons. Continuity of mining activities in the region was a crucial factor for many international partners. Tshombe knew this and underlined the alleged stability in his proto-state. The President and his government representatives were in close contact with business circles in Belgium, France, the United States, and the United Kingdom through extensive lobby structures.

Belgians, and ultimately Belgium, became supporters of the Katangese secessionists. Nzongola-Ntalaja characterised Conakat as "basically the voice of white settlers through African mouths"<sup>260</sup> and it was one of the few parties that did not follow an anti-colonial course. Although the Katangese secession was set in motion by Katangese officials instead of Belgians,<sup>261</sup> the text of the proclamation of Katangese independence, pronounced on 11 July 1960, does not leave much to the imagination of the reader: "this independence is absolute", the declaration signed by the College of Ministers states. "Nevertheless, conscious of the urgent need of an economic collaboration with Belgium, the government of Katanga, for which Belgium provided assistance of its own troops to protect human lives, asks Belgium to unite with Katanga in a close economic community."<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Hoskyns, *The Congo Since Independence*, 1965, 70-1.

<sup>258</sup> Kisangani, *Civil Wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo*, 2012, 3-4.

<sup>259</sup> Sené, *Tshombe à Alger*, 2020, 11.

<sup>260</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo From Leopold to Kabila*, 2013, 100.

<sup>261</sup> Former Vice-Governor General André Schöller, for instance, was surprised that he was not consulted by Tshombe prior to his demarche. Stengers, "La reconnaissance *de jure* de l'indépendance du Katanga", 2003, 178.

<sup>262</sup> "CETTE INDEPENDANCE est TOTALE. Cependant, conscient de la nécessité impérieuse d'une collaboration économique avec la Belgique, le gouvernement du Katanga, auquel la Belgique, pour protéger les vies humaines, vient d'accorder l'assistance de ses propres troupes, demande à la Belgique de s'unir avec le Katanga en une étroite communauté économique." Cited in Gérard-Libois, *Sécession au Katanga*, 1963, 296.

In order to cement their authority, the Katangese leadership reached out to international partners and looked for shared interests. Belgians permeated the whole public administration. Without exception, every government minister had Belgian technicians at his disposal.<sup>263</sup> The distinction between adherence to Belgian or Katangese authorities blurred somewhat by a number of Belgians, including Major Guy Weber. He commanded the Belgian troops intervening in Katanga between 10 and 13 July, but was promoted to Tshombe's military adviser on 17 July. It is then hard to assess, in other words, whether *Belgians*, or *Belgium*, arrived at the heart of the decision-making organs of the Katangese state. Several high-ranking politicians such as Interior Minister Godefroid Munongo and Finance Minister Jean-Baptiste Kibwe were hardliners opposed to an intensive cooperation with Belgium. One Belgian adviser in particular, Georges Thyssens, even ran an anti-Belgian course.

Nevertheless, the far-reaching cooperation between the Katangese and Belgian governments is beyond dispute. On 20 July, Deputy *Chef de cabinet* to the Belgian Prime Minister, Harold d'Aspremont Lynden, set up shop in Elisabethville as the head of Belgian technical assistance mission Mistebel. The Belgian government, d'Aspremont Lynden informed Tshombe, was interested in ensuring the Katangese government the necessary contacts with international players.<sup>264</sup>

As an intricate network of Katangese and Belgian actors with ambiguous allegiances, this rough sketch of the initial development of the state apparatus shows the importance of exposing areas of entanglement between domestic and international politics. In this case, the state lacked claims to juridical statehood, but state representatives were still capable of exercising agency over foreign actors. The State of Katanga's history is overshadowed by its eventual reincorporation into the Congolese state and its failure to accomplish its main foreign policy goal of diplomatic recognition.<sup>265</sup> Still, one must not fall into the trap of teleology and assume that Katangese political actors were not able to promote their political stance, notably one of anti-Communism, or to highlight shared interests such as similarities between the political thought of themselves and of foreign actors.

During the establishment of the state apparatus of Katanga, the greatest of care was given to the securing of international ties. The secessionist leadership succeeded in establishing a sizable network of Katangese delegations abroad of differing sizes and durations of existence,

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<sup>263</sup> Cf. The list of ministers and cabinet staff in Weber, *Le Katanga de Moïse Tshombe*, 1983, 201.

<sup>264</sup> Vandewalle, *Mille et quatre jours*, Fascicle 2, 1974, 151.

<sup>265</sup> Brownell, "Diplomatic Lepers", 2014, 213.

charged with a variety of assignments. More or less permanent representations were established in Brussels, Paris, and New York. In Brazzaville as well, Tshombe's ally Abbé Fulbert Youlou tried to keep the Congo divided, attract financial assistance and gave leeway to Katangese representatives to monitor Leopoldville from across the Congo river.

### *Representation in Belgium (Delperkat/Ocekat)*

The Katangese representation in Brussels was inaugurated in the presence of two delegates of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 21 September 1960.<sup>266</sup> The Resident Minister, Jacques Masangu of the Balubakat party, initially refused the position of Katangese Minister of Foreign Affairs, citing his concern not to be considered a sell-out by his partners. He wanted to apply for asylum in Belgium and continue his studies there. According to Masangu's memoirs, Tshombe proposed him to represent Katanga in exchange for a scholarship.<sup>267</sup>

An important objective of the mission was to convince Belgians of the Katangese cause through propaganda. On 10 February 1961, a pro-Katangese lobby *Amitiés katangaises* was formed which, according to its statutes, aimed at "promoting, encouraging, and maintaining amiable ties with Katanga by using all means deemed useful and at its disposal".<sup>268</sup> The budgetary provisions of the Katangese mission for the year 1963, already renamed to Cultural and Economic Office (Ocekat), showed a proposed financial injection of 400 000 Belgian francs (BEF) granted as "support to 'Amitiés Katangaises' Brussels (including magazine 'Liberté')".<sup>269</sup>

The Belgian government demanded that Delperkat cease its activities after diplomatic relations between Congo and Belgium resumed on 27 December 1961. Masangu's office closed on 26 January 1962 and returned to Leopoldville to become a senator once again, even calling for foreign support to end the secession in December 1962.<sup>270</sup> Ocekat replaced Delperkat, and Odilon Mwenda replaced Masangu when the latter resigned on 7 April 1962.<sup>271</sup> Ocekat was ostensibly more focused on propaganda, which ended the uncomfortable position for Brussels<sup>272</sup>, but more clandestine actions seem to have existed during Ocekat's time. The budgetary provisions for 1963 contain a budget line related to the "aid to friendly countries and

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<sup>266</sup> CRISP, "La politique "katangaise" de la Belgique. (juillet 1960-décembre 1962). I.", 1963, 17.

<sup>267</sup> Masangu-a-Mwanza, *Mémoires d'un Baobab*, 2021, 62, 64 and 70.

<sup>268</sup> CRISP, "Nouvelles formes et tendances d'extrême droite en Belgique (II)", 1962, 13.

<sup>269</sup> FMT, Box 7, 1351 Prévisions budgétaires 1963 Bruxelles Paris. The budgetary provisions of 1963 remained dead letter, since the Katangese secession ended in January 1963.

<sup>270</sup> CRISP, "La politique "katangaise" de la Belgique. (août 1961-janvier 1963). II.", 1963, 8.

<sup>271</sup> Masangu-a-Mwanza, *Mémoires d'un Baobab*, 2021, 64.

<sup>272</sup> CRISP, "La politique "katangaise" de la Belgique. (août 1961-janvier 1963). II.", 1962, 8.

politicians”, as well as “clandestine political action”, amounting to 500 000 Belgian francs in total, with the caveat in mind that the Katangese secession ended on 21 January 1963.<sup>273</sup>

### *Representation in France*

Towards the end of 1960 and certainly from the first half of 1961, Katanga’s political leadership turned its attention more and more towards France at the expense of the privileged relationship with Belgium. Observers noted a faction of ‘ultras’ or ‘extremists’ within the Katangese government, such as Interior Minister Munongo, Finance Minister Kibwe, and Foreign Affairs Minister Kimba, who rejected Tshombe’s overreliance on Belgian collaborators.<sup>274</sup> Additionally, due to the relative disengagement of Belgium with Katanga after Lumumba’s assassination in January 1961 and a change of Belgian government in April 1961,<sup>275</sup> it became clear that Belgium would not officially recognise Katanga. Before, Katangese officials could exercise agency over their Belgian counterparts by instrumentalising shared interests. Lumumba’s assassination upset Congolese domestic order to such a degree that Katanga’s and Belgium’s shared interest of anti-communism drastically declined. Decision-makers were therefore encouraged to look out for other alternative privileged ties. Masangu concluded that, “when Lumumba died, his image of Communist danger was also put aside. The world had no need any more of an independent Katanga and cantor of anti-Communism! That death announced the end [of the secession].”<sup>276</sup> In other words, the secessionists had to look out for alternative partners that had other motivations to be involved with the secession than anti-communism.

The mission in Paris was headed by Dominique Diur, former *Chef de cabinet* to Katangese Minister of Justice Ilunga.<sup>277</sup> It had several functions, including a representative function in the strict sense of the term. They helped to advertise the July 1961 Elisabethville Fair on the streets of Paris.<sup>278</sup> Diur and his team also liaised with politicians and members of the pro-Katangese lobby *Association France-Katanga*. The association’s treasurer, Bernard Delègue, worked at the Katangese mission.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> “*aide aux pays amis et à des hommes politiques*” and “*action politique clandestine*”. FMT, Box 7, 1351 Prévisions budgétaires 1963 Bruxelles Paris.

<sup>274</sup> Larmer, and Kennes, *The Katangese Gendarmes*, 2016, 54.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>276</sup> Masangu-a-Mwanza, *Mémoires d’un Baobab*, 2021, 15.

<sup>277</sup> FMT, Box 9, Folder 1356 Curriculum-vitae D.D., *Biographie de Monsieur Dominique Diur*.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, Box 4, Affichage Foire d’Eville juillet 1961.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, Box 3, Folder “Actions de l’association France Katanga”. About Delègue, see Genin, “La France et le Congo ex-belge”, 2013, 1066-1067.

Belgium's relative disengagement opened a window of opportunity for both France and Katanga to put an end to Belgium's quasi-monopoly,<sup>280</sup> and to intensify France's twin-track policy of non-recognition accompanied with various kinds of assistance. In his secret report on the establishment and functioning of the permanent mission in Paris of February 1961, Diur wrote that "in the process of disengagement vis-à-vis Belgium as intended by the government [of Katanga], France is the country with generous ideas to which our Katanga gladly turns its eyes to. France is the starting point of political actions which, in the coming months, ensures the recognition of the independence of our country."<sup>281</sup>

A meeting at the cabinet of French Prime Minister Michel Debré on 14 March 1961 was telling in this regard. Representatives of the Secretary-General for African and Malagasy affairs, the State Secretary charged with the *Communauté*, the Chief of General Staff, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the secret services SDECE praised Diur "for his caution, discretion, and expertise".<sup>282</sup> Despite protestations by Couve de Murville's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they decided to limit their assistance (*aide*) to Katanga instead of the Congo as a whole. This would be delivered via the Katangese representative in Paris. This assistance had to be under the guise of 'technical' assistance, either directly or through francophone African countries sympathetic to Katanga, with which they likely meant Congo-Brazzaville.<sup>283</sup> Diur reported to Tshombe that the taking of this position was probably preceded by "contacts and decisions at the highest international echelons in the context of NATO."<sup>284</sup> On 18 March, a representative of Debré visited Diur to ask whether Katanga would accept an unofficial representative of the French government in Elisabethville, meant to create a counterpart to Diur in Katanga, to protect French nationals against the "slander-campaigns" of the Belgian personnel in Katanga, and to gather intelligence.<sup>285</sup>

Despite the *rapprochement* between France and Katanga, France actively tried to obstruct the workings of Diur's mission towards the end of 1961. He was forced to change the name of the permanent mission to 'Cultural and economic office of Katanga for Europe – Paris branch'<sup>286</sup>. The French government tried to expel Diur in January 1962, but he was allowed to

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<sup>280</sup> Gérard-Libois, *Sécession au Katanga*, 1963, 201.

<sup>281</sup> FMT, Box 11, "Rapport du Ministre Dominique DIUR, Chef de la Mission Permanente du KATANGA en FRANCE, concernant l'établissement, le fonctionnement et l'avenir du poste", February 7, 1961.

<sup>282</sup> FMT, Box 3, Folder Aide de la France au Katanga, Letter Diur to Tshombe, 16 March 1961.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, Box 3, Folder Aide de la France au Katanga, Letter Diur to Tshombe, 18 March 1961.

<sup>286</sup> FMT, Box 3, Folder Notes de Service, "Office culturel et économique du Katanga pour l'Europe – Siège de Paris". "Note de Service n°8", 20 October 1961.

stay after the intervention of several allies, including President Fulbert Youlou of Congo-Brazzaville.

### *Representation in the United States*

In October 1960, the Belgian Michel Struelens opened the *Katanga Information Services* (KIS) at 609 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, New York. As the head of the office, he was not concerned with the recruitment of personnel for Katanga. Instead, the primary reason for a formal Katangese presence in the US was propaganda. Struelens' radio broadcast was called 'Katanga calling' and he presented himself as "head of the KIS".<sup>287</sup>

At first, the State Department tried to use Struelens as an intermediary to reach Tshombe, but this channel closed when Cyrille Adoula was installed as Congo's Prime Minister in August 1961.<sup>288</sup> Until approximately that time, he "enjoyed a friendly and cooperative relationship with the Department of State."<sup>289</sup> Struelens found a listening ear within anti-UN and anti-communist circles, most prominently with Thomas J. Dodd, Senator from Connecticut. He lobbied together with the KIS to change the State Department's pro-Adoula stance, to no avail.<sup>290</sup> The presence of an office representing an unrecognised state acting against the US's foreign policy goals created an uneasy situation. The State Department found a bureaucratic excuse to expel Struelens.<sup>291</sup> As a result of Dodd's protest to Secretary of State Dean Rusk, efforts to deport Struelens were ceased. He only left the US for Canada in August 1963, seven months after the end of the secession.<sup>292</sup>

As in France, several US citizens actively began to organise a pro-Katangese lobby. The *American Committee For Aid To Katanga Freedom Fighters*, headed by African-American anti-Communist Max Yergan, published a page-size advertisement in the *New York Times* on 14 December 1961 comparing the situation in Katanga with the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, when the US also "stood aside."<sup>293</sup> Notable personalities who endorsed the organisation were former President Herbert Hoover, former Vice-President Richard Nixon, Senators Barry

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<sup>287</sup> FMT, Box 11, "Katanga Calling... Text of Broadcast over Station WWRL New York on Monday August 27, 1962".

<sup>288</sup> Brownell, "Diplomatic Lepers", 2014, 216.

<sup>289</sup> Visa Procedures of Department of State, *The Struelens Case*, 1962, 2.

<sup>290</sup> O'Malley, *The Diplomacy of Decolonisation*, 2018, 96.

<sup>291</sup> Visa Procedures of Department of State, *The Struelens Case*, 1962, 17.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 30; Brownell, "Diplomatic Lepers", 2014, 218; AP, "U.S. Raises No Objection To Struelens Appointment", *The New York Times*, 4 August 1964, 2.

<sup>293</sup> American Committee For Aid To Katanga Freedom Fighters, "Katanga is the Hungary of 1961!", *The New York Times*, 14 December 1961, 49.

Goldwater, Truston Morton, Everett Dirksen, and Thomas Dodd.<sup>294</sup> In March 1962, the *American Committee* honoured Tshombe by organising a rally in Madison Square Garden in the presence of Goldwater, which raised \$ 80 000 for the Katangese cause.<sup>295</sup>

Katanga's propaganda efforts in the US were successful, even when Dodd and other local allies could not move their country towards a more pro-Katangese attitude. For the US, Struelens' presence was something to take into account. Tshombe's adviser Clémens noted in October 1961 that the "State Department finds itself already forced to manoeuvre with great prudence".<sup>296</sup> Kennedy discussed Struelens' political impact and legal status more than once.<sup>297</sup>

### *Relationship between Katanga and Other Countries*

Brussels, Paris, and New York were crucial interlocutors for Katanga, underlined by the presence of Katangese representations in these cities. Besides facilitating the outreach to lobby structures and mercenary recruitment, the more formalised presence of the Katangese state was instrumental in its effort to gain international legitimacy and unsuccessful attempt to gain international recognition. Economic motivations, however important, were thus not the only incentives for Katangese elites to engage with the international system. Katanga's ties with other countries and actors also show the various motivations driving its foreign policy, including economic, military, and ideological motivations.

Paradoxically, Katanga's international relations also extended to the intranational Congolese level. Douglas Lemke pleaded in favour of studying autonomous political entities other than internationally recognised states in order to discuss African political realities more accurately.<sup>298</sup> Tshombe was indeed "skilled in the art of constructing alliances of convenience"<sup>299</sup> including with the same central government he seceded from. The announcement of Lumumba's death in Katanga by Munongo on 13 February 1961 resulted in "explosions of popular anger round the world".<sup>300</sup> Faced with these "international repercussions", Masangu and Vice-President of the Chamber Jean-Marie Pweto wrote in a telex to Tshombe on 20 February to "define a new position of Katanga towards its congeners after elimination of the enemy in common [...] [T]o

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<sup>294</sup> Gérard-Libois, *Sécession au Katanga*, 1963, 202.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> JVL, 132: Vertrouwelijke nota's en brieven van Belgische raadgevers aan Tshombe (president van Katanga) betreffende diplomatieke en militaire actie van de staat Katanga, Letter René Clémens to Tshombe, Liège, 17 October 1961.

<sup>297</sup> Brownell, "Diplomatic Lepers", 2014, 211.

<sup>298</sup> Lemke, "Intra-national IR in Africa", 2011, 49-70.

<sup>299</sup> Young, and Turner, *The Rise and Decline*, 1985, 50.

<sup>300</sup> De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, 2001, 148. Lumumba was assassinated near Elisabethville on 17 January 1961, in the presence of Tshombe, some other ministers, and Belgian officers.

calm the international opinion vis-à-vis Katanga it would be desirable to receive and hear [...] [Leopoldville Interior Minister and later Prime Minister Cyrille] Adoula.”<sup>301</sup> A first major *rapprochement* between Elisabethville and Leopoldville did indeed take off on 28 February 1961 with the military agreement between Leopoldville, Elisabethville, and Bakwanga.<sup>302</sup> The follow-up conference of Antananarivo in March was aimed at reinforcing the same axis, against the pro-Lumumbist forces of Gizenga in the East. It concluded with Tshombe’s proposition of a confederate Congolese state.<sup>303</sup> The fragile *entente* broke down at the Coquilhatville conference, where Tshombe and Kimba got arrested.<sup>304</sup> Later in 1962, negotiations between Elisabethville, Leopoldville, and the UN revolved around the reintegration plan of Secretary-General U Thant. Tshombe was successful in stalling these negotiations, which led Larmer and Kennes to conclude that “far from being a puppet of western interests, Tshombe played a skillful role in an increasingly difficult situation.”<sup>305</sup>

In the same larger region, Katanga could count on the support of the white and apartheid regimes in southern Africa. Tshombe sent out emissaries to South Africa, including Georges Thyssens, who met and discussed with Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd in September 1960.<sup>306</sup> Several Katangese ministers would also meet with South African decision-makers, in August and September 1961.<sup>307</sup> The Central African Federation (CAF) also aligned with Katanga, mainly because of economic ties.

Finally, Katanga enjoyed the “thinly veiled support” of the Brazzaville group, a group of former French colonies who recently became independent and had the ambition to maintain close ties with their former coloniser.<sup>308</sup> Congo-Brazzaville, in particular president Abbé Fulbert Youlou, sought to keep its neighbour divided on the other side of the river.<sup>309</sup> Although Congo-Brazzaville never recognised Katanga and Youlou remained on speaking terms with Kasa-

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<sup>301</sup> “vu repercussions internationales priere definir nouvelle position du katanga envers ses congeneres apres elimination de l ennemi commun stop pour calmer opinion internationale vis a vis du katanga il serait souhaitable d accueillir et d entendre monsieur adoula fullstop” FMT, Box 7, Folder 1348 TELEX TELEGRAMMES Folder Ensemble de telex divers moins importants ou déjà traités, Telex delperkat to presikat 20 February 1961.

<sup>302</sup> Verhaegen, *Congo 1961, 1962*, 19-27.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-49.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-101.

<sup>305</sup> Larmer, and Kennes, *The Katangese Gendarmes*, 2016, 58.

<sup>306</sup> Passemiers, *Decolonisation and Regional Geopolitics*, 2019, 61.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-2.

<sup>308</sup> Gérard-Libois, *Sécession au Katanga*, 1963, 197; “Brazzaville Powers”, *International Organization*, 1962, 434-437.

<sup>309</sup> Cf. the demarches of Jayle and Croquez on 5 September 1960. JVB, BE/942855/654, 6.4.1./2., Report US Ambassador in Brussels [after 22 September 1960].

Vubu, he was a particularly consistent ally of Tshombe, whom he called “the daring, intelligent, and responsible leader of his nation.”<sup>310</sup> Youlou successfully intervened when Tshombe was arrested in Coquilhatville and when the French authorities tried to expulse Diur from France.<sup>311</sup>

Katanga’s three representations abroad strengthened the secessionist state’s international network in order to strengthen both its authority and legitimacy. Many external actors supported Katanga as a capitalist dam against communism. On the other hand, the Stanleyville government, north of Katanga, embodied the legacy of Lumumbism.

### 1.2.3. Stanleyville

Even when the central government removed Lumumbist thought in their ranks, the coup d’état did not herald the end of Lumumbism altogether. By October, after the political elimination of Lumumba, proponents of Lumumbist thought changed their strategy of negotiated reconciliation with Kasa-Vubu to the establishment of a government in Stanleyville. Antoine Gizenga, the strongman of the *Parti solidaire africain* (PSA) and Deputy Prime Minister of the Lumumba government, founded the Stanleyville government as a rival government to the Leopoldville central power. In his memoir, he motivated the move as follows:

“the reactionary imperial powers who launched, through the intermediary of the duo Kasa-Vubu – Mobutu, a large-scale retrograde action in the Congo, encountered resistance from the population more determined by willpower than material means which they lacked, to cease this action at any price. Urgently, one has to find the necessary means for these people to organise their long combat against exploitation in any form.”<sup>312</sup>

With the written approval of Lumumba, Gizenga proclaimed on 12 December 1960 that Stanleyville became the seat of the central government and provisional capital of the Republic.<sup>313</sup> The Stanleyville government now had to find ways to strengthen their authority

Through the coalescence of Lumumbist politicians, the overthrow of the provincial government of Kivu and appointment of Anicet Kashamura as its head, Stanleyville gradually extended its authority over a large part of eastern Congo.

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<sup>310</sup> Cited in Passemiers, *Decolonisation and Regional Geopolitics*, 2019, 26.

<sup>311</sup> Verhaegen, *Congo 1961, 1962*, 269; FMT, Box 2, Folder Dossier d’expulsion, Letter Dominique Diur to Fulbert Youlou, 26 January 1962.

<sup>312</sup> Gizenga, *Ma vie et mes luttes*, 2011, 217-8.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

## *External Relations*

Contrary to Lumumba, whose policy was one of neutralism and therefore non-hostile towards the United States, Belgium, the Soviet Union, and Afro-Asian bloc, the government declaration of Gizenga on 31 January 1961 was less circumspect in its treatment of Belgium and the UN.<sup>314</sup> Although Gizenga reaffirmed the government's foreign policy to be "based on non-alignment and positive neutralism", he also lashed out at the "diabolic work of sabotage and destruction carried out by the Belgian government and the Katanga mining companies, which have now become the preserve of international trusts".<sup>315</sup> Furthermore, the United Nations have "failed in the Congo and have betrayed the United Nations Charter".<sup>316</sup> With regard to the Soviet Union, Gizenga explained that he wanted to avoid to align his government with one of the two blocs of the Cold War, and that his social policy is inspired by "traditional African structures" instead of Marxist doctrines.<sup>317</sup>

On the other hand, the Stanleyville government attempted to align itself with the Afro-Asian bloc. Through the intermediary of District Commissioner of Stanleyville Bernard Salumu, the government opened a representation in Cairo in order to secure relations with the United Arab Republic (UAR).<sup>318</sup> Pierre Mulele became the representative in Cairo in December 1960. Other Bandung powers were more reticent to accommodate Stanleyville representatives. Ghana did not provide any aid to Gizenga and his Lumumbist allies. André Mandi, former Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the Lumumba government, lived in Belgium since November and assured a Stanleyville representation there.<sup>319</sup> Kanza stayed in New York after he failed to obtain *de jure* international recognition for the Lumumba government. He stayed loyal to Lumumba by representing the Stanleyville government at the UN.

The announcement of Lumumba's death<sup>320</sup> caused a wave of indignation throughout the world. On 13 February 1961, Katangese Interior Minister Godefroid Munongo disseminated a concocted version of Lumumba's death during a press conference, stating that Lumumba and his allies Maurice Mpolo and Joseph Okito were massacred by the inhabitants of a small village,

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<sup>314</sup> The government declaration was made after Lumumba's assassination on 17 January 1961, but before his death was announced by Katangese Interior Minister Munongo on 13 February.

<sup>315</sup> Cited by Guinean representative Diallo Telli at the UNSC. *931st Meeting*, 7 February 1961, 19-20 [S/PV.931].

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>317</sup> Rouleau, "Le peuple congolais", *Le Monde*, 22 March 1961.

<sup>318</sup> Besides Egypt, the UAR also included Syria until the Syrian coup d'état in September 1961.

<sup>319</sup> *Congo 1960*, Tome II, 1961, 1042.

<sup>320</sup> The term 'death' is used since Godefroid Munongo announced the death, but not the assassination, of Lumumba.

and added that “I would lie if I would say that the death of Lumumba grieves me.”<sup>321</sup>

As a consequence, the legitimacy of the Stanleyville grew within some non-aligned and communist countries. Gizenga and his government could then capitalise on the shared interest of upholding Lumumbism against the more unequivocally pro-western forces in the country. Several foreign powers began to recognise Stanleyville as the legitimate government of the Congo. The UAR, closest ally of Gizenga, officially recognised the government on 14 February, followed the next day by the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Yugoslavia, and Guinea. The same month, Morocco, Ghana, the provisional government of Algeria, Mongolia, Albania, Cuba, Poland, Bulgaria, Iraq, Hungary, and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) recognised the government.<sup>322</sup> Diplomatic manoeuvres by foreign governments sympathising with the successor to Lumumba’s government rapidly followed one another, and in March, Czechoslovakia signed a trade agreement with the “legal government of Congo”, Indonesia proposed to install a diplomatic representation in Stanleyville, and Romania signed an agreement with the Stanleyville government about the exchange of ambassadors. The first diplomat to present his letters of credence in Stanleyville was Alione Diakite of Mali, on 5 April.<sup>323</sup> The following weeks, other states followed Mali’s example and established diplomatic delegations, namely Yugoslavia, UAR, Guinea, and Czechoslovakia. The Soviet Union, however, only opened a diplomatic mission as late as July 1961.<sup>324</sup> On Stanleyville’s side, ambassadors were sent out to Cairo, on 17 March, where Samone Fale presented his credentials to Gamal Abdel Nasser on 13 April, Antoine Awazi to Poland, Bernardin Mungul Diaka to the PRC on 17 March, and Antoine Kiwewa to Guinea, Mali, and Ghana. The latter presented his credentials to Mali’s Modibo Keita on 2 June, and to Guinea’s Sékou Touré on 23 June.<sup>325</sup>

#### *End of the Stanleyville government*

After several episodes of *rapprochement* and breaking off ties between Gizenga and the central government, the final dissolution of Gizenga’s government occurred in the period November 1961 – January 1962. The government’s legitimacy declined after the killings of thirteen Italian ONUC aviators in November 1961 and eighteen Belgian and two Dutch Spiritan missionaries

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<sup>321</sup> “Je mentirais si je disais que le décès de Lumumba m’attriste.” “Conférence de presse de M. Godefroid Munongo”, 13 February 1961, cited in: *Congo 1961, 1962*, 664-5.

<sup>322</sup> See *Congo 1961, 1962*, 184-6.

<sup>323</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Situation in the Congo”, *Central Intelligence Bulletin*, 10 April 1961, 4.

<sup>324</sup> De Witte, *Crisis in Kongo*, 1996, 419.

<sup>325</sup> *Congo 1961, 1962*, 186.

in Kongolo on 1 January 1962.<sup>326</sup> Furthermore, after General Victor Lundula refused Gizenga's attempt at reshuffling the Stanleyville military by placing the commander of the Kindu troops at the helm of the ANC troops in Stanleyville, Lundula urged the provincial government to oppose Gizenga in December 1961. Consequently, the UAR and several eastern countries pulled their diplomatic representations out of Stanleyville.<sup>327</sup> The Chamber of Deputies in Leopoldville debated on the removal of the Stanleyville government on 8 January 1962. A resolution of a PSA party member which asked Gizenga to get back to Leopoldville within 48 hours was accepted at the session.<sup>328</sup> On 12 January, a vote of no confidence was passed against Gizenga, which accused him of rebellion.<sup>329</sup> The next day, Adoula ordered the immediate arrest of Gizenga, after consulting head of civilian operations of the UN, Sture Linnér.<sup>330</sup> Gizenga was effectively dismissed from his position as Deputy Prime Minister on 15 January,<sup>331</sup> was flown back by the ONUC to Leopoldville, and ended up in detention.<sup>332</sup>

#### 1.2.4. South Kasai

The Kasai province in 1960 encompassed many distinct population groups, including the Baluba, Lulua, and Basonge. These were treated differently by the colonial authorities: the Baluba were framed as hardworking and progressive, in contrast to Lulua and other peoples as lazy and conservative. Towards the end of the colonial era, the Belgians sought to counteract the increasingly vocal Baluba, who opposed the racist and discriminatory practices of the colonisers, and supported a Lulua counter-elite.<sup>333</sup>

Muluba politician Albert Kalonji was the province's preeminent politician at the time of independence. Originally a Lumumba ally at the MNC, he would split from the party advocating a centralised Congo, and form the branch MNC(Kalonji), which would advocate Muluba regionalism. This MNC(K) would be one of the few notable political groupings that were excluded from Lumumba's coalition government. In addition, Lumumba sided with the Lulua people in Kasai, appointing Barthélémy Mukenge as the provincial President, thereby undermining Kalonji's position.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> See Loffman, "Same Memory, Different Memorials", 2018, 217-50. The author of the present thesis is a distant relative of Gaston and Louis Crauwels, two victims of the Kongolo massacre.

<sup>327</sup> *Congo 1961, 1962*, 578.

<sup>328</sup> "Annexe I: Résolution 14", 20 January 1962 [S/5053/Add.1].

<sup>329</sup> "Dépôt d'une motion de censure", *Le Monde*, 15 January 1962.

<sup>330</sup> *Congo 1961, 1962*, 583.

<sup>331</sup> "Annexe VI: Ordonnance No 1/62", 20 January 1962 [S/5053/Add.1].

<sup>332</sup> Gizenga, *Ma vie et mes luttes*, 2011, 338-46.

<sup>333</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo From Leopold to Kabila*, 2013, 103-4.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

On 8 August, the ‘Mining Province’ was proclaimed, confirmed by a letter of Ngalula to Hammarskjöld stating that a “new Republic” was created, which they provisionally called “Mining Province”. The letter specified that the Mining Province was politically and administratively distinct from the Kasai Province, and that they “refused to break off ties with our Congolese brothers with whom we would like to keep close ties within the framework of a confederation.”<sup>335</sup> Kalonji would speak in terms of a ‘Mining State’ the same day, and would use the word ‘independence’ in his declarations.<sup>336</sup> Kalonji retained his seat in the Leopoldville parliament, which shows the bicephalous character that would mark the Mining State during its whole existence.

The state never officially seceded from the Congo and the politicians of the Mining State never made any effort to seek official international recognition. From Elisabethville, Kalonji and Ngalula did present a provisional constitution of their state on 5 September 1960, a state which was now called ‘Autonomous State of South Kasai’.<sup>337</sup> The ever-changing name of the state and lack of control over the claimed territory underline once more the improvised and feeble base of the Mining State. They were never effective in bolstering their political thought by reaching out to foreign actors. Because of the presence of the *Forminière* diamond mining company in the Bakwanga region, their anti-communist rhetoric resonated somewhat in Belgian business interest circles, but this demonstrated a more economic want from the Belgian side rather than any ideological or political congruence. South Kasai was the world’s leading industrial diamond extracting centre, and the Congo’s leading diamond mining region.

### 1.3. Second Part of the Congo Crisis (1963-1965)

With the defeat of the several rival authorities by January 1963, the Adoula government could convincingly claim to be the only legitimate entity representing the Congolese state. Kalonji, and certainly Tshombe, established significant support networks in exile in Spain, but they did not form an immediate threat to Adoula’s position. The suppression of Lumumbism in the government did not spell the end of the politics of Lumumba’s proponents. From January 1964 in Kwilu and, later, in eastern Congo, two rebellions would threaten the central government’s authority, albeit in a less severe way than during the first part of the Congo Crisis.<sup>338</sup> Although there are several similarities between the rebellions – the inclusion of Lumumbist politicians

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<sup>335</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1960*, Tome II, 1961, 800.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, 800-1.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 806.

<sup>338</sup> US Ambassador Herman Cohen, for instance, wrote in this context about the “Congo Crisis Redux”. Cohen, *US Policy Toward Africa*, 2020, 72.

and former MNC(L) supporters, the popular character, the harsh violence – there was no operational unity linking both rebellions. Adoula's term ended exactly four years after independence. Partly as a result of international consultations, Moïse Tshombe was brought back from exile and made a surprise comeback on the political scene as the new Prime Minister of the reunified Congo. Through external military aid, the rebellions were largely suppressed, after which Tshombe was dismissed by Kasa-Vubu. As the appointment of new Prime Minister-Designate Évariste Kimba did not succeed in parliament, Mobutu became the new President after his second coup d'état and dismissed Kimba.

### 1.3.1. Central Government

During the first three years of Congolese independence, the Congolese political elites' interaction with their international counterparts was heavily focused on defending their respective claims of legitimacy in the eyes of the outside world. After the dissolution of this internal and external negotiation, Adoula's government was well-entrenched and prepared to advance a more substantial foreign policy agenda, for instance by organising the fifth conference of the *Pan-African Freedom Movement for East, Central and Southern Africa* in December 1962 in Leopoldville, and the participation of Kasa-Vubu at the Conference of Addis Ababa in May 1963, where the *Organisation of African Unity* (OAU) was founded.

Adoula's foreign policy was marked by a *rapprochement* to western countries in spite of its nominal 'positive neutralism', and a successful departure from their diplomatic isolation towards the Global South.<sup>339</sup> In the meantime, Belgium was exploring the possibilities of a political future for Tshombe. When he received a visa in December 1963 to attend the wedding of his daughter in Belgium, he met with Spaak for the first time, and with his old Belgian advisers.<sup>340</sup> Initially, doing justice to his pragmatic and opportunistic political style, Tshombe approached the rebels of the CNL-Gbenye.<sup>341</sup> In February 1964, Gbenye sent out two envoys to Madrid which led to an agreement between Tshombe and the CNL-Gbenye to join hands against the Adoula government.<sup>342</sup> Subsequently, however, Spaak and his former *Chef de cabinet* Robert Rothschild<sup>343</sup> negotiated with Tshombe for his return. Tshombe-allied journalist Pierre Davister was charged with contacting the former Katangese leader in Madrid.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1963, 1964*, 41.

<sup>340</sup> Spaak, *Combats inachevés*, 1969, 266-7; Quanten, *Operatie Rode Draak*, 2014, 81.

<sup>341</sup> See "Les contacts de M. Tshombe avec le CNL et avec les provinces", *Congo 1964, 1965*, 209-24.

<sup>342</sup> Quanten, *Operatie Rode Draak*, 2014, 83.

<sup>343</sup> At the time permanent representative of Belgium in Geneva.

<sup>344</sup> Quanten, *Operatie Rode Draak*, 2014, 92.

Adoula offered his government's resignation on 30 June 1964, a pivotal date for the Congo's politico-military history, since it also marked the end of the ONUC mission. Tshombe then made a surprise comeback as Prime Minister of the unified Congo. Although Rothschild wrote that neither Belgium nor the US were involved in Kasa-Vubu's choice for Tshombe, and Spaak maintained in his memoirs that the Belgian and US governments were "surprised and concerned" and Kasa-Vubu acted alone, the evidence presented above suggests that deliberations with Spaak and Rothschild were closer than they acknowledged.<sup>345</sup> On 10 July, Tshombe took office as the Prime Minister of the Congo. Out of the eleven ministers, no one had any experience in the central government, but Munongo received the portfolios of internal affairs and public service, and Albert Kalonji received agriculture.<sup>346</sup>

As the Prime Minister of the Congo, Tshombe would re-establish his characteristic style of conducting politics. This was most pronounced in the military sphere (cf. chapter four), but the close international confidants of Tshombe would also join him in Leopoldville. Oftentimes, their stance went against the official Belgian policy.<sup>347</sup> During the first month of Tshombe's tenure, advisers arrived in the Congo, including his main adviser René Clémens.<sup>348</sup> Michel Struelens officially became an adviser at the Congolese embassy in Washington and Congolese delegation to the UN, but would also exercise functions normally reserved to ambassadors.<sup>349</sup> Contrary to US policy during the Katangese episode, the US became an ally of Tshombe. Struelens negotiated to receive US funding for Tshombe's re-election. The CIA approved, but not the requested 3.3 million USD.<sup>350</sup>

Despite his domestic popularity, the new Prime Minister was vilified by most African countries. Tshombe was perceived as the murderer of Lumumba, and a sell-out to the West. Although his government was accepted as the official Congolese government, Egyptian President Nasser invited Kasa-Vubu to represent his country at the Conference of Nonaligned Nations in Cairo but expressly stated that Tshombe was not welcome. The foreign affairs ministers who prepared the conference voted on a resolution to exclude Tshombe from the conference. When Tshombe left for Cairo, the airport authorities refused landing rights and

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<sup>345</sup> Rothschild, *Un phénix nommé Europe*, 1997, 291; Spaak, *Combats inachevés*, 1969, 269-70.

<sup>346</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1964*, 1965, 190.

<sup>347</sup> Quanten, *Operatie Rode Draak*, 2014, 156.

<sup>348</sup> *Congo 1964*, 1965, 196; Genin, "CLEMENS (René)", 15 January 2014.

<kaowarsom.be/en/notices\_clemens\_rene>, consulted on 28 May 2021.

<sup>349</sup> Cf. Hendrickx, "STRUELENS (Michel)", 26 April 2021. <kaowarsom.be/en/notices\_struelens\_michel>, consulted on 26 May 2021.

<sup>350</sup> Cf. "405. Memorandum from Harold H. Saunders", *Foreign Relations of the United States* [FRUS], vol. XXIII, 2013, 588-9.

diverted the plane to Athens. An Ethiopian carrier took him to Cairo where he arrived on 6 October 1964 and was held under house arrest for the duration of the conference. This incident increased his popularity further on the home front.<sup>351</sup>

### 1.3.2. Rebels

The Kwilu and Simba rebellions were structurally different from the first wave of secessions and rival governments in the immediate post-independence period. Katanga, South Kasai, and Stanleyville were constellations mainly driven by political and economic concerns of political elites. The rebellions of the so-called ‘second independence’ movement were led by political elites, but relied heavily on popular support in their revolutionary fight. The *modus operandi* differed heavily as well, since the Kwilu and Simba rebellions were movements of *maquisards* or countryside resistance fighters. As shown below, the Kwilu and Simba rebellions also differed from one another in certain respects, most notably the ideological depth of their respective movements.

The Kwilu rebellion was led by Pierre Mulele, who invoked Maoism as his leading ideology. He started out as the Vice-President of the PSA, political party that, together with the MNC(L), pursued a national platform rising above single ethnicities. Prominent PSA politician Cléophas Kamitatu was influenced by the principles of social democracy, Mulele and Gizenga were more radically left-wing, certainly compared to Kamitatu or Lumumba. As the country’s Prime Minister, Lumumba always stressed his non-communist ambitions. Western state officials were aware that Lumumba was not a communist. CIA chief of station Devlin did not believe that Lumumba “was either a communist or a Soviet agent”, but “was convinced that he was being manipulated by the Soviets and that he would, sooner rather than later, fall under their control.”<sup>352</sup> Similarly, Belgian diplomats Jean-Paul Van Bellinghen and Étienne Davignon declared that Lumumba was known not to be a communist at the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>353</sup>

As already mentioned before, after becoming the Minister of National Education in the Lumumba government, Mulele became the representative of the Stanleyville government in Cairo. At that time, he began to connect with Chinese officials, which provided the basis for the later ideological foundation of the Kwilu rebellion. In early July 1963, Mulele returned to

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<sup>351</sup> Mazrui, “Moise Tshombe and the Arabs”, 1969, 291-2.

<sup>352</sup> Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, 2007, 79.

<sup>353</sup> VRT, *Boudewijn: Naar het hart van de Koning*; Krasno, and Van Bellinghen, *The Congo Operation*, 4 March 1991, 39-40. <[dag.un.org/bitstream/handle/11176/89606/Bellinghen4Mar91TRANS.pdf](http://dag.un.org/bitstream/handle/11176/89606/Bellinghen4Mar91TRANS.pdf)>, consulted on 27 November 2020.

the Congo after a stay in Beijing and started his trainings in guerrilla warfare in the PSA heartland Kwilu. Some of the military recommendations and rules that were used during the rebellion were transposed from writings of Mao, notably the *Three Rules of Discipline and Eight Points for Attention*.<sup>354</sup>

Whereas the Kwilu rebellion was marked by a unity of command and ideological authority of Mulele, the rebellions in the east were marred by internecine conflict, specifically at the highest level of command. On 3 October 1963, the *Conseil national de la liberation* (CNL) was founded in Leopoldville and operated from Brazzaville, where it could count on the new left-wing nationalist rule of Alphonse Massamba-Débat, replacing Youlou. The CNL would split up in February 1964 in two groups: the CNL-Gbenye, led by Christophe Gbenye and inspired by Lumumba's MNC-L, and CNL-Bocheley, led by Egide Bocheley-Davidson, inspired by the Gizenga wing of the PSA. Gbenye and Bocheley were both ministers in the Gizenga rival government. Gaston Soumialot was allied with CNL-Gbenye and was based from January 1964 in the Paguidas hotel in Bujumbura, Burundi, the same building as the provisional Chinese embassy.<sup>355</sup> Soumialot's rebels commenced their attacks in April 1964, capturing Bukavu and Albertville, where he established the *Provisional government of the CNL – eastern section*. Soumialot became the Minister of Defence. Almost two-thirds of the Congolese territory was now under rebel control. By August, the rebels have captured Stanleyville and eventually, on 5 September 1964, the *People's Republic of the Congo* was proclaimed. Gbenye became the President and Head of Government.<sup>356</sup> After the international military operations in November, the rebels dispersed and posed no immediate threat anymore to the Congolese central government. In March 1965, a Cuban unit led by Che Guevara arrived in Congo for training operations, only to leave a few months later.

Contrary to the 1961 Gizenga rival government, the legitimacy of the provisional government was never accepted by any state.<sup>357</sup> The SU, PRC, and revolutionary African states such as the UAR did not take the risk of a premature recognition, given the rapid succession of events and recollection of the ill-fated Gizenga government. Furthermore, the personal struggles between the rebel commanders and schisms of the CNL did not provide a solid base for external support. Unlike the smaller Kwilu rebellion, the Simba rebellion was rather based

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<sup>354</sup> For a discussion on Mulele's *Partisans' Code*, see Verhaegen, "Le code des partisans", *Rébellions au Congo*, Tome I, 1966, 120-4.

<sup>355</sup> Berner, "Peking und der kongolesische Partisanenkrieg", 1966, 611.

<sup>356</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1964*, 1965, 267.

<sup>357</sup> Berner, "Peking und der kongolesische Partisanenkrieg", 1966, 613.

on party politics and soon began to organise a more institutionalised proto-state. Despite the hosting of rebel forces in Brazzaville and Bujumbura, as well as the many calls for international support by Gbenye, Olenga, Bocheley, Soumialot, and Kanza, they did not receive any notable external political support. A delegation headed by Bocheley was sent out to the OAU meeting in Cairo in July 1964, but was banned from the conference.

## 2. Mobutu's Zaire

*“Dès 1965, le Congo opta d'emblée pour une politique d'influence et une politique d'indépendance, la première en Afrique, plus particulièrement en Afrique Centrale, la seconde à l'égard de ses partenaires traditionnels du monde occidental notamment la Belgique, la France et les USA.”*<sup>358</sup>

Isidore Ndaywel è Nziem

*“Stratégie du régime à l'égard de l'étranger: Cette stratégie se traduit par la diplomatie de la dépendance.”*<sup>359</sup>

Nguza Karl-I-Bond

The diplomacy and international politics of the Congo/Zaire under Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, later Mobutu Sese Seko, oscillated between independence and dependence. After Mobutu's second coup d'état on 24 November 1965, there was a certain sigh of relief among Congolese as well as foreign observers. The new President would carefully cultivate his qualification of 'pacifier' and portray himself as an indispensable asset for his country's peace. Through repressive means – ranging from mock trials and execution of political adversaries to the quelling of protests – Mobutu quickly consolidated his authority and expertly balanced several international audiences against one another for his own political gain. His obvious closeness to western powers such as the US, France, and Belgium, was complemented by an effort to become one of Africa's regional leaders by cynically reviving a partial reading of Lumumbism, establishing the nation-building *recours à l'authenticité*, and intensifying Congo/Zaire's presence on regional fora such as the organisation of the 1967 OAU summit in Kinshasa and failed attempt

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<sup>358</sup> “Since 1965, Congo straight away decided for a policy of influence and a policy of independence, the former in Africa, more specifically in Central Africa, the latter with regard to its traditional partners of the western world, notably Belgium, France, and the US.” Ndaywel è Nziem, *Histoire générale du Congo*, 1998, 696.

<sup>359</sup> “Regime strategy vis-à-vis foreign countries: this strategy translates to a *diplomacy of dependency*.” Nguza Karl-i-Bond, *Un avenir pour le Zaïre*, 1985, 31 [Emphasis in the original].

at creating the *Ligue des états négro-africains*. This helped to legitimise his grip on power from the perspective of several international partners. Dunn and Englebert's reference book *Inside African Politics* noted that states in Africa have become detached from its domestic societies and had to rely more and more on external sources of support and legitimacy in order to survive. The authors used Mobutu's Zaire as a poignant example. Towards the end of Mobutu's time in office, they wrote, the central government's authority "barely extended beyond [...] Kinshasa, while Mobutu and his cadre maintained their claim to rule through the international norm of juridical sovereignty, foreign assistance, and lucrative contracts with global economic actors."<sup>360</sup>

Similar to the period of the First Republic, scholarship and broader literature about Congolese/Zairean politics predominantly blended competent writing with a closeness to the subject. The regime change also engendered profound changes to the Congolese academic landscape. Just like ambitious Congolese politicians, academics based in Congo had to choose between their continuing residency in Congo or conducting critical scholarship outside the country. Mudimbe was invited to become a member of the MPR's Central Committee, but refused and went to the US where he became a naturalised US citizen.<sup>361</sup> In 1971, the African section of the CRISP could not operate in Congo anymore due to local political pressure.<sup>362</sup> They closed its African section, at the same time as founding the *Centre d'études et de documentation africaines* (CEDAF) in Brussels. CEDAF authors barely addressed the political situation in the Congo/Zaire in order not to jeopardise the possibility of travelling to the country and cooperation with Congolese researchers.<sup>363</sup> Verhaegen, inaugural director of the CEDAF, lived and worked in Congo as a professor at the University of Kisangani, transformed into the Kisangani campus of the University of Zaire. He would be joined by de Villers in 1987.<sup>364</sup>

According to Benoît Henriët, academic life in the Congo of the 1960s was remarkably stable.<sup>365</sup> A Lubumbashi political science professor in the early 1970s declared that he could work with "no constraint" from MPR officials and "in absolute freedom".<sup>366</sup> Nevertheless, it became all but impossible to conduct any critical research on the nature of the leadership in

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<sup>360</sup> Dunn, and Englebert, *Inside African Politics*, 2013, 400.

<sup>361</sup> Fraiture, and Orrells, "Introduction", in Fraiture, and Orrells (eds.), *The Mudimbe Reader*, 2016, xv.

<sup>362</sup> See Gérard-Libois, "Le CRISP, le Zaïre et l'Histoire immédiate", in Omasombo Tshonda (ed.), *Le Zaïre à l'épreuve de l'histoire immédiate*, 1993, 243-6.

<sup>363</sup> de Villers, *Histoire du politique*, 2016, 16.

<sup>364</sup> de Villers, "A la mémoire de Benoît Verhaegen", 2010, 274.

<sup>365</sup> Henriët, "Decolonizing African History", 2022, 340.

<sup>366</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, "Decolonizing African History", 2022, 348.

place. The editorial of the first volume of the Lubumbashi campus-led journal *Cahiers zaïrois d'études politiques et sociales*, released in 1973, expressed a desire to mobilise the Zairean academic world for Mobutu's 'revolution'. "[B]y devoting itself to science," the Director of the Lubumbashi campus Koli Elombe Motukoa wrote, "the Zairean elite can efficaciously take part in the oeuvre of the Revolution and in the edification of our country."<sup>367</sup>

Like the section on the First Republic, this section examines political developments outside the traditional scope of international relations as well. Internal measures taken by the Zairean leadership such as the creation of new constitutions in 1967 and 1974, or the reappropriation of Lumumba's legacy were mainly intended to address domestic needs, or needs of the leadership, but they also served as a strategy of extraversion. In the case of *recours à l'authenticité* and other discourses constructed by Mobutu and his supporters, Dunn summarised that "these discourses on Zaïrian national identity were produced for *international* consumption as much, if not more so, than for a domestic audience."<sup>368</sup> Similarly, taking into account the necessity of the Zairean leaders to maintain their international partnerships, their actions at the domestic level were often influenced by that requirement – to retain their legitimacy on the continent and shake off Mobutu's reputation as 'stooge of the West', for instance, while at the same time maintaining their alliance with Belgium, France, the US, and other western states.

This section is divided in three parts. Firstly, it will look at the engagement of Zairean state actors with the Global South. Secondly, the same actors' engagement with the West will be discussed. Finally, this section ends with a discussion on the diplomacy of elite political exiles, who defied their previous employer, the Zairean state.

## 2.1. Global South

### 2.1.1. Consolidation

With Lieutenant-General Joseph-Désiré Mobutu proclaiming himself the new President of the Republic and appointing Colonel Léonard Mulamba as the new Prime Minister in the early morning of 25 November 1965, the new military leadership immediately tried to establish close partnerships with African countries. Although CIA Chief of Station Larry Devlin denied instigating the coup,<sup>369</sup> the closeness of Mobutu with the CIA and Belgian security services spawned a justified suspicion on the side of African countries. Devlin's memoirs reveal some

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<sup>367</sup> Motukoa, "Éditorial: Contribution à la révolution zaïroise", 1973, 10.

<sup>368</sup> Dunn, *Imagining the Congo*, 2003, 116 [Emphasis in the original].

<sup>369</sup> Devlin, *Chief of Station*, 2007, 234.

hesitation but relief at the same time, since Mobutu was a partner of the US: “[t]here was no point [...] in voicing my skepticism”, he wrote. “It was a *fait accompli*, and it was in our interest to maintain friendly relations with the new regime. In Cold War terms, the new government would be on our side and unfriendly to the Soviet Union.”<sup>370</sup> The new leaders already voiced their solidarity with the African continent through the statement of the ANC high command revoking Kasa-Vubu and Prime Minister Évariste Kimba on 25 November: “the international politics of Congo, African country, will be inspired by the interests of the African continent as a whole. In that constellation of ideas, the politics of entente between the Congo and the African countries will be pursued and continued.”<sup>371</sup>

Reactions in Africa were initially generally favourable towards Mobutu’s accession to power. In Ghana, Nkrumah appreciated Mobutu’s position against the Portuguese territories in Africa and in favour of African unity.<sup>372</sup> Nyerere proposed starting conversations between Congo and Tanzania about economic and commercial agreements. Tanzania also claimed to stop its backing of the Congolese rebels.<sup>373</sup> Mobutu’s initial search for legitimacy on the continent seemed to work.

The goals of Mobutu cannot be exclusively condensed to the consolidation and survival of his authority. When looking at Christopher Clapham’s *Africa and the International System*, the book’s subtitle fittingly reads *The Politics of State Survival*. According to the author, survival is not the only goal of political elites, but nonetheless a *sine qua non* for the pursuit of any other goal. Personal survival is not a legitimate basis for political action, he wrote, and was “characteristically excluded in the rhetoric of international relations, in favour of goals which provide a more respectable rationale for their activities.”<sup>374</sup> Just like politicians of the First Republic, the actors, above all the President, aimed to be accepted as the legitimate representative of Zaire by the international system. On the international stage, the goal of personal survival was either packaged as a different and more noble goal, or supplemented by other goals. As demonstrated below, the initiatives aimed at consolidating the new leadership such as the reinstatement of Lumumba’s legacy, hanging of four politicians, and conviction and kidnapping of Tshombe was not only aimed at political survival in the form of the consolidation of power. Tshombe’s reputation as Lumumba’s assassin and Lumumba’s reputation as an

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<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>371</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1965*, 1966, 411.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, 454.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, 455.

<sup>374</sup> Clapham, *Africa and the International System*, 1996, 5.

advocate of positive neutralism was used by Mobutu to polish up his reputation by the progressive countries of the Global South.

The rejection of the politics of the First Republic ran like a thread through the consolidation phase of the new leadership. Jean-Luc Vellut summarised that during the first year of the government installed by Mobutu, two objectives characterised the Africa policy of the Congo, namely the immediate goals closely linked to domestic politics and longer-term goals to ensure that the Congo achieves an important position in the regional equilibrium of Africa. The immediate goals, he specified, were the safeguarding of the leaders' security by neutralising the foreign-backed opposition – goals clearly related to the solidification of their authority.<sup>375</sup> Besides the prominent appeal to put an end to the 'petty party politics', Mobutu had to neutralise the powerful politicians of the First Republic. Kasa-Vubu reacted rather apathic to his removal of office and presented no challenge to the new President. He went back to his region of origin, Bas-Congo, where he died in 1969, after held under house arrest by Mobutu and unable to consult a medical professional.<sup>376</sup>

A first major attack against the First Republic's political class occurred when a military tribunal sentenced to death four former ministers of several Congolese governments for alleged attempts to stage a coup d'état. The indictment was based on flimsy evidence. On 2 June 1966, these four politicians were publicly hanged in Kinshasa. Most prominently, former Foreign Affairs Minister of Katanga and final Prime Minister-Designate of the First Republic Évariste Kimba was among the executed convicts.<sup>377</sup>

In contrast to Kasa-Vubu, Mobutu's rival Tshombe continued to pose a credible threat for the new President. He was a popular politician in his region who also succeeded in significantly reducing the rebellions in 1964-1965 and had important contacts in international right-wing, far-right, and mercenary circles. He was therefore the greatest danger for Mobutu.<sup>378</sup> He went into exile in Madrid for a second time in December 1965, where he organised a possible return to power.<sup>379</sup> He was removed as an MP and lost his parliamentary immunity in May 1966 for critiquing the Congo's politics in the *contentieux*. On 30 June, symbolic date for the country,

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<sup>375</sup> Vellut, "La politique africaine du Congo", in CRISP, *Congo 1966, 1967*, 473.

<sup>376</sup> Young, and Turner, *The Rise and Decline*, 1985, 50; Kasa-Vubu, *Kasa-Vubu et le Congo indépendant*, 1997, 168-72.

<sup>377</sup> See for instance the conclusions of the *Conférence nationale souveraine*. "Période allant de 1965 à 1971", 1992. <[documents.fr/document/periode-allant-de-1965-a-1971-fra-a2-actespdf-cns-92-francais-avdh.html](http://documents.fr/document/periode-allant-de-1965-a-1971-fra-a2-actespdf-cns-92-francais-avdh.html)>, consulted on 20 May 2021.

<sup>378</sup> Larmer, and Kennes, *The Katangese Gendarmes*, 2016, 72.

<sup>379</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1966, 1967*, 340; Larmer, and Kennes, *The Katangese Gendarmes*, 2016, 73.

Mobutu accused Tshombe of high treason by signing the Spaak/Tshombe agreement of February 1965 (cf. chapter five).<sup>380</sup> The next month, ex-Katangese gendarmes and white mercenaries who remained integrated in the ANC but enjoyed significant autonomy, performed a mutiny in Kisangani and killed Colonel Joseph-Damien Tshatshi. Tshombe's involvement remains unclear,<sup>381</sup> but this was another event that sparked some concern by the Congolese leaders and was a catalyst for a swift neutralisation of Tshombe. In March 1967, Tshombe was sentenced to death *in absentia*, motivated by four main misdeeds: the proclamation of Katangese independence, the "alienation of the economic independence of the country" by signing the Spaak/Tshombe agreements, organising a mercenary army and inciting subversive activities within the ANC to bring down the new leadership, and financing subversive publications such as *Le Léopard Libre*.<sup>382</sup>

A great deal about Tshombe's activities in Madrid and the later course of events remains unclear to this day, partially because of heuristics problems pertaining to the study of subversive activities, covert operations, and involvement of international intelligence services. On 30 June 1967, once more on the anniversary of Congolese independence, Tshombe's business plane was hijacked by Francis Bodenan, while on its way to Palma de Mallorca after a one-day excursion on Ibiza.<sup>383</sup> Bodenan forced the pilots to set course to Algiers, where Tshombe was tried. The Algerian court approved his extradition to the Congo but did not implement it – the final clearance was not provided. Tshombe died almost exactly two years after his kidnapping, on 29 June 1969 in Algiers.

French criminal Bodenan was just released from prison in 1966 after serving his sentence for a double murder in 1955. The most plausible hypothesis regarding the instruction to 'neutralise' Tshombe is that the Congolese Ambassador in Brussels Bernardin Mungul Diaka asked Bodenan to infiltrate in Tshombe's inner circle and, later, to kidnap him.<sup>384</sup> Mungul Diaka later confirmed that the hijacker was working for the Congolese secret police.<sup>385</sup> However, many authors such as Colette Braeckman, and Young and Turner, deem it unlikely that the Congolese acted on their own without any help from foreign secret services.<sup>386</sup> Bodenan

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<sup>380</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1966, 1967*, 345.

<sup>381</sup> Larmer, and Kennes, *The Katangese Gendarmes*, 2016, 76.

<sup>382</sup> Piraux, "La condamnation et l'enlèvement de Moïse Tshombe", in CRISP, *Congo 1967, 1968*, 316; *Le Courrier d'Afrique*, 30 March 1967.

<sup>383</sup> Wiame, "L'enlèvement de Tshombe: Crime sans coupable", *Pourquoi Pas?*, 18 February 1982, 42.

<sup>384</sup> This hypothesis was espoused by Bodenan himself. Diallo, and Buana Kabue, "Le rapt de Moïse Tshombe", *Jeune Afrique*, 24 October 1975, 61-2.

<sup>385</sup> Interview with Colette Braeckman in Augustijnen, "Cher Pourquoi Pas?", *A Prior*, 14, 2007.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*; Young, and Turner, *The Rise and Decline*, 1985, 419n25.

founded the Liechtenstein-based company Sédéfi as a front for his ploy. The company was located in the same building as the CIA front WIGMO.<sup>387</sup> Sédéfi was led by lawyer Alfred Bühler, who was also an administrator at WIGMO.<sup>388</sup> Bodenan dissolved Sédéfi on 5 July 1967.<sup>389</sup> Pierre Davister, who maintained close amiable and financial ties with Mobutu, was involved in the kidnapping. A letter sent to an examining magistrate during the Belgian investigation claimed that Davister worked for the “Zairean political police for Europe since 1967” and that he recruited Bodenan.<sup>390</sup>

By the time of Tshombe’s kidnapping, African decision-makers disliked Tshombe, who was regarded as a sell-out to the western powers and racist regimes in southern Africa. Mobutu not only dissociated himself and his government from ‘Africa’s enemy’, but actively removed him from any position of political influence. As Young and Turner accurately concluded, besides the actual threat of Tshombe’s political clout, there was an “evident advantage to the regime in brandishing a Tshombe menace” and provided “invaluable legitimation in milieux suspicious of the close American ties of Mobutu, who was prone to be seen as ‘a running dog of imperialism.’”<sup>391</sup> Mobutu thus safeguarded his authority by neutralising Tshombe and increased his legitimacy through the framing of Tshombe as a menace.

On the other hand, even after his assassination, the legacy of Mobutu’s old ally Lumumba was hanging like a Sword of Damocles over Mobutu’s political future. Mobutu was Lumumba’s secretary in 1960, but became implicated in the assassination of his former employer, which could jeopardise his standing in the Congo as well as abroad. In a cynical but effective move, Mobutu co-opted Lumumba’s image from 1966. On 30 June, the Congolese President held a speech in the context of the sixth anniversary of the country’s independence. He officially announced that Patrice Lumumba become the national hero and renamed Kinshasa’s main *Boulevard Léopold III* into *Boulevard Patrice Emery Lumumba*.<sup>392</sup> On the anniversary of the second coup, he ended a long speech by declaring the Brouwez Farmhouse, the place where Lumumba, Mpolo, and Okito were tortured before being moved to their execution place, a centre of international pilgrimage.<sup>393</sup> Just like the political neutralisation of Tshombe, the

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<sup>387</sup> Interview with Colette Braeckman in Augustijnen, “Cher Pourquoi Pas?”, *A Prior*, 14, 2007.

<sup>388</sup> KU Leuven University Archive, WDB, Folder 5.16 Bodenan, Tsjombe, “Report Guillaume Jans”, 30 August 1967.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>390</sup> KU Leuven University Archive, WDB, Letter of Muller to Joseph Durand, 20 May 1972, Folder 5.16 “Bodenan, Tsjombe”.

<sup>391</sup> Young, and Turner, *The Rise and Decline*, 1985, 57.

<sup>392</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1966, 1967*, 120.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

political rehabilitation of Lumumba's legacy was as much a foreign as a domestic policy objective. About the awarding of national hero status to Lumumba, Pierre Petit specified that Mobutu

“did not aim to recuperate the hypothetical devotion people had for Lumumba (signs of which were minimal before this date, except for some political elites): he wanted to take advantage of Lumumba's huge popularity abroad. [...] [H]e became a ‘national hero’ in the Congo mainly because he had been recognised as a ‘hero of Africa’ outside the country.”<sup>394</sup>

Manu Ruys saw in Mobutu's consolidation efforts a return to Lumumbist philosophy.<sup>395</sup> Besides the defeat of federalism, made possible through the neutralisation of Tshombe and centralisation of the state, the “dissidents” were defeated,<sup>396</sup> with which Ruys probably meant the mercenary uprisings of 1966 and 1967. Moreover, Lumumba claimed that political independence also called for a suppression of foreign economic dominance, which was realised under Mobutu by Zairianisation, according to Ruys. “Only on the level of foreign policy”, Ruys argued, “he would continue to refuse [Lumumba's] neutralist ‘third way’. Despite the trips to the Soviet Union, India, and the Chinese People's Republic, he stayed a loyal ally of the western states.”<sup>397</sup> Zairianisation did not engender the suppression of foreign economic dominance, but a mobilisation of the Bretton Woods institutions. Ruys also misinterpreted Lumumba's neutralism, which did not anticipate a breach with western states.

Another domestic measure that appealed to foreign audiences was the consolidation of the one-party state. As a prelude, the Corps of Volunteers of the Republic (*Corps des volontaires de la république*, CVR) arose in early 1966 out of an amalgam of radical youth movements combatting “neo-colonialism” and “imperialism” curtailing economic and political development in Congo.<sup>398</sup> Mobutu obtained the first membership card of the movement whose precise relationship to the country's political world was yet to be defined. The resolutions of a CVR conference held in December 1966 disambiguated the organisation's political motives: diplomatic relations based on non-interference in internal affairs; “only force”, though not

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<sup>394</sup> Petit, “Official Miniatures: The Figure of Patrice Lumumba”, in De Groof (ed.), *Lumumba in the Arts*, 2020, 381 and 386.

<sup>395</sup> Ruys, *Vijfentwintig jaar Kongo-Zaire*, 1985, 41.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>398</sup> Wording of article 1 of the statutes of the *Ligue des Jeunes Vigilants, Congo 1966, 1967*, 38-39. Cf. *Moniteur Congolais*, n°2 du 15 janvier 1966.

specified which kind of force, as a solution to the problems of Angola, Rhodesia, and South Africa; rejection of “tribalism” and *la politicaille*,<sup>399</sup> a reference to the political troubles during the Congo Crisis, particularly the federalist current; and, significantly, the creation of one or two political parties, “freed from their tribal ideologies and contrary to the interests of the Congolese people.”<sup>400</sup>

In order to break the spine of the politics of the First Republic, the 1964 Luluabourg constitution had to disappear. This document envisaged a federal state with far-reaching decision power for the provinces and a bicameral semi-presidential system. As a compromise meant to reconcile the office of the President with the federalist centrifugal forces in the country, the Luluabourg constitution was an impediment to Mobutu’s authoritarian and centralist agenda. The constitution of 24 June 1967, adopted by referendum by 97,8 percent of the voters, provided the creation of maximum two political parties, a reduction of the provinces to eight plus the capital of Kinshasa, and a monocameral system.<sup>401</sup> It gave far-reaching executive powers to the president, who had no term limits. When Lumumbist Antoine Kiwewa attempted to found the MNC(L) as a supra-ethnic second party, Mobutu immediately cut short his effort to create a political opposition to the MPR by affirming that two parties cannot back the same revolution.<sup>402</sup>

With Lumumba reinstated, Tshombe neutralised, and at least the appearance of economic independence, the Congo’s foreign policy opened up for a credible alignment with African countries. Through the use of different strategies, members of the Congolese government exerted their authority over the whole territory and became more credible spokespeople for the Congolese state. For the first time in the country’s history of independence, there were no secessions anymore, the Simba and Mulele rebellions were quelled, and the mercenary uprisings of 1966 and 1967 were also soon terminated. The new Head of State gained credibility among his African homologues as a pacifier and anti-imperialist. The first major international African conference after Lumumba’s Pan-African Leopoldville Conference in August 1960 was the fourth OAU summit in Kinshasa in September 1967. The organisation of the summit in itself was already a triumph for the new leadership, certainly given the ongoing mercenaries’ revolt in the east which broke out right after Tshombe’s kidnapping. Foreign Minister Bomboko

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<sup>399</sup> In French, the suffix -aille denotes a pejorative connotation to the word. ‘Politicaille’ could be translated to ‘petty (party) politics’.

<sup>400</sup> “Résolutions du Séminaire (extraits)”, *Congo 1966, 1967*, 71-8.

<sup>401</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1967, 1968*, 58.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

motivated the choice for Kinshasa as an opportunity for African states to check how their efforts in helping the Congo in its troubles bore fruit. More unofficially, Mobutu also hoped that “such an all-African gathering would strengthen his position both at home and abroad, just as Lumumba had done when, in much more desperate need for outside assistance seven years before, he called for the Leopoldville Conference.”<sup>403</sup> Of all the OAU members, only South African ally Malawi did not send any delegation. Seventeen members sent their heads of state to Kinshasa. Furthermore, Ghanaian UN civil servant Robert Gardiner, who advised Hammarskjöld on the Congo during the crisis and Executive Secretary of UNECA at the time of the summit, attended the OAU conference. UN Secretary-General U Thant was present during the closing ceremony.<sup>404</sup> Mobutu’s opening address showed his concern for economic autonomy and liberation of non-independent African countries.<sup>405</sup>

The Congo’s fragile balancing act between its attempt to become one of the leading countries in Africa and remain intimately connected with the political and business circles of western Europe and North America did have an expiration date. Positive external legitimacy requires active support of external actors. Congolese elites had to aim their strategies towards attracting this external support. At the time of the Shaba Wars in 1977 and 1978, it was clear that Mobutu relied heavily upon the US, France, and Belgium for his survival. The ill-fated Zairianisation measures of 1973 already showed the limits of the Zairean Africa and Africanisation policy. Concurrently, however, Zaire’s apex of African leadership was the President’s address to the United Nations General Assembly on 4 October 1973.<sup>406</sup> Three important topics were raised during his address: detachment from western countries and its allies, attachment to African and non-aligned countries, and *authenticité*.

The prevailing “anarchy, chaos, disorder, blindness and incapacity” during the Congo Crisis from 1960 to 1964, Mobutu argued, was mainly caused by “greed of the West and the East” whereby some “wanted to recolonize us economically, whereas others wished to dominate us ideologically.”<sup>407</sup> The main bone of contention was foreign interference in Zaire, especially colonialism and recolonisation. In 1885, the President argued, “the great slave-traders of the period met in Berlin and, like vultures, carved up the African continent among themselves.”<sup>408</sup> Belgium is only tacitly present in the speech, but Portugal, which still had

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<sup>403</sup> Nagel, and Rathbone, “The OAU at Kinshasa”, 1967, 473.

<sup>404</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1967*, 1968, 436-7.

<sup>405</sup> Nagel, and Rathbone, “The OAU at Kinshasa”, 1967, 477-8.

<sup>406</sup> “Address by General Mobutu Sese Seko”, 2140<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, 4 October 1973 [A/PV.2140 and Corr. 1].

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

several colonies on the African continent at the time, was most severely criticised by a President who spared no effort to show his detachment from colonialism. Portugal was an “economically, socially and culturally under-developed nation” without any democracy or military force whose “sole record is that of having the highest level of illiteracy in Europe.”<sup>409</sup> Finally, after vehemently disapproving colonialism, South Africa and Rhodesia, Mobutu announced the breaking-off of diplomatic relations with Israel.<sup>410</sup> Back in 1967, this rupture was one of the requests of the Algerian to the Congolese government for the extradition of Tshombe, but the price was deemed too high for Mobutu.<sup>411</sup> In 1973, the opinion of the Zairean political leadership had changed and it would take until 1982 before the relations between the two countries were restored again.<sup>412</sup>

Through his address, Mobutu showed his willingness to join forces with other African countries, not just by decrying colonialism and racism, but also by showing Zaire’s alignment with African countries. The country had an African vocation when it has to choose “between a friendly country, Israel, and a brother nation, Egypt.”<sup>413</sup> Until Egypt and the other Arab countries have recovered their territories, Mobutu stated, he would cease diplomatic relations. Zaire’s solidarity with countries of the Global South went beyond Africa. Regarding the Korean peninsula, Zaire had “excellent relations with both parts of that land, North and South, that share the votes of the Korean people.”<sup>414</sup> The speech came one year before Mobutu’s visit to North Korea and the People’s Republic of China. Mobutu lauded Sino-Zairean cooperation in his speech. Regarding financial assistance, for instance, “China has made us a large loan on a very long term and without interest. This, in my view, is a fine example to follow if you want to help an under-equipped country.”<sup>415</sup>

Finally, Mobutu outlined his political philosophy of *authenticité*, defined in his speech as “an awareness on the part of the people of Zaire that they should return to their beginnings and search for the values of their ancestors in order to appreciate the values which contribute to the country’s harmonious and natural development.”<sup>416</sup> This set of political thought, at times portrayed in academic literature as highly superficial or as a serious nation-building project, was not only an instrument of domestic policy. The very fact that the Zairean President

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<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>411</sup> Kyle, “Plot and Counter-Plot”, *The New Republic*, 16 September 1967, 15.

<sup>412</sup> Hakim, and Stevens, “Zaire and Israel”, 1983, 41-53.

<sup>413</sup> “Address by General Mobutu Sese Seko”, 2140<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, 4 October 1973, 12 [A/PV.2140].

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

explained its intricacies on the rostrum in front of the international community demonstrates the international repercussions of the *recours à l'authenticité*.

### 2.1.2. Authenticité

The different phases in the political history of Congo/Zaire from 1965 to 1997 are not separated by distinct caesurae between them. *Recours à l'authenticité* was a project of nationalism that was part of, and went beyond, the phase of consolidation. Mobutism was the extension of *authenticité* and not a radically different project. Neither did *authenticité* appear *ex nihilo*.

Mobutu described *authenticité* as an ideology as follows: “[a]uthenticité means to speak, to exist, to act, like us, Zaireans, like to and think to. That is the precise meaning of *authenticité*; this means that the sources of inspiration of our action has to be conceived and thought of by ourselves.”<sup>417</sup> Despite *authenticité* being unveiled only in 1971, some first signs presaged the institutionalised *authenticité* project. *Authenticité*, which reached cruising speed in the 1970s, was embedded in a broader campaign to showcase intellectual and cultural alignment with Africa, to the detriment of the traditional western partners. Before *authenticité*, the Council of Ministers decided on 2 May 1966 to change the toponyms of major cities throughout the country, entering into force on 1 July. As a clear dissociation from colonial-era Congo, placenames referring to King Leopold II, Queen Elisabeth, Berlin Conference negotiator Émile Banning, explorer Henry Morton Stanley and his associate Camille Coquilhat, were renamed into supposedly more authentic African names: Leopoldville changed into Kinshasa, Elisabethville into Lubumbashi, Banningville into Bandundu, Stanleyville into Kisangani, and Coquilhatville into Mbandaka.<sup>418</sup> The colonial authorities, one ideologue stated, ignored and rejected ‘authentic’ names, or “names proper to the Zairean nation”, borrowed and imported from abroad.<sup>419</sup>

The earliest incarnation of a coherent set of Mobutist political thought crystallised around the 1967 *Manifesto of N'Sele*. In line with Mao Zedong's *Little Red Book*, which was published in 1965, Mobutu bundled his teachings and aphorisms in his *Paroles du Président* (The President's Words) or *Petit Livre Vert* (Little Green Book) in 1968.<sup>420</sup>

In 1971, *authenticité* was officially unveiled at a Congress of Léopold Sédar Senghor's

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<sup>417</sup> “Authenticité elingi koloba, kozala kosala makambo ndenge oyo biso moko bana ya République du Zaïre tolingi pe tozali kokanisa, voilà le sens exact du mot authenticité, elingi koloba source d'inspiration na makambo manso tozali kosala ndenge ezali conçu, pensé par nous-mêmes.” Cited in Nguza Karl-i-Bond, “Dix ans de pouvoir”, 1976, 16.

<sup>418</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1966, 1967*, 112.

<sup>419</sup> Manwana Mungongo, *Le Général Mobutu Sese Seko*, 19.

<sup>420</sup> Mobutu, *Paroles du Président*, 1968.

*Union progressiste sénégalaise* (UPS) in Dakar, Senegal.<sup>421</sup> The location was not a coincidence, since it showed the international ambition of the project. According to Tshiyembe, *authenticité* served as an alibi to strengthen Mobutu's tyrannical power, whereas at the international level, it enhanced the historical and cultural personality of Africa.<sup>422</sup> The project had thus both domestic and international ambitions.

As the state and state party ideology, *authenticité* advocated 'positive neutralism'. Members of the government and high civil servants, Manwana Mungongo specified, regularly went on official missions to the USSR, Yugoslavia, and Romania, whereas Zaire continued to have amicable ties with western countries.<sup>423</sup> In other words, a nationalism without exclusivities, "open to all good-willed nations."<sup>424</sup>

Zaire's *authenticité* in the international system was proclaimed by Mobutu and his ideologues as "neither left nor right"<sup>425</sup>, later adding "not even in the centre." Ndaywel è Nziem concluded that Zaire's foreign policy was "all that at the same time."<sup>426</sup>

As the most well-known project of the Zairean leadership to exercise agency over its international interlocutors with regard to the promotion of political thought, Dunn characterised *authenticité* as a "counterhegemonic discourse on the Congo within international relations"<sup>427</sup>. A major source of inspiration was the cultural movement *négritude*. Among other main features of the movement, whose proponents were W.E.B. Du Bois, Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas, and Frantz Fanon, was an indictment against Africans' heritage of suffering and alienation from human dignity.<sup>428</sup> Most important representative of *négritude* for Mobutu's *authenticité* was Senegalese Poet-President Léopold Sédar Senghor. In 1989, years after *authenticité* lost its performative quality, Mobutu told a journalist that

"[f]rom a literary point of view, President Senghor, of which I have read a lot of writings, has been a role model [*modèle*] for me. I have felt that his accession as a member to the *Académie française* was a sign of reconnaissance of the rationality and

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<sup>421</sup> Young, and Turner, *The Rise and Decline*, 1985, 210.

<sup>422</sup> Tshiyembe, *La politique étrangère de la République Démocratique du Congo*, 2009, 85.

<sup>423</sup> Manwana Mungongo, *Le Général Mobutu Sese Seko*, 69.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>426</sup> Ndaywel è Nziem, *Histoire générale du Congo*, 1998, 705.

<sup>427</sup> Dunn, *Imagining the Congo*, 2003, 107.

<sup>428</sup> Bâ, *The Concept of Négritude*, 1973, 27. A more comprehensive definition of *négritude*, by Senghor, can be found on page 44, namely the "sum of the cultural values of the black world as expressed in the life, the institutions, and the works of black men; the sum of the values of the civilization of the black world."

dignity of the black man. Because the *négritude* he preached and the *authenticité* I defend are one and the same.”<sup>429</sup>

The concept of dignity (*dignité*) occupied an important place in *authenticité*. The abovementioned citation is taken from the book *Dignité pour l’Afrique*, the concept is mentioned in the national anthem *La zairoise*, and features prominently in several of Mobutu’s speeches such as the 1973 UNGA speech. Frantz Fanon argued that the land is the most essential value for colonised people: “the land, which must provide bread and, naturally, dignity.”<sup>430</sup>

Ruys evaluated Mobutist political thought as a successor to Lumumbist political thought. Mobutu rather successfully created a sense of national and political unity, thereby transcending local political affiliations and bringing them together under the MPR movement.<sup>431</sup> Moreover, the supposed African traditional values of *authenticité* and *négritude* connect the doctrine with the Pan-African movement. However, following de Villers, it is more appropriate to associate *authenticité* with Kasa-Vubu’s decolonial thought and the members of *Conscience africaine*, who argued in favour of a rehabilitation of African values in their 1956 manifesto.<sup>432</sup>

Authors disagree whether *authenticité* was mainly aimed towards foreign or domestic audiences. In addition, several authors question whether it had any performative capacity at all. David Van Reybrouck asked and answered it along these lines: “[w]as this *recours à l’authenticité* then simply a ruse? A charming ideology meant to disguise a deeper reality? Yes, it was. And that deeper reality was: Mobutu had started caring less and less about his people.”<sup>433</sup> Crawford Young called it “high in symbolic connotations of Zaïrean culture, though low in specific content.”<sup>434</sup> It would be wrong, however, to dismiss *authenticité* as an empty shell. Even when Mobutu started to care less and less about the population, he at the same time presented, as Dunn stated, “the image of a postcolonial Africa, boldly embracing the future while simultaneously grounding itself in an ancestral past.”<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>429</sup> Mobutu, *Dignité pour l’Afrique*, 1989, 37.

<sup>430</sup> Fanon, however, did not equate that understanding of dignity with ‘human dignity’, since colonial subjects have “never heard of such an ideal”. A subject, he specified, has only seen arrests, beatings, and starvation on the land. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 2004, 9.

<sup>431</sup> See in this regard Abbeloos, “Mobutu, Suharto, and the Challenges”, in Frankema, and Buelens (eds.), *Colonial Exploitation and Economic Development*, 2013, 251-73.

<sup>432</sup> de Villers, *Histoire du politique*, 2016, 106; manifesto reprinted in “Manifeste de ‘conscience africaine’ 1956”, 1960, 439-46.

<sup>433</sup> Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, 2015, 355.

<sup>434</sup> Crawford Young, “Zaire: The Unending Crisis”, 1978, 171.

<sup>435</sup> Dunn, *Imagining the Congo*, 2003, 106.

Dunn also emphasised that *authenticité* was produced for international consumption “as much, if not more so, than for a domestic audience.”<sup>436</sup> In any case, *authenticité* showed once more the entanglement between Zairean foreign and domestic politics. The ideologues were eager to show the doctrine’s alignment with Africa south of the Sahara. Kangafu-Kutumbagana quoted *Paroles du président* in his study on *authenticité*: “[w]e want to build, in the heart of Africa, not just a fatherland [*patrie*], but a negro state [*Etat nègre*], powerful, prosperous and free, guardian of continental liberation and disalienation.”<sup>437</sup> As an ideology for contemporary Africa, he wrote in 1973, it had to be “a radical revolutionary ideology without compromises with the Euro-American world”.<sup>438</sup> Foreign African leaders were inspired by Mobutu’s *authenticité*. Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Togo adopted doctrines closely related to *authenticité*.<sup>439</sup> To name one example, Togolese president Étienne Eyadéma changed his name to Gnassingbé Eyadéma.<sup>440</sup>

The final stage of the hardening of the Mobutist system took place in 1974 with the promulgation of a new Zairean constitution. Described as the “normative embodiment of the Mobutist state at its apogee”<sup>441</sup> by Young and Turner, the document definitively gave the authoritarian state a proper basis in law. Director of the MPR’s propaganda institute *Makanda Kabobi* and later First State Commissioner Mpinga Kasenda explained that decentralisation as in the 1964 Luluabourg constitution is not feasible in the Zairean context.<sup>442</sup> He told a Belgian audience that “[w]e are in the process of enriching our current-day political vocabulary”<sup>443</sup> by deliberately putting aside foreign political systems. Zaireans “do not need to go all the way to Montesquieu to determine their form of governance [*pouvoir*].”<sup>444</sup> The 1974 constitution embedded the MPR as the single national movement which not only assembled the whole population but also took over the primary functions of the state.<sup>445</sup> The MPR’s President is

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<sup>436</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>437</sup> Cited in Kangafu-Kutumbagana, *Discours sur l’authenticité*, 1973, 24.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>439</sup> Brooke, “In Congo, Fashion From a Suitcase”, *The New York Times*, 17 March 1988, 14.

<sup>440</sup> Ellis, “Rumour and Power in Togo”, 1993, 464.

<sup>441</sup> Young, and Turner, *The Rise and Decline*, 1985, 69.

<sup>442</sup> Mpinga Kasenda, “Le Zaïre d’aujourd’hui”, 1975, 91.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>445</sup> Article 8: “*Le peuple zaïrois est organisé au sein du Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution*”; Article 28: “*En République du Zaïre, il n’existe qu’une seule institution, le Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution, qu’incarne son Président*”; Article 29: “*Le Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution est la nation zaïroise organisée politiquement*”. “*Digitèque de matériaux juridiques et politiques*”, University of Perpignan. <mjp.univ-perp.fr/constit/cd1974.htm>, consulted on 15 April 2021.

*ex officio [de droit]* President of the Republic as well.<sup>446</sup>

The new constitution almost caricaturally revised *authenticité* as ‘Mobutism’. The *Bureau politique*, powerful institution that outlined the MPR’s ideology and political course, was the guarantor of Mobutism and determined cases of “deviationism”.<sup>447</sup> Mpinga Kasenda clarified that Mobutism is a doctrine containing “the ideas, teachings and the action of the President-Founder of the *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* which made Zaire and the Zaireans what they are today.”<sup>448</sup> Kinshasa-based newspaper *Salongo* stated that “it is as correct to speak of ‘Mobutism’ as authenticity since he is its inspiration and incarnation.”<sup>449</sup> Although there were several similarities between *authenticité* and *Mobutism* such as their clear instrumentalisation for a political agenda, they were, however, not the same.

The most important difference between the two doctrines was their intellectual depth. *Authenticité* was part of a more general conception of the Zairean state. It showed an alignment with African countries and provided a balance between supposed traditional values and acknowledgement of contemporary rational thought – *recours à l’authenticité* did not equal *retour à l’authenticité*. On the other hand, Mobutism was a true fig leaf, an empty shell inspired by Mobutu’s visits to North Korea and the People’s Republic of China. The transposition of Mao’s and Kim’s cults of personality to the Zairean context was skilfully realised by Mobutu. He later said about Mobutism that “[i]t is not a cult of personality. We have already talked about Gaullism when General de Gaulle was still alive. Mobutism is the set of nationalist ideas incarnated in the institutions, the whole forming a coherent philosophy which imposes itself as a doctrine.”<sup>450</sup>

### 2.1.3. Later developments

Young and Turner declared that, when they started their book project of *The Rise and Decline* in 1973, they “witnessed the first phases of what was to become a crisis of the state itself.”<sup>451</sup> Their theoretical vantage point on authoritarianism became outdated as time progressed. Instead, their final manuscript was more focused on the condition of the Zairean state.<sup>452</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>446</sup> Article 30: “Le Président du Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution est de droit Président de la République et détient la plénitude de l’exercice du pouvoir.” Ibid. <mjp.univ-perp.fr/constit/cd1974.htm>, consulted on 15 April 2021.

<sup>447</sup> Article 46.

<sup>448</sup> Mpinga Kasenda, “Le Zaïre d’aujourd’hui”, 1975, 97.

<sup>449</sup> “Le recours à l’authenticité...”, *Salongo*, 22 March 1974, 2.

<sup>450</sup> Mobutu, *Dignité pour l’Afrique*, 1989, 99-100.

<sup>451</sup> Young, and Turner, *The Rise and Decline*, 1985, xiv.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid., xiv-xv.

at the time of publication in 1985, the state was in a deep crisis. Politicians were more and more faced with difficulties to demonstrate their allegiance to other African states. The role of Mobutu as an ally of African emancipation and economic liberation became harder to maintain. Mobutism was more a sign of the President's decreasing legitimacy and increasing anxiety rather than a strengthening of his position. Zaire's rising reliance on western partners was most explicit during the Shaba Wars and, later, multiple visits of Mobutu to the US under Ronald Reagan. On the other hand, Mobutu did not entirely abandon his aspirations to play a leading role in the regional politics of sub-Saharan Africa.

In front of an audience of Senegalese journalists in 1984, he launched the idea of an organisation of sub-Saharan African states, the *Ligue des Etats négro-africains*.<sup>453</sup> Many reasons exist why this project turned out to be stillborn.

Firstly, political ideologues could not come up with a solid motivation to establish an organisation of 'negro-African' (*négro-africain*) states, in between the regional organisations such as ECOWAS, and the OAU. Malagasy politician and author on *négritude* Jacques Rabemananjara compared the *Ligue des Etats négro-africains* to the Arab League in an institutional way and to *authenticité* in an ideological way.<sup>454</sup> Ntombolo Mutuala, who wrote a treatise on the embryonic organisation, backed up its *raison d'être* by referring to both regional justifications such as Africa's distant past as cradle of civilisation and common belief in one God and the spirit world, as well as internal reasons such as the failure of the First Republic. Practical considerations, besides some indeterminate references to the need for concertation and strengthening of the OAU, were simply unavailable.<sup>455</sup>

Secondly, the term 'negro-African' does not only imply an association with *négritude*, but also a separation from the Arab world. Almost ten years after Zaire broke off diplomatic relations with Israel, the countries re-established their ties in 1982 (cf. supra).<sup>456</sup>

## 2.2. Western partners

### 2.2.1. Consolidation

Mobutu's Zaire generated scholarly interest for its connections with the US, Belgium, and other western players, more so than its connections with other African countries. The close contacts

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<sup>453</sup> Ntombolo Mutuala, *Ligue des Etats négro-africains*, 1986, 9.

<sup>454</sup> Jacques Rabemananjara, "La marginalisation de l'Afrique et la Ligue des États négro-africains", in Ibrahima Baba Kaké (ed.), *Conflit belgo-zairois*, 1990, 166.

<sup>455</sup> Ntombolo Mutuala, *Ligue des Etats négro-africains*, 1986.

<sup>456</sup> Hakim, and Stevens, "Zaire and Israel", 1983, 41.

between Mobutu and CIA's Larry Devlin in the run-up and aftermath of his second coup d'état were followed by a strong alignment with the United States, virtually until the end of the Cold War. Although the Zairean decision-makers acted according to their proper logic and were never glove puppets of western players, this western backing was indispensable for the rise and survival of the Mobutist system.

The recipe of the close relationships with western partners was generally speaking quite straightforward. Joseph-Désiré Mobutu was perceived as the guarantor of stability in Central Africa and, most importantly, political alignment with the capitalist world. The different bilateral relationships did vary, however. The US regarded its relationship with Zaire mainly from an orthodox Cold War perspective, whereas Belgium, as a minor power, saw its relationship as an opportunity to amplify its influence on the international scene, next to the protection of the relatively large Belgian community in the country. In the early 1970s, close personal ties existed between the Zairean President and Belgian political circles (cf. *infra*). Finally, France was initially less interested in a strong connection with the new leadership in the country with the largest francophone community, but became more invested under Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and even kept a close bilateral relationship until well into the 1990s.

During the run-up to the 24 November coup d'état, Mobutu requested a \$100 000 financial contribution from the CIA in order to ensure payment of officers during the tense political situation in November 1965. The CIA paid an undisclosed amount to Mobutu, which was approved shortly after the coup d'état. Thus, the CIA and the covert operations oversight office 303 Committee did not annul or change their policy since Mobutu's rise to power "was not deemed to alter the need for the program."<sup>457</sup> The day after Mobutu's coup, US Ambassador McMurtrie Godley informed the State Department about Mobutu, that "while he will endeavor maintain good relations with all African states, his regime will insure that Communist influence is not felt in Congo" and that he "repeatedly stressed he is counting on American friendship and support and commented that if his govt fails, it will result in complete chaos in Congo, a situation which, he thought, would almost certainly spread to neighboring countries."<sup>458</sup> The 'Mobutu or chaos' myth was born and would guide US policy for decades to come. Mobutu successfully portrayed himself for the next decades as the indispensable safeguard of western interests in Central Africa. The 'Mobutu or chaos' myth dictated that the exit of Mobutu from the political stage would mean the danger of a communist takeover in the Congo/Zaire, and an

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<sup>457</sup> "450. Memorandum for the 303 Committee", FRUS, vol. XXIII, 2013, 655.

<sup>458</sup> "453. Telegram From the Embassy in the Congo to the Department of State", FRUS, vol. XXIII, 2013, 659.

existential threat to the European population and western access to economic activities in the country. This resonates with Buzan, Waeber, and de Wilde, who argued that some nondemocratic governments could securitise their own survival “directly without embarrassment.”<sup>459</sup> In this case, Mobutu securitised his own survival, instead of the whole government. When looking at the level of individual politicians, Mobutu’s own political survival superseded any political survival of any other politician.

The new President’s well-defined anti-communist stance and proximity to the CIA made his primary anti-communist rival Tshombe redundant. In other words, the enemy of America’s friend became America’s enemy. The kidnapping of Tshombe was therefore only met with minimal resistance. Although Devlin denied any involvement in the kidnapping<sup>460</sup> and CIA involvement in the kidnapping is far from established, the CIA front organisation WIGMO was housed in the same building in Vaduz as Sédéfi (cf. supra).<sup>461</sup> The US did not want a second spectacular execution like Kimba’s, but according to *The New Republic*, a quiet and private execution of Tshombe would not cause a great stir.<sup>462</sup> After Tshombe’s death, Étienne Davignon, *Chef de cabinet* to the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs Pierre Harmel wanted to prevent the funeral service in Belgium to avoid possible manifestations.<sup>463</sup> Eventually, the funeral took place in Ixelles, Belgium, without any manifestations.<sup>464</sup> Gaspard Mwepu, Congolese student who held a politically charged eulogy, was expelled from Belgium. In short, Mobutu could immediately count on the support of the US and Belgium.

### 2.2.2. Authenticité

In their interaction with international partners, Zairean decision-makers used an effective blend of hard and soft power. Their agency partly lay in choosing the right repertoire for the right audiences. *Recours à l’authenticité* resonated with Global South audiences but was less useful for western ones. Nevertheless, several western observers appreciated the nation-building exercise. The self-declared ‘Bantu’ notion that there could only be one chief was accepted by several journalists empathising with Mobutu. Walter Geerts wrote that he could talk with the

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<sup>459</sup> Buzan, Waeber, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework For Analysis*, 1998, 56.

<sup>460</sup> Cf. his testimony for the documentary “Tshombe: Het eindspel”, *Histories*, 2005.

<sup>461</sup> Braeckman in Augustijnen, *Cher Pourquoi Pas?*, 2007.

<sup>462</sup> Kyle, “Plot and Counter-Plot: What Happened in the Congo”, *The New Republic*, 16 September 1967, 16.

<sup>463</sup> “Tshombe: Het eindspel”, 2005.

<sup>464</sup> Through the irony of history, Patrice Lumumba Square was unveiled on 30 June 2018, about 100 metres from the Methodist church where Tshombe’s funeral ceremony took place.

President on the same “Bantu wavelength” (*Bantugolflechte*),<sup>465</sup> whereas Manu Ruys believed that “according to African custom, there was only room for one chief.”<sup>466</sup>

Several aspects of *authenticité* did appeal to western audiences. *Authenticité* ideologues inserted western ideas and thinkers into their political thought. In his genealogy of the concept of *authenticité*, Kangafu-Kutumbagana cited Michel Foucault, Sartre, Camus, Heidegger, among others.<sup>467</sup> Similarly, Manwana Mungongo drew upon Belgian missionary Placide Tempels’ standard work *Bantu philosophy*.<sup>468</sup> ‘Life force’, the central theme of Tempels’ book, was repackaged by Manwana Mungongo to serve the purposes of *authenticité*. A chief is authoritarian because he is a Bantu. The Bantu philosophy of vital force, Manwana Mungongo added, prescribes spontaneous obedience to strong authorities, which is not at all enslavement.<sup>469</sup> Finally, Belgian anthropologist Jan Vansina coined the term ‘zaire’ for the national currency at a dinner with Mobutu in 1967, predating the renaming of the country by four years.<sup>470</sup>

Even when *authenticité* did not spark great enthusiasm in the West, its harmless character for western audiences underlined the careful balancing act between different audiences. Through the appropriation of western thinkers, *authenticité* provided a familiar image to the West.<sup>471</sup> Dunn summarised that Mobutu “was accepted by the West because, in large part, he was not threatening western notions of the Self while simultaneously reinforcing their notions of the African Other.”<sup>472</sup>

### 2.2.3. Later developments

A common view regarding the evolution of Zairean relations with western partners revolves around the idea that they were strong until the end of the Cold War when Mobutu’s presence became an embarrassment. At the very end of his time in office, Mobutu was left with virtually no international friends, but the process of reaching that moment was marked by a gradual erosion rather than a sudden collapse in 1989 or 1991.

The Zairean state as a solid authoritarian monolith, embodied by the 1974 constitution,

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<sup>465</sup> Walter Geerts, *Mobutu: De man van Kamanyola* (Leuven, Davidsfonds, 2005), 9; the author, *Interview Walter Zinzen*.

<sup>466</sup> Ruys, *Vijfentwintig jaar Kongo-Zaire*, 1985, 64.

<sup>467</sup> Kangafu-Kutumbagana, *Discours sur l’authenticité*, 1973, 17-18.

<sup>468</sup> Tempels, *Bantoe-filosofie*, 1946.

<sup>469</sup> Manwana Mungongo, *Le Général Mobutu*, 76.

<sup>470</sup> Interview of Jacques de Groote by Jean-Pierre Langellier in Langellier, *Mobutu*, 2017, 169.

<sup>471</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Imagining the Congo*, 2003, 118: “By employing Western, mainly Belgian, knowledge of the Congo, Mobutu was able to present the West with an image it already understood and accepted as ‘authentic.’”

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

state party MPR, and Mobutist cult of personality, already showed several cracks in the 1970s. After the economically disastrous Zairianisation measures, the First Shaba War inspired Mobutu to hold his speech on the ‘Zairean sickness’ (*Le mal zairois*) at the MPR Congress on 25 November 1977. This seeming *mea culpa* of the Zairean leadership entailed that the MPR cadres and militants alike achieve the opposite of the MPR’s constitutional motto ‘*servir et non se servir*’.<sup>473</sup> As a shrewd diplomat, Mobutu provided western audiences with answers to their concerns about corruption and bad governance. His rhetoric resulted in a recovery plan, the *Plan Mobutu*, which included certain liberalisation measures such as the reestablishment of the position of Prime Minister, now called First State Commissioner (*Premier commissaire d’Etat*).<sup>474</sup>

After Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs Henri Simonet and his *Chef de cabinet*, Mobutu confidant Alfred Cahen, wanted to maintain a close relationship between Belgium and Zaire (1977-1980),<sup>475</sup> bilateral relations declined under Minister of External Relations Leo Tindemans (1981-1989). The 1983 Africa Note declared a “new age” of Belgo-African relations with a “determined action to geographically diversify the Belgo-African relations”.<sup>476</sup> In the same year, King Baudouin appointed his new *Chef de cabinet* Jacques van Ypersele de Strihou, a man who shared the same dedicated religious convictions as the King.<sup>477</sup> During the visit of King Baudouin and Queen Fabiola de Mora y Aragón to Zaire in 1985, the King of the Belgians stressed the respect for human rights in his speech.<sup>478</sup> Finally, Belgium insisted on a human rights clause in the Kinshasa agreements of 27 March 1990, which settled the debt restructuring talks between the two countries.

These dynamics of limited dissociation with the Zairean leadership began before the end of the Cold War. The emphasis on human rights and abandonment of support for Mobutu by Zaire’s international partners did however gain even more momentum around 1990. Like many of the other undemocratic regimes on the African continent, the Zairean political leadership embarked on a process of democratic transition, albeit stunted, in 1990. Images of a lifeless Nicolae Ceauşescu on Zairean television in December 1989 greatly upset Mobutu, who visited the Socialist Republic of Romania and his personal friend twice.<sup>479</sup> In an important speech on

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<sup>473</sup> ‘to serve and not to serve oneself.’ “Document 2: Discours du président Mobutu”, 1979, 52.

<sup>474</sup> Van de Voorde, *Mark Eyskens*, 2003, 62-5.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>476</sup> “Opties van de regering voor het Afrika-beleid”, 13 July 1983, 1.

<sup>477</sup> VRT, *Boudewijn: Naar het hart*, 2013.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>479</sup> Testimony of Sakombi Inongo in Michel, *Mobutu: Roi du Zaïre*, 1999.

24 April 1990, Mobutu announced the start of a democratisation process, the end of the MPR as sole political party, and the birth of the Third Republic. Less than one month later, however, the events at the university campus of Lubumbashi on 11 May 1990 proved that Mobutu's assertions were actually empty promises. Several university students were killed when Zairean security forces attacked students who led an insurgency against members of the campus security apparatus disguised as students.<sup>480</sup> Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mark Eyskens made clear to his Zairean colleague Nguza Karl-I-Bond that the human rights reference in the Kinshasa agreements was not a stylistic device.<sup>481</sup> Furthermore, after the looting sprees in Kinshasa in September 1991, Eyskens further insisted on restoring a climate of trust with the Bretton Woods institutions.<sup>482</sup> Mobutu responded by disclosing sensitive information about the Belgian royal family, which definitively ended every cordial contact between the heads of state. With the exception of Saddam Hussein, Mobutu was the only head of state not invited to Baudouin's funeral in 1993.<sup>483</sup>

The United States maintained strong relations with Zaire. At the presidential level, Mobutu first visited the US in 1970. Pachter noted that six US presidents "clung tenaciously to the relationship with Mobutu".<sup>484</sup> On official and private visits to the US from 1973, he would meet US presidents Nixon, Carter, Reagan, and George H.W. Bush. During Mobutu's private visit to the US for meetings connected to the IMF in 1979, he met for twenty-five minutes with Carter. The latter emphasised the importance of the reform process in Zaire in the aftermath of the Shaba Wars.<sup>485</sup> Ambassador Robert Bigger Oakley stipulated that there was some friction within the US embassy in 1979 when certain staff members wanted to be more aggressive on human rights issues.<sup>486</sup> Under Reagan, however, the US administration was more in unison about its policy towards Zaire and Mobutu. Reagan always used cordial phrasings during the

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<sup>480</sup> Sympathisers of Mobutu maintain to this day that only one student was killed. Although a UN investigation headed by Amos Wako did not mention a concrete number of confirmed casualties, the mission report consistently mentions several casualties. In one specific attack, for instance, "[t]he Special Rapporteur estimates that 10 to 12 students lost their lives in the Gata attack." (§217, 49). Furthermore, an annex of the report mentioned dozens of casualties by name on a list of reported dead and missing, found in newspapers and testimonies (Annex IV, 86-8). Amos Wako, "Report of the Special Rapporteur", 28 April 1992 [E/CN.4/1992/30/Add.1].

<sup>481</sup> Eyskens, "Témoignage: Mark Eyskens", in Lanotte, Roosens, and Clément (eds.), *La Belgique et l'Afrique centrale*, 2000, 179. Eyskens wrote about the Protocol of Rabat, but probably meant the Kinshasa agreements.

<sup>482</sup> De Winter, "Zaire. Naar een eigen vorm van democratie", 1993, 29.

<sup>483</sup> Martens, *De memoires*, 2006, 513.

<sup>484</sup> Pachter, *Our Man in Kinshasa*, 1987, 5.

<sup>485</sup> "Meeting With President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire", *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States. Jimmy Carter 1979*, book II (Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1980), 1627-8.

<sup>486</sup> "Ambassador Robert B. Oakley", 7 July 1992, 96. <adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Oakley,%20Robert%20B.toc.pdf>, consulted on 1 October 2021.

five visits of Mobutu to the US during Reagan's tenure. Zaire was a "friend of the United States",<sup>487</sup> the country was "one of our oldest and most solid friendships in Africa", and Mobutu was "a consistent voice of good sense and good will to the international councils where African issues are considered".<sup>488</sup>

Although different US presidents emphasised different foreign policy aspects, they all considered Zaire from a Cold War perspective. Ambassador and Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman Jay Cohen justified the US's support by arguing that the Soviet Union was "very expansive [...] and they saw Zaire as a great prize", despite the lack of evidence of extensive Soviet involvement in the country.<sup>489</sup> Mobutu's final visit to the US was in October 1989, where he met with George H.W. Bush. After the 1991 Lubumbashi events, US support waned. Although the massacre was not a pretext for both the US and Belgium to break off ties with Mobutu, they did take the opportunity to proceed with a rupture. Cohen commented that it

"demonstrated that the United States now supports democracy in Zaire, supports good economic management and does not support any individual leader. [...] When we needed Zaire, we worked very closely with Zaire. Now, we are being very tough on Zaire. [...] This is normal evolution of policy for any country."<sup>490</sup>

In other words, Cohen clearly showed the US's Cold War concerns.

The performative character of Mobutist political thought declined concurrently with the gradual demise of the Zairean state. The President and his court also physically moved from Kinshasa to the equatorial city of Gbadolite in the 1990s. Before his speech on the democratisation of the country on 24 April 1990, Mobutu only stayed in his ancestral region *Équateur* for short amounts of time. Since the beginning of the *Conférence nationale souveraine* (CNS), he relocated to Gbadolite.<sup>491</sup>

In the eyes of French decision-makers, however, one aspect of the Zairean state had a distinctive political dimension: the French language. Although a large portion does not speak French and other languages such as Lingala and Swahili are *linguae francae* of the country, the

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<sup>487</sup> "White House Statement on a Meeting", *Ronald Reagan: 1981: January 20 to December 31, 1981*, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1982), 1106.

<sup>488</sup> "Remarks Following Discussions", *Ronald Reagan: 1986*, Book 2, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1988-9), 1615.

<sup>489</sup> *Il était une fois... Mobutu*, 1995.

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>491</sup> Nagifi, *Les derniers jours de Mobutu à Gbado-Lite*, 2003, 25.

language inherited from Belgian colonisation is an official language of the country, making it the second most populous country in the world where French is an official language. From Giscard d'Estaing's presidency onwards, France tried to extend its sphere of influence next to the existing close ties with many former French colonies.<sup>492</sup> As late as 1988, French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac told journalists that "from my side, you know that I have for [Mobutu] very profound and very respectful sentiments, but also sentiments of affection."<sup>493</sup> When Mobutu retreated to Gbadolite, seasoned French experts of African politics continued to visit Mobutu such as former Minister of Cooperation Michel Aurillac and an elderly Jacques Foccart.<sup>494</sup>

After the relative retreat of the US and Belgium, France became the last ally of Mobutu. Just like France's foreign policy towards Rwanda was based on the preservation of the country under the umbrella of *francophonie*, France was worried that, with Yoweri Museveni as a new prominent regional leader since 1986 and the RPF of Paul Kagame in power in Rwanda, the regional balance would tip towards an anglophone domination. In a short-term effort to save his rule, Mobutu agreed to cooperate with France in the *Opération Turquoise* military mission and host the immense group of Rwandan refugees, including many of the genocide's perpetrators. Jason Stearns wrote that "[i]n his Machiavellian bid to become a regional power broker, Mobutu had come to host over ten different foreign armed groups on his territory, which angered his neighbors to no end."<sup>495</sup> As a token of gratitude towards Mobutu, François Mitterrand invited him to the Franco-African summit in Biarritz in November 1994. De Villers observed that "between 1993 and 1996, it looked conceivable that, like the phoenix, Mobutu could still arise from the ashes of the Zairean state."<sup>496</sup> During the last month of Mobutu's presidency, French Minister of Foreign Affairs Hervé de Charrette declared that "President Mobutu is incontestably the only personality capable to guarantee the territorial integrity of Zaire."<sup>497</sup> It turned out to be the last straw of Mobutu's competent diplomacy. It could not counterbalance the loss of state institutions.

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<sup>492</sup> Powell, *France's African Wars*, 2013, 54.

<sup>493</sup> Michel, *Mobutu: Roi du Zaïre*, 1999.

<sup>494</sup> Diangitukwa, *Qui gouverne le Zaïre?*, 1997, 132-3.

<sup>495</sup> Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters*, 2012, 8.

<sup>496</sup> de Villers, *Histoire du politique*, 2016, 136.

<sup>497</sup> Cited in Pourtier, "Congo-Zaïre-Congo: un itinéraire géopolitique", 1997, 7. See also de Villers, *Histoire du politique*, 2016, 136-7.

### 2.3. The Diplomacy of Elite Political Exiles<sup>498</sup>

In the era of the First Republic, the country's political elites were striving for international recognition by trying to secure the Republic of the Congo's seat at the UN for their respective faction or build their own power base by separating themselves from the central government. Mobutu's authoritarian mode of governance did not leave much room for dissidence, but Zairean political elites did not find themselves in a state of complete inertia regarding their ability to promote their political thought to international audiences. Contrary to their predecessors of the First Republic, ambitious Zairean politicians-cum-diplomats sought to avoid the seat at the UN and instead explored another avenue of gaining international legitimacy: activism in exile. Some of these exiled politicians published memoirs, and testified on public fora where they argued that Mobutu actually meant chaos. They securitised him as an existential threat to the Zairean population.

Through their journey into exile, these actors bypassed self-censorship, silencing by Mobutu's allies, and possible incarceration. They found a mechanism to share their political thought to large foreign and domestic audiences and found a listening ear within agenda-setting groups consisting mostly of authors, journalists, pundits, and politicians. As a transnational network of anti-Mobutist advocates, they benefited greatly from the knowledge production of these elite political exiles, since their former privileged positions as diplomats and politicians allowed them to access undisclosed and classified information from the Zairean state. In this respect, the foreign anti-Mobutists could more effectively uncover and report on the magnitude of corruption under the Zairean president. Without the testimonies of Jean Nguza Karl-I-Bond to IMF country director of Zaire Erwin Blumenthal<sup>499</sup> and the US Congress<sup>500</sup>, or the publication of Emmanuel Dungia's *Mobutu et l'argent du Zaïre*<sup>501</sup> including highly compromising annexes, for instance, we would have had significantly less insight into Zaire's corruption. Even today, these sources remain valuable.

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<sup>498</sup> This section is partially based on the book chapter Hendrickx, "Zaire's Exile-Diplomats", in Coleman, Kornprobst, and Seegers (eds.), *Diplomacy and Borderlands*, 2020, 72-90. The author presented the main findings at the International Studies Association (ISA) conference *Exploring the Agency of the Global South in International Studies (Practices)*, Accra, on 2 August 2019.

<sup>499</sup> The *Blumenthal Report*, including the annex with Nguza's interview, is cited in Lumuna Sando, and Buana Kabue (eds.), *Mobutu Sese Seko*, 1982, 85-101; Dungia, *Mobutu et l'argent du Zaïre*, 1992, 136-69 [especially 157-69]. The report, excluding annexes, is reproduced in "Zaïre: Rapport sur sa crédibilité financière internationale", 1982, 360-78.

<sup>500</sup> Nguza, *Mobutu ou l'incarnation du mal zaïrois*, 1982, 137-75.

<sup>501</sup> Dungia, *Mobutu et l'argent du Zaïre*, 1992.

The transnational network of anti-Mobutist advocates considered the exiles as more legitimate spokespeople of the Zairean state than the politicians and, in particular, the nation's President. In September 1982, a session of the Permanent People's Tribunal was organised in Rotterdam, discussing the indictment against Mobutu. The Tribunal, originally a People's Tribunal created by Bertrand Russell to discuss US intervention in Vietnam, pitted Mobutu against the "people of Zaire".<sup>502</sup> In this instance, exiled politicians were invited to speak out as representatives of the people, testifying against 'usurper' Mobutu.

One remarkable example of an exiled Zairean politician and diplomat is Nguza Karl-I-Bond. In 1965, this nephew of Moïse Tshombe<sup>503</sup> started out his diplomatic career as a counsellor at the Embassy in Brussels, before working at the Permanent Representation in New York from 1966 to 1971. He became the Permanent Representative in Geneva and was soon appointed as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1972. A few weeks after the First Shaba War broke out, an editorial in *Le Monde* mentioned the possible retreat of Mobutu to one of his luxurious residences around the world and put forward the name of Nguza as a potential new leader in the country.<sup>504</sup> Nguza was sentenced to death for high treason, officially on account of alleged contacts with Shaba rebels, which included a telephone conversation with Jean-Baptiste Kibwe, but conceivably because of the editorial in *Le Monde*.<sup>505</sup> After episodes of severe torture, he was pardoned by Mobutu, being appointed Foreign Minister once more in 1979 and even First State Commissioner in 1980. Nguza fled into exile in April 1981 and became a vocal opposition figure, testifying in front of the US House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa,<sup>506</sup> testifying to IMF Country Director for Zaire Erwin Blumenthal about corruption, as well as during the Russell Tribunal, and writing *Mobutu ou l'incarnation du mal zaïrois* in Brussels in 1982. In 1985, he began to work for Mobutu once more as the Ambassador to the United States and eventually a last tenure as Foreign Minister in 1988. At the time of the *Conférence nationale* in the early 1990s, Nguza became a member of the radical opposition, before accepting the position of Prime Minister one final time.<sup>507</sup> As a Prime Minister in 1992, Nguza suspended the CNS, leading to a big Christians' march demanding the reopening of the CNS. It ended in a bloodbath when security forces opened fire on the crowd.<sup>508</sup>

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<sup>502</sup> For the records of the testimonies, international inquiry, Mobutu's defense, sentence, and supporting documents of the Tribunal, see Lumuna Sando, and Buana Kabue (eds.), *Mobutu Sese Seko*, 1982.

<sup>503</sup> Nguza, *Mobutu ou l'incarnation*, 1982, 13.

<sup>504</sup> "Le régime en péril", *Le Monde*, 31 March 1977.

<sup>505</sup> Nguza, *Mobutu ou l'incarnation*, 1982, 21; de Villers, *De Mobutu à Mobutu*, 1995, 110.

<sup>506</sup> Crossette, "Leader in Exile Pleads His Case in the Capital", *The New York Times*, 21 September 1981, B12.

<sup>507</sup> de Villers, *De Mobutu à Mobutu*, 1995, 110.

<sup>508</sup> Kisukula, *La désintégration de l'armée*, 2001, 20.

At first sight, it looks contradictory that Nguza wanted to work again for the President he so severely criticised in his books and that Mobutu would reappoint a fierce opponent. Nguza gave three reasons to collaborate again with Mobutu after the presidential pardon of 1979. First, to Nguza, him becoming victim of the Mobutu tyranny is clearly an established fact. Second, Mobutu's western partners have outlined several conditions that the Zairean leadership had to take into account after the Second Shaba War of 1978, including liberalisation measures. Third, he wanted to contribute to the proposed liberalisation of the autocratic regime from within.<sup>509</sup> Mobutu, on the other hand, skilfully played his politicians off against each other. The reappointment of political exiles was part of this strategy. Bayart wrote that "[t]he success with which Field Marshal Mobutu used promotions to decimate his opposition, from 'revolutionaries' of the First Republic to the parliamentary members of the *Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social* (UDPS), has become legendary, and Zaïrian exiles have gained a strong reputation for being hypocrites".<sup>510</sup> Certainly, the motivations for these exiles were oftentimes manifold and ambiguous, but Bayart's assessment is quite critical. Nevertheless, Nguza's pragmatic instead of principled approach is clear and clashed with Mobutu's politics of playing his politicians off against each other. Just as in the case of the reinstated politician Cléophas Kamitatu, there is a rumour that the President put Nguza's anti-Mobutu publication in clear view on his desk when he received him.<sup>511</sup> This was a warning towards those who wanted to challenge his dominance. Since Kamitatu and Nguza went too far with their scathing accounts, further missteps would not be tolerated. With Nguza humiliated and 'domesticised' before he was reinstated, Mobutu had a convenient minister at his disposal.

Nguza and the other elite political exiles were integrated in a broader network of people and organisations with similar interests.<sup>512</sup> These exiles, as well as the broader network, used these shared interests to further their political agenda. Journalists, authors, pundits, and politicians created what Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink called a 'transnational advocacy network'. Such a structure consists of often non-traditional international actors bound together by "shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services."<sup>513</sup> When domestic actors have no means of voicing their political opinions when a government violates

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<sup>509</sup> Nguza, *Mobutu ou l'incarnation*, 1982, 125-6.

<sup>510</sup> Bayart, *L'État en Afrique*, 1989, 233.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid.

<sup>512</sup> See Hendrickx, "Zaire's Exile-Diplomats", in Coleman, Kornprobst, and Seegers, *Diplomacy and Borderlands*, 2020, 78-9.

<sup>513</sup> Keck, and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, 2014, 2.

certain rights, they could reach out to international connections to express their concerns.<sup>514</sup> Transnational advocacy networks are more likely to develop around an issue or set of issues, according to Keck and Sikkink, when three elements are present. These elements roughly correspond to the conceptual triad of strategies of the present thesis.

First, the ‘boomerang pattern of influence’ can occur when the channels between the state and domestic actors are hampered. In many human rights campaigns, domestic actors like NGO’s reach out to international allies, who have more leeway to exert pressure on the state in question. This dynamic is certainly present at the anti-Mobutist transnational advocacy network. The elite exiles are unconventional nodes in the network since they are criticising the leadership they were once associated with. Nguza stated that, since he was living outside Zaire at the time of writing his books, he could give “the most authentic account” of his own case with all details and clarifications. He would challenge anyone to question his account.<sup>515</sup> He resigned and chose the path of exile to “denounce, testify, and fight.”<sup>516</sup> Domestic actors abandoned domestic institutions in favour of international institutions. Deciding how to relate to domestic and international institutions is a prominent strategy used by Zairean exiles to reach their goals.

Second, Keck and Sikkink argued that transnational advocacy networks take shape when activists or political entrepreneurs are convinced that networking furthers their cause.<sup>517</sup> This conviction was also present among the advocates in the network under study. Many of them, such as Nguza, went into voluntary exile with the belief that they could gather support among international actors. This corresponds to the strategy of shared interests between foreign and domestic actors.

Third, formal spaces of contact and exchange of ideas such as conferences create fora for the establishment and strengthening of networks.<sup>518</sup> The knowledge production of the elite exiles was not only disseminated through books, but also at fora such as the Russell Tribunal, the US Congress, and many other places.<sup>519</sup> The third element of Keck and Sikkink’s development of transnational advocacy networks entails the importance of institutions such as

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<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>515</sup> Nguza, *Mobutu ou l’incarnation*, 1982, introduction.

<sup>516</sup> “J’ai démissionné et choisi l’exil pour dénoncer, témoigner et lutter.” Nguza, *Mobutu ou l’incarnation*, 1982, 126.

<sup>517</sup> Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, 2014, 14.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>519</sup> Besides the abovementioned high-profile fora, Nguza was interviewed by Belgian television and other media, and was a speaker at more small-scale events, such as a talk with Walter Zinzen at a venue in the Flemish village of Nijlen. Zinzen, *Mobutu: Van mirakel tot malaise*, 1995, 100.

conferences. More importantly, it opened up the opportunity to make the voice heard of exiles. They made use of the performativity of speech, since speaking on those fora and writing books created a counternarrative to the Zairean state. This is the third part of the conceptual triad of strategies.

The activities of the network greatly disturbed Mobutu, who was concerned about his own image and standing in relation to foreign audiences. He showed an “extreme sensitivity” towards the public opinion in Belgium,<sup>520</sup> reading the Belgian press, including translated Dutch press clippings, on a daily basis.<sup>521</sup> The network’s actions and Mobutu’s reactions were considerable political factors in Zaire’s foreign policy. Belgian anti-Mobutist lawyer Jules Chomé wrote his pamphlet *L’ascension de Mobutu* in 1974, which was so embarrassing for Mobutu that Chomé was attacked by a supporter of the President according to the second edition of the book.<sup>522</sup> The Belgian government, while sending a letter to Mobutu expressing its regret regarding the publication of the book, stated it had not the legal tools to ban the sale of the book in Belgium. As a result, Mobutu ended the friendship treaty between the two countries signed on 29 June 1969.<sup>523</sup> France, on the other hand, banned the book on the grounds of defamation to a foreign head of state. In 1981, Nguza’s first year in exile, Mobutu threatened to cut diplomatic ties with Belgium, accusing the country to give *carte blanche* to Mobutu’s adversaries.<sup>524</sup>

Belgium was not the only space where anti-Mobutist advocacy networks took root. In France, exiled former PSA minister Cléophas Kamitatu published *La grande mystification* at François Maspero’s publishing house. Similar to Chomé’s work, France banned Kamitatu’s book in 1971. At the request of Mobutu, the French government took several steps to expel Kamitatu from the country, despite disagreements between the Élysée (Jacques Foccart) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Maurice Schumann).<sup>525</sup> The Élysée adviser on African affairs Foccart realised that Mobutu leveraged the Franco-Congolese close engagement for his quarrels with Belgium.<sup>526</sup> Foccart’s actions met with resistance outside the French political sphere as well. Meredith Terretta argued that “[b]uilding on interrelationships forged in previous decades, by the 1970s, French Third Worldism intersected with African opposition politics in a Franco-

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<sup>520</sup> de Villers, *De Mobutu à Mobutu*, 1995, 31.

<sup>521</sup> Braeckman, *Le dinosaure*, 1992, 305; Martens, *De memoires*, 2006, 513.

<sup>522</sup> Chomé, *L’ascension de Mobutu*, 1974, VII.

<sup>523</sup> Renaat Van Elslande, *Annales parlementaires Chambre des Représentants*, 6 November 1974, 287.

<sup>524</sup> Tindemans, *Een politiek testament*, 2009, 48.

<sup>525</sup> Terretta, “The French Trials”, in Carpenter, and Lawrance (eds.), *Africans in Exile*, 2018, 206.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*, 204; Foccart, and Gaillard, *Foccart parle*, Vol. 2, 1997, 186.

African nexus of political activism.”<sup>527</sup> Lawyer Jean-Jacques de Félice, for instance, defended Kamitatu during his French trials. Furthermore, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadruddin Aga Khan intervened in favour of Kamitatu at the French Foreign Affairs Ministry.<sup>528</sup>

### 3. Conclusion

Despite the notable divergences between the First Republic and Mobutu’s Zaire in terms of political culture and state structure, the epistemic agency, specifically with regard to the overarching goals and strategies of Congolese political elites, are categorised in the same way. Vying for leadership positions on the Congolese political level was ubiquitous. The goals of these actors were based on authority such as political survival, and legitimacy such as their aim to be accepted as the legitimate representative of the Congo by the international system. They went to great lengths to accomplish these goals, but their strategies can be grouped under the triad of institutions, performativity of speech, and instrumentalisation of shared interests.

Right after independence, the rapidly deteriorating security situation in the country brought about a fragmentation of authority. Congolese political elites endeavoured to gain or retain authority. Members of the central government, as well as President Kasa-Vubu, aimed at conserving their authority over the whole territory and Congolese people. Other actors, such as Gizenga after the dismissal of the Lumumba government, Tshombe, Kalonji, or Pierre Mulele, had other power bases and wanted to extend their authority. After Mobutu’s second coup d’état, the new President envisaged an authoritarian state in order to cement his authority. Political survival was indeed one of the main goals of Congolese political elites in their interaction with the international system. On the other hand, other individual politicians safeguarded their political and, in many cases, physical survival by continuing their activities in exile.

Political survival, or more broadly, goals related to authority were important goals in the epistemic contestation between Congolese elites, but legitimacy was equally important. From 1960 to 1965, Congolese political elites aimed to be accepted as the legitimate representative of the Congo by the international system. This was not carried out through military means (cf. chapter four) but predominantly by ideological, rhetorical, and legal reasoning. Lumumba and Gizenga wanted to convince national and international audiences of their political vision of centralism and positive neutralism, whereas Tshombe wanted to convince them of his federalist vision. After the Congo Crisis, Mobutu had to walk a tightrope

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<sup>527</sup> Terretta, “The French Trials”, in Carpenter, and Lawrance (eds.), *Africans in Exile*, 2018, 207.

<sup>528</sup> *Ibid.*, 206-7.

between different international partners, since he wanted his leadership to be accepted as legitimate by African, western, and eastern players. Finally, elite political exiles wanted to be accepted as legitimate representatives of the Congo by providing an alternative to Mobutu's Zaire.

In order to accomplish those sets of goals, actors strategized their actions in several ways. As a first strategy, they decided how to relate to national and international institutions. They did matter, even during a long period of crisis, or under authoritarian rule. Political scientist Bwana N'Sefu Lumanu-Mulenda espoused a legal view on the Congo Crisis when he wrote that the *Loi fondamentale* of 1960 was one of the factors that led to the crisis and that the 1964 constitution was the legal response to the crisis.<sup>529</sup>

'Institutions matter' does not mean 'institutions are always respected'. Mobutu's coups d'état are flagrant violations of the rule of law, but even he had to motivate his decisions and secure national and international support for his ploys. Nick Cheeseman argued that the African state is not a "Hollywood movie set – an illusory façade with little or no content" and that formal institutions do matter.<sup>530</sup> To him, states and their organisational structures have to be brought in, as formal institutions grow in importance in certain countries.<sup>531</sup> As demonstrated in this chapter, formal institutions also mattered in the immediate post-independence period, although they were severely contested and put to the test.

Linked to this emphasis on institutions, claims of juridical statehood were important tools in the actors' engagement with the international system. When Jackson and Rosberg argued that juridical statehood explained the persistence of states in Africa, they meant that several so-called weak states, who ceased to be empirical states, continued to exist because they assured the recognition of sovereignty by their neighbouring states and others.<sup>532</sup> Political scientists, Jackson and Rosberg mentioned, are convinced by the limitations of a merely legalistic approach to states and favour a more sociological conception of states.<sup>533</sup> This chapter, on the other hand, demonstrated that a socially informed conception of juridical statehood can be utilised in the study of agency. Bomboko and Kanza were both present in New York to defend their respective faction of the Congolese state. When Kanza's side was denied juridical statehood by the UN General Assembly, the search for diplomatic recognition was not over for

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<sup>529</sup> Lumanu-Mulenda, "Les révisions constitutionnelles au Zaïre", 1989, 41.

<sup>530</sup> Cheeseman, "Introduction: Understanding African Politics", in Cheeseman (ed.), *Institutions and Democracy*, 2018, 2.

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>532</sup> Jackson, and Rosberg, "Why Africa's Weak States Persist", 1982, 18.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

the Lumumbists. In Stanleyville, Gizenga's government eventually received recognition by several international actors. In Katanga, on the other hand, Tshombe's government received support in some western business and anti-communist circles exactly because it was *not* associated with the Lumumba-led central government. Finally, Mobutu could use platforms such as the UN General Assembly and bilateral contacts to further his agenda, because he held the Zairean presidency.

The second strategy considers the utilisation of the performativity of speech. Words are not used just to describe, but also to actively shape the social reality. In ideological terms, for instance, Tshombe successfully securitised Lumumba as a communist and existential threat to western interests in Katanga. Lumumba and Lumumbism were presented by the Katangese government as existential threats.<sup>534</sup> Kasa-Vubu, as well, presented him as a warmonger when he dismissed his government on 5 September 1960. The removal of Lumumba and Lumumbism was framed as a *sine qua non* for a return to peace in the Congo and Katanga. The threshold to reach the securitisation of an issue according to Buzan, de Wilde, and Wæver, was certainly reached. According to their securitisation theory, an issue is securitised when an audience accepts a discourse presented as an existential threat.<sup>535</sup> In this case, Lumumba and Lumumbism were presented as 'issues' that were threats to peace, but also to western political and business interests. The audience that accepted the discourse consisted of Belgian, French, US, UK, and other western political and economic decision-makers who were susceptible to this particular Cold War discourse. Furthermore, Mobutu was a proficient communicator, who changed the content and tone of his discourse depending on the audience he was addressing. Regime ideologues crafted *authenticité*, a nation-building project which showed Zaire's alignment with the progressive African countries, without offending other audiences.

Finally, Congolese political elites instrumentalised real or perceived shared interests with international players to their own benefit. The changing Congolese domestic order after the assassination of Lumumba offers a clear illustration. Foreign ideological interest in Katanga's secession waned after the announcement of Lumumba's death in February 1961. The leaders could not credibly claim to be a bulwark against communism anymore. Despite the efforts to diversify their interactions with international partners by strengthening their ties with French actors, Katangese leaders could not hold their position because the mandate of ONUC was more

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<sup>534</sup> On the concept of 'existential threat', see Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework*, 1998, 23-4.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

and more strengthened after Lumumba's assassination. Moreover, the working relationship between Struelens and the State Department ended. The US namely lobbied in favour of Adoula's rise as Prime Minister and strongly aligned with him after August 1961. On the other hand, the Stanleyville government's international standing was strengthened by Lumumba's assassination. Communist and left-wing countries became more vocal in their support of progressive forces in the Congo, prompting several to recognise Stanleyville as the Congo's legitimate government.

After the Congo Crisis, Mobutu reached out to a diverse set of international political actors and approached them in various ways in search for common ground. In order to dispel any reputation of him as a product of CIA intervention and portray himself as a full-fledged Head of State of a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Mobutu reinstated Lumumba's legacy, made an anti-colonialist speech at the 1973 UNGA meeting, and based *authenticité* on *négritude* and positive neutralism. When the need arose to strengthen his ties with the west, he re-established diplomatic relations with Israel and advocated for a *Ligue des Etats négro-africains* as a counterweight to Arab influence at the OAU. *Authenticité* was perceived by the West as a benign nation-building project that did not contest cordial relations with western partners. The same strategy of pragmatically choosing audiences and accommodate them appropriately was exercised by the other political elites. Zairean ideologues like Kangafu-Kutumbagana developed the concept of *authenticité* in order to cater to different audiences. Actors who did not stay loyal to Mobutu changed their behaviour. In Sewell's terms, they transposed schemas to new contexts. When the Zairean state became unavailable as a vehicle to promote their political thought, going into exile enabled them to do so in a different context. Conversely, when they were reappointed to a position in the national government, they resumed their official duties in a usually seamless manner.

The agency of Congolese political elites cannot be adequately studied by solely looking at their foreign policy, or the domestic repercussions of foreign involvement. Putnam called for far-ranging empirical research into two-level games.<sup>536</sup> The present study diverges from the focus on games but builds on the starting point that the domestic and the international spheres are entangled and that densely empirical research is needed to identify those areas of entanglement. In the case of the Congo between 1960 and 1965, the presence of Belgian and, by extension, foreign advisers shows that some actors are not entirely defined by their Congolese allegiance, nor by some attachment to a foreign government.

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<sup>536</sup> Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics", 1988, 60.

Similarly, the Katangese representative in New York, Michel Struelens was explicitly authorised by the Belgian government to work for the State of Katanga<sup>537</sup>, but kept on defending the Katangese cause even when Belgian support for the secessionist province declined. The Belgian Georges Thyssens, to name another example, sided with the anti-Belgian ultras in the Katangese government.

James Ferguson's thesis about declarations of dependence comes to mind as an interpretive framework. Being dependent on others, as his seminal article purported, is not the opposite of freedom as liberal thought puts forward, but rather fundamental to politics and people. Those declarations, according to him, "present us with the theoretical and political challenge of a form of agency that seeks its own submission."<sup>538</sup> Freedom was not attained by independence, but by a plurality of opportunities for dependence.<sup>539</sup> Yet, his thesis contains a contradiction. It is not clear why having a plurality of opportunities for dependence still indicates a relationship of dependence. As in Giddens' example of a gagged prisoner in solitary confinement underlines (cf. chapter one), agents who have several feasible options at their disposal remain agents. Furthermore, the recognition of entanglements between domestic and international politics, as this current study does, moves the discussion beyond unidirectional dependency relations towards one of shared interests of domestic and international elites. Those shared interests also extended to the military sphere, as the next chapter will demonstrate.

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<sup>537</sup> AP, "Spaak backs Struelens", *The New York Times*, 10 March 1962, 3.

<sup>538</sup> Ferguson, "Declarations of Dependence", 2013, 237.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

## Chapter Four: Security

### Introduction

One of the immediate reasons prompting King Baudouin to deliver his 1959 speech where he mentioned Belgium would grant the Congo its independence was the January 1959 Léopoldville riots. They broke out after a demonstration by ABAKO escalated. It sounded the starting signal for decades of managing security issues. Five days after the Congo's independence from Belgium, commander of the *Force Publique* (FP) General Émile Janssens wrote the words “before independence=after independence” on a blackboard at Leopoldville's Camp Leopold II in front of his troops, showing that political independence should not interfere with the workings of the military.<sup>540</sup> The oft-repeated anecdote has the dubious honour of lighting the fuse of the powder keg and inciting the mutiny of the FP.

After the Congo Crisis, Mobutu built up the authoritarian Zairean state, but he did not prevent the occurrence of two brief military conflicts posing credible and immediate threats to his authority in 1977 and 1978. The National Front for the Liberation of Congo (*Front de libération nationale congolaise*, FLNC) was an organised military resistance movement mainly consisting of so-called ex-Katangese gendarmes, former Katangese security forces at the time of the secession subsequently exiled in Angola. They attacked the Shaba province, formerly Katanga, from Angola from March to May 1977, and re-entered the province during a shorter but more crucial campaign from May to June 1978, momentarily capturing the mining city of Kolwezi.

Finally, During the waning years of Mobutu's presidency, he was abandoned by his traditional partners with the possible exception of France and controlled only a small part of the territory around Kinshasa and Gbadolite. The *Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire* (AFDL), an alliance assembled by Rwanda and Uganda and led by veteran *maquisard* Laurent-Désiré Kabila, managed to march from the eastern part of the country to Kinshasa in a few months and overturn a terminally ill Mobutu. No great battles were fought during the First Congo War. Rather, the conflict's high death toll was caused by large-scale massacres of refugees in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide.

This chapter on agency related to security issues is divided into four parts. First, it discusses the agency Congolese elites exercised over international partners during the Congo Crisis. Similar to the previous chapter's part about the First Republic, this part is subdivided into a first half

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<sup>540</sup> “*Avant l'indépendance=après l'indépendance*”. Ganshof van der Meersch, *Fin de la souveraineté*, 1963, 408.

about the first part of the crisis, and a second half about the second part of the crisis. The chapter's second part discusses the Shaba Wars. This is further divided into a first half, which is concerned with the First Shaba War or eighty days' war, and the second half about the Second Shaba War, which was shorter but more salient with regard to external interventions. Third, this chapter analyses the First Congo War. That part will, first, discuss Mobutu's final years in office including the erosion of the state institutions. Then, the agency of Laurent-Désiré Kabila's *Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire* (AFDL) is scrutinised. Alleged to be a front organisation for Rwandan and Ugandan state interests, the analysis will show that they were still able to exercise agency and achieve their goals of authority and legitimacy. Finally, the conclusion summarises the analysis of the agency related to security issues.

### **1. Congo Crisis**

The Congo Crisis was initially a domestic conflict that would soon internationalise and become a major episode in the history of United Nations peacekeeping, the Cold War, and Congolese history. Academic and popular literature have generally given more attention to international actors as a consequence of the *prima facie* salience of Cold War factors in the conflict, but an alternative analysis could trace the ways in which domestic political actors, grouped in different and ever-changing political factions, dealt with foreign actors ranging from UN decision-makers to US-American, Belgian, French, and other politicians.

Arms shipments, mercenary recruitment, or military support by the UN helped in establishing or retaining authority by the respective factions. Different actors used different strategies to attract foreign military support, with varying degrees of success. The advancement of those actors' political thought at the international level set the stage for military support. In the first place, they had to convince international actors that they were the legitimate representatives of the Congo. This was only realised when an external partner was available. As demonstrated below, the Soviet Union was not a solid partner for any Congolese political actor and its role during the crisis was limited. This is one of the reasons why the Stanleyville government and Kwilu and Simba rebellions failed in their political project.

## 1.1. First part of the Crisis: 30 June 1960 – 21 January 1963

### 1.1.1. Central Government

The central government in Leopoldville was the least politically coherent entity, but had the most credible claims to legitimacy of all governments in Congo, which at one time reached the number of four (Leopoldville, Stanleyville, Elisabethville, Bakwanga).

On the eve of the transfer of sovereignty, the Congo signed a treaty of friendship, assistance and cooperation with Belgium whose article six outlined the modalities of a potential military intervention by Belgium:

“Every military intervention of Belgian forces stationed in the bases of the Congo can take place only at the express request of the Congolese Minister of National Defence [Lumumba].

Subsequent agreements will fix the modalities of the retaking of Belgian military bases in Congo and will specify the ways of cooperation desired by both governments.”<sup>541</sup>

The Congolese government was in a powerful position, since the Belgian government could not have afforded to cast aside this treaty right before independence.<sup>542</sup> There is however a glaring contrast between the strong prohibition in the treaty of a Belgian intervention without the Congolese Defence Minister’s approval and the exclusively Belgian composition of the command of the FP. General Émile Janssens considered his FP as unaltered by the political transfer of power and had a profound aversion to his Defence Minister, calling him a “demon rather than a man, unscrupulous, without any sound knowledge”.<sup>543</sup> In a colonial-style letter to Lumumba on 5 July, Janssens expressed concerns about the risk of “a loss of effectiveness” caused by Lumumba’s independence speech and concluded that this was his “final and solemn warning”.<sup>544</sup>

Whether or not Janssens’ undiplomatic writing at Camp Leopold II was the cause of the mutiny, the unrest among Congolese soldiers quickly spread to nearby Camp Hardy in Thysville

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<sup>541</sup> *Traité général d’amitié, d’assistance et de coopération*. Cited in “Document 26: Projet de loi”, 1960, 628.

<sup>542</sup> Vanderstraeten, *De la Force publique*, 1983, 57.

<sup>543</sup> Janssens, *J’étais le général Janssens*, 1961, 11.

<sup>544</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, 249-50. Kanza also regarded Janssens’ style as “a colonial leader talking to a colonized subordinate.” Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo*, 1972, 187.

and to the whole country. The mutiny prompted Lumumba to implement measures of Africanisation of the FP command, starting by dismissing Janssens.

Contrary to the friendship treaty, Belgium unilaterally decided to invade the Congo on 10 July, officially to facilitate the evacuation of Belgians, specifically at places such as airports where mutinous troops impeded the transit of Belgians. In Katanga, however, the primary objective of the Belgian troops was to ensure the administrative and economic continuity, according to Major Weber, who commanded the Belgian troops but immediately joined the ranks of Tshombe as a military adviser.<sup>545</sup>

The diplomatic reactions of the Congolese decision-makers from the central government were not well coordinated and resulted in several demands for foreign assistance to several foreign entities without satisfying the central government. Gizenga presided over the Council of Ministers of 11 and 12 July in the absence of Lumumba, who was travelling throughout the country together with Kasa-Vubu to try to convince the troops to end their mutiny. At that moment, foreign observers were allowed into the premises where the Council of Ministers took place. Officials such as Belgian ministers August de Schryver and Walter Ganshof van der Meersch, as well as American Ambassador Clare Timberlake, attended the meetings.<sup>546</sup> Gizenga asked Timberlake for military assistance on 12 July, in the presence of de Schryver, Ganshof van der Meersch and Belgian Ambassador Jean van den Bosch, a move opposed by several other ministers. That same day, Gizenga, Bomboko, and Conakat Secretary of Defence Albert Nyembo officially requested the assistance of 3000 American troops for the restoration of law and order. Kanza deemed this a “failure in diplomacy” and regretted the resulting opportunity for Timberlake to inquire into military information from the Belgians.<sup>547</sup>

A Ghanaian delegation in the Congo advised against the direct demand to the US and instead suggested to redirect their request to the United Nations.<sup>548</sup> In order to obtain military support from the UN, political leaders had to look out for shared interests with the UN in order to obtain the goal of restoring authority over the whole territory. Consequently, Kasa-Vubu and Lumumba made clear to the UN that the unfolding crisis was a threat to international peace and security. Still on 12 July, the President and Prime Minister appealed to UN representative Ralph Bunche for “military assistance”. Not only did the Congolese leaders justify their appeal by stressing the violation of the friendship treaty of 29 June 1960, they did also accuse Belgium of

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<sup>545</sup> CRISP, “La politique “katangaise” de la Belgique. (juillet 1960-décembre 1962). I.”, 1963, 3.

<sup>546</sup> Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo*, 1972, 201.

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid.*, 201-2.

<sup>548</sup> Hoskyns, *The Congo Since Independence*, 1965, 114.

“having carefully prepared the secession of the Katanga”.<sup>549</sup> The next day, they sent another telegram with some important clarifications. Requesting aid to the UN, they pointed out, was not meant to restore the internal situation in the country, but to “protect the national territory against act of aggression posed by Belgian metropolitan troops.”<sup>550</sup> A possible UN force should consist out of military personnel from neutral countries and not, for example, US troops. Moreover, Lumumba and Kasa-Vubu warned that, if the UN would not respond without delay, they would be forced to “appeal to the Bandung Treaty Powers.”<sup>551</sup> At a press conference in Leopoldville, van den Bosch declared that Belgium was not prepared to withdraw its troops when the internal order is not yet ensured by local authorities and the only reasons why the Belgian metropolitan forces intervened were the protection of human lives and “possibly the economic heritage”.<sup>552</sup>

When Secretary-General Hammarskjöld convened an immediate meeting of the Security Council on the evening of 13 July in accordance with article 99 of the UN Charter,<sup>553</sup> he had the prior experience of three UN actions in mind, namely the Suez Crisis of 1956, and conflicts in Lebanon and Jordan in 1958. The lessons learned from these actions were crystallised in a 1958 report by the Secretary-General.<sup>554</sup> Important principles were the separation of UN operations from “activities by national authorities” and non-interference in “situations of an essentially internal nature.”<sup>555</sup> During the 13 and 14 July session, Hammarskjöld had to walk a tightrope between not provoking Belgium and its partners by avoiding to speak in terms of aggression, and going far enough in requesting Belgium to withdraw its troops. The Council adopted a Tunisian draft compromise text as Resolution 143, calling upon Belgium to withdraw its troops, but without any mention of a timeline. It further authorised the Secretary-General to take steps, in consultation with the government of the Congo, to provide military assistance as may be necessary to the government until the national security forces may be able, in the opinion of the government, to meet fully their tasks.<sup>556</sup>

Besides the initial request to the American Ambassador and request to the UN, Kasa-

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<sup>549</sup> “Cable Dated 12 July 1960”, 13 July 1960 [S/4382].

<sup>550</sup> “Cable Date 13 July”, 13 July 1960 [S/4382].

<sup>551</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>552</sup> “Une ferme déclaration de l’ambassadeur belge”, *Le Soir*, 14 July 1960, 3.

<sup>553</sup> “The Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.” It was the first time that Article 99 was invoked.

<sup>554</sup> “Summary Study of the Experience”, 9 October 1958 [A/3943].

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>556</sup> “Resolution Adopted by the Security Council at its 973<sup>rd</sup> Meeting on 13 July 1960”, 14 July 1960 [S/4387].

Vubu and Lumumba broke off diplomatic relations with Belgium<sup>557</sup> and sent a telegram to the Soviet Union asking Khrushchev to follow the situation in the Congo hour by hour and that they might ask the Soviet Union to intervene.<sup>558</sup> According to Lumumba's Chief of Protocol Andrée Blouin, he said: "If people want to say that because of [the telegram] I am a communist, then the president is too!"<sup>559</sup> Khrushchev responded that the Soviet Union did condemn the "imperialist intervention" and that they support Resolution 143.<sup>560</sup>

The threat of resorting to Soviet support by the President and Prime Minister was repeated on 17 July. Lumumba was convinced by that time that the UN cooperated with the Belgians and demanded the "immediate retreat of UN forces [...] if it were true that they operated in conformity with the arrangements made with Belgium".<sup>561</sup> Kasa-Vubu and Lumumba then would send a final notice to the UN that if the Belgian troops would not retreat before 19 July, they would solicit the intervention of the Soviet Union. This did not, however, pass the Senate for approval.<sup>562</sup>

Thomas Kanza and his delegation arrived in New York right before the Security Council meeting of 21 July. In his own words, his job was to "defend the Congo *and* save Lumumba."<sup>563</sup> In that regard, he spoke in a moderate tone during the meeting, merely wondering why the Belgians could not have made a phone call to Lumumba prior to their military operation, but was slightly firmer in his right of reply after Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs Pierre Wigny spoke.<sup>564</sup> The new resolution adopted on 22 July, sponsored by Tunisia and Ceylon, did not change much to the ONUC's mandate on a legal level, but was an important political instrument in two respects. First, it mentioned the admission of the Congo to the UN "as a unit" and requested all states to "refrain from any action which might undermine the territorial integrity and the political independence of the Republic of the Congo".<sup>565</sup> This was a clear reference to the Katangese problem, without providing an outright condemnation that would risk losing support for the resolution by the United Kingdom.<sup>566</sup> Second, the resolution specifically called

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<sup>557</sup> "M. Lumumba rompt les relations diplomatiques avec la Belgique", *Le Soir*, 15 July 1960, 1.

<sup>558</sup> Hoskyns, *The Congo Since Independence*, 1965, 127-8.

<sup>559</sup> Blouin, *My Country Africa*, 1983, 257.

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>561</sup> Statement by Lumumba at the Congolese Chamber of Representatives, 15 July 1960, cited in *Congo 1960*, Tome II, 1961, 610.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>563</sup> Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo*, 1972, 225 [Emphasis in the original].

<sup>564</sup> *877th Meeting*, 20-21 July 1960, 5-6 [S/PV.877].

<sup>565</sup> "Resolution Adopted by the Security Council", 22 July 1960 [S/4405].

<sup>566</sup> UK Representative Harold Beeley mentioned that his country considers the relationship between the province of Katanga and other provinces "a matter to be settled by the Congolese themselves" and that "the

upon the government of Belgium “to implement speedily the Security Council resolution on 14 July 1960, on the withdrawal of their troops and authorizes the Secretary-General to take all necessary action to this effect”,<sup>567</sup> a firmer condemnation of Belgium compared with the resolution of 14 July.

Lumumba arrived in New York on 24 July, for a visit to the UN, Washington, and Canada. Until then, despite their many differences of opinion, the Prime Minister and President succeeded in overcoming their disagreements and talk with one voice. They both signed the request for military assistance to the United Nations on 12 July, the diplomatic rupture with Belgium, the telegram to Khrushchev, and the final notice to the UN regarding the departure of Belgian troops before 19 July. By 28 July, however, Lumumba hardened his position. He received a telegram from Gizenga detailing a fighting in the Kolwezi barracks in Katanga with an exaggerated number of Congolese casualties. Additionally, the US notified Lumumba that all aid should be channelled through the UN and the US could not provide bilateral technical assistance agreements.<sup>568</sup> Later on his North American trip, Lumumba accepted direct Soviet aid of lorries and airplanes.<sup>569</sup>

According to Kanza, Lumumba was by now convinced that “Hammarskjöld was working mainly for western interests, and that he could not be trusted even as a man, because of his preconceived ideas about the means by which the Congo’s integral security was to be preserved.”<sup>570</sup> The close relationship with Lumumba’s African neighbours was put to the test by his reservations about the UN mission. The new Security Council resolution of 9 August condemned Belgium even firmer than before, explicitly calling upon “the Government of Belgium to withdraw immediately its troops from the province of Katanga under speedy modalities determined by the Secretary-General and to assist in every possible way the implementation of the Council’s resolutions”. Additionally, while maintaining that ONUC will not be a party to an internal conflict, the resolution declared that “the entry of the United Nations force into the Province of Katanga is necessary for the full implementation of this resolution”.<sup>571</sup>

Lumumba became even more upset when Hammarskjöld and Bunche paid a visit to Katanga to discuss the modalities of the resolution with Tshombe without prior discussions

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United Nations Force cannot be a party to any internal conflict nor can the United Nations Force intervene in a domestic conflict.” *879<sup>th</sup> Meeting*, 21-22 July 1960, 8 [S/PV.879].

<sup>567</sup> “Resolution Adopted by the Security Council at its 879<sup>th</sup> Meeting on 22 July 1960”, 22 July 1960 [S/4405].

<sup>568</sup> Hoskyns, *The Congo Since Independence*, 1965, 158.

<sup>569</sup> *Ibid.*, 157-8.

<sup>570</sup> Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo*, 1972, 243.

<sup>571</sup> “Resolution Adopted by the Security Council on 9 August 1960 (886<sup>th</sup> Meeting)”, 9 August 1960 [S/4426].

with the Congolese government. On 15 August, the Prime Minister and the UN Secretary-General exchanged several letters between each other. Lumumba used increasingly stark wording and made increasingly outlandish claims. He accused Hammarskjöld of supporting the Katangese secession and denounced the sending of only Swedish troops to Katanga – “a country which is known by public opinion to have special affinities with the Belgian Royal family”.<sup>572</sup> Hammarskjöld dryly responded that the Security Council should decide about the interpretation of the resolutions. Congolese security forces became more assertive towards United Nations forces. Probably as a case of mistaken identity, ANC soldiers assaulted fourteen Canadian UN forces thought to be Belgian spies or Belgo-Katangese mercenaries, at N’Djili airport near Leopoldville.<sup>573</sup>

These diplomatic and security incidents set the scene for the UN Security Council session of 21 August. The several incidents and Lumumba’s steadfast disapproval of Hammarskjöld resulted into a deeply divided Security Council. Disagreements between the Soviet Union and the United States were to be expected since the Congo Crisis was a threat to international peace and security, but a large part of the Afro-Asian group now took the side of the UN and its Secretary-General in the dispute between the Congolese government and the UN. Hammarskjöld regretted the “severe criticism from the Prime Minister of the Congo” aimed at the actions and attitudes from the UN and, in particular, himself.<sup>574</sup> The fact that he singled out the Prime Minister in his statement was a tell-tale sign for the deteriorating personal relations between both leaders. Speaking for the Congo, Gizenga objected to an “unfortunate parallel between the so-called conditions laid down by the rebel Tshombé and the decisions taken by the Secretary-General in implementation of the Security Council’s resolutions concerning Katanga.”<sup>575</sup> Gizenga was convinced that Hammarskjöld sabotaged all the efforts of the Lumumba government to solve the crisis.<sup>576</sup>

Lumumba had valid reasons to be distressed by the status quo. First, the Belgian government supported the Katangese secession with about everything but diplomatic recognition. The third Gaston Eyskens government was marked by internal disagreement about its Congo policy but, ultimately, pro-Katangese politicians such as d’Aspremont Lynden and

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<sup>572</sup> “Letter Dated 15 August 1960”, *Second Report by the Secretary-General*, 15 August 1960, 10 [S/4417/Add.7]. King Baudouin’s mother was Astrid of Sweden, Queen of the Belgians and member of the Bernadotte family. A discourse analysis of the correspondence is the subject of Blommaert, “Lumumba, Hammarskjöld, and the 1960 Congo Crisis, 1990, 97-118.

<sup>573</sup> “Tension accrue à Léopoldville entre ‘Casques bleus’ et Congolais”, *Le Soir*, 20 August 1960, 1.

<sup>574</sup> 887<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 21 August 1960, 2 [S/PV.887].

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>576</sup> Gizenga, *Ma vie et mes luttes*, 2011, 202.

Wigny succeeded in putting forward a double-track policy of non-recognition with covert support. Second, Lumumba was disappointed by ONUC's limited mandate. Bunche and Hammarskjöld realised that the penetration of UN forces in Katanga would be met with organised armed resistance.<sup>577</sup> They could not provide any military assistance to the Congolese central government to defeat the Katangese secession at that time.

At the 21 August meeting of the Security Council, Tunisia's Mongi Slim reiterated that his delegation

“cannot share any distrust whatever with regard to the Secretary-General – both because of his functions themselves and, above all, after the tangible proof of the devotion and impartiality which he has personally displayed in the execution of the task entrusted to him by the Security Council.”<sup>578</sup>

Guinea's representative Sory Caba, on the other hand, was invited by Poland and the Soviet Union to speak and supported Gizenga's statement. The UN, he stressed, should put down the rebellion in Katanga. That would not be interference in the Congolese government's domestic affairs, Caba reasoned, because Tshombe's attitude was just “one aspect of Belgian aggression in the Congo.”<sup>579</sup> Poland and the Soviet Union followed similar lines of reasoning, but the other Security Council members stood completely behind Hammarskjöld.

In September 1960, arguably the most crucial month of the Congo Crisis with the mutual dismissals of Kasa-Vubu and Lumumba and Mobutu's first coup d'état, it became clear that Lumumba became even more isolated at the international level. The UN was divided over the situation in the Congo with new Soviet Ambassador Zorin attacking Hammarskjöld and thereby alienating the Afro-Asian bloc further from the Soviet standpoint. Through the Uniting for Peace Resolution, an emergency session of the General Assembly was called due to a lack of unanimity at the Security Council.<sup>580</sup>

In short, the African states were bitterly divided regarding the Congo question and UN intervention. Frantz Fanon wrote that Lumumba made a mistake “when he asked for the

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<sup>577</sup> Cf. Hammarskjöld's statement at the 21 August meeting of the Security Council. *887<sup>th</sup> Meeting*, 21 August 1960, 4 [S/PV.887].

<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>579</sup> *888<sup>th</sup> Meeting*, 21 August 1960, 9.

<sup>580</sup> Uniting for Peace Resolution: A/Res/377(V); Security Council Resolution calling a General Assembly emergency meeting: 157 (1960). Resolution of 17 September 1960 [S/4526].

intervention of the UN. It was wrong to appeal to the UN.” After all, he argued, “[i]n reality the UN is the legal card used by the imperialist interests when the card of brute force has failed.”<sup>581</sup>

Disappointed by the limited mandate of ONUC in the eyes of the Leopoldville government, the central authorities organised military campaigns against the dissident forces in the Congo. Since this thesis is concerned with political agency, the military side, however important in the country’s history, has a subordinate role. Conflicts between the different authorities in the Congo, including discussions on sovereignty and territorial claims, were also fought out through diplomatic ways. Representatives of different factions (central government, Katanga) met during several roundtables facilitated by foreign mediators. These discussions lie at the intersection of domestic and international politics since different actors had different claims of statehood. In the eyes of the Leopoldville authorities, however, the several roundtables were organised in view of national reconciliation. The readiness of the central authorities to negotiate with dissidents demonstrates a failure to reclaim authority over the whole territory right away by military means.

Adoula and Tshombe met at the major airbase of Kitona, Leopoldville province, under the auspices of US Ambassador Gullion and UN Under-Secretary General Ralph Bunche. The talks spelled the end of the Katangese secession with its recognition of the Congo’s “indissoluble unity” and reintegration of Katanga into the sphere of the central government.<sup>582</sup> Tshombe, however, managed to drag on discussions with the central government and the UN. Between March and June 1962, discussions between Adoula and Tshombe did not result in much progress on the implementation of the Kitona declaration. The international pressure on the Congo’s reconciliation attempts was markedly different than the situation after the first Security Council Resolution of 14 July 1960, particularly modified by the resolutions of 21 February 1961 after the news of Lumumba’s murder permitting the use of force if necessary, and the one of 24 November 1961 explicitly condemning the Katangese secession and refuting its sovereignty. On 10 August 1962, the U Thant Plan for National Reconciliation was issued and later accepted by Adoula and Tshombe.<sup>583</sup> Again, Tshombe succeeded in stalling the implementation of the plan. Eventually, in December 1962 and January 1963, ONUC forcibly brought the State of Katanga back under the control of Leopoldville.

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<sup>581</sup> Fanon, “Lumumba’s Death: Could We Do Otherwise?“, 1967, 194-5.

<sup>582</sup> *Report of the Secretary-General Concerning the Negotiations*, 21 December 1961, 2-3 [S/5038].

<sup>583</sup> The plan is published as an annex in CRISP, “La tentative de réintégration du Katanga”, 1962, 25-7; see also *Report to the Secretary-General*, 26 November 1962 [S/5053/Add. 13].

### 1.1.2. Katanga<sup>584</sup>

In order to study the State of Katanga, the question why it survived for a relatively long time outweighs the question why it eventually failed in its aims. The security situation in the newly independent proto-state was precarious, which led local decision-makers to use different channels of military aid in the form of mercenary recruitment and acquisition of military materiel. Throughout the secessionist state's existence, these channels were constantly changing. The initial heavy reliance on Belgium made room for a diversification by looking at France, certainly after Lumumba's murder and arrival of the new Belgian government Lefèvre/Spaak. Katangese decision-makers made sure to package their interests in order to resonate with international audiences. Vandewalle summarised the arguments of the Katangese to secede from the Congo as follows: "Lumumba is the instigator of the troubles; there is collusion between him and international communism; Katanga has the right to detach itself from chaos."<sup>585</sup> To successfully portray issues as security issues thus also had repercussions on the military level.

A significant support to the State of Katanga appeared when Belgian armed forces stayed in Katanga. Major Guy Weber commanded the Belgian troops intervening in Katanga between 10 and 13 July, but was promoted to Tshombe's military adviser on 17 July. Other Belgians occupied major functions in Katanga right after independence. Colonel Champion led the Belgian presence in Katanga in an effort to restore the economic functioning of the area, and Major Jean-Marie Crèvecoeur built up the Katangese armed forces – the so-called *gendarmérie* – from the rubbles of the former FP.<sup>586</sup> Former head of the Belgian Congo security forces, Lieutenant-Colonel Frédéric Vandewalle only departed for Elisabethville on 4 November, on the recommendation of deputy *Chef de cabinet* to the Belgian Prime Minister, Harold d'Aspremont Lynden to Tshombe.<sup>587</sup>

On 20 July, d'Aspremont Lynden set up shop in Elisabethville as the head of Belgian technical assistance mission Mistebel. The mission of his team was not only to train the local armed forces, but also to supply them with arms from Kamina and other places where the Force Publique left its equipment, including aviation resources.<sup>588</sup> Furthermore, despite the diplomatic

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<sup>584</sup> This section is partially based on Hendrickx, "Tshombe's Secessionist State of Katanga", 2021, 1809-28.

<sup>585</sup> Vandewalle, *Mille et quatre jours*, Fascicle 1, 1974, 77.

<sup>586</sup> Weber, *Le Katanga de Moïse Tshombe*, 1983, 86-87; Gérard-Libois, *Sécession au Katanga*, 1963, 128.

<sup>587</sup> Regarding the preparations for his departure, see Vandewalle, "Retour au Congo!", *Mille et quatre jours*, Fascicle 3, 1975, 363-7.

<sup>588</sup> CRISP, "La politique "katangaise" de la Belgique. (juillet 1960-décembre 1962). I.", 1963, 7.

rupture between Congo and Belgium from 14 July onwards, a consular mission in Elisabethville was headed by Henri Créner which included a political cell led by the influential Robert Rothschild, former *Chef de cabinet* to Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak.<sup>589</sup> The consulate continued its operations after Mistebel ceased theirs on 12 October, but diplomatic relations between the Congo and Belgium were not restored until 27 December 1961.<sup>590</sup> Tshombe looked out for shared interests between the Katangese and Belgian government in order to solidify his authority. He emphasised the breakdown of order in the rest of the country and threat to economic infrastructure that it could entail when Katanga would be under Lumumba's sphere of influence. This resonated well in Belgian political, military, and economic circles at the start of the crisis.

Mercenary recruitment for Katanga was an especially transnational phenomenon that happened in Africa as well as Europe in a pragmatic way. Although Larmer and Kennes recognised the important role of these mercenaries to the history of the Katangese Armed Forces, they also cautioned

“not to overestimate their authority during the secession itself: the mythology that has developed around these mercenaries, perpetuated until today through their niche publications and sensational novels, has a tendency to attribute to them qualities of military leadership and organization out of all proportion to their actual role”<sup>591</sup>.

Although I do subscribe to the vision of Larmer and Kennes regarding the sensationalist mercenary literature, I differ regarding the supposed overstatement of the mercenaries' importance. The United Nations Mission in the Congo made substantial efforts to detain and expel foreign military personnel. Security Council resolution 161 of 21 February 1961 urged that measures be taken “for the immediate withdrawal and evacuation from the Congo of all Belgian and other foreign military and paramilitary personnel and political advisers not under the United Nations Command, and mercenaries”<sup>592</sup>. On 7 April 1961, thirty mercenaries were arrested in Kabalo, northern Katanga, by troops of ONUC.<sup>593</sup> Operations *Rum Punch* of 28 August and *Morthor* of 13 September were aimed to further reduce the presence of foreign military personnel.<sup>594</sup>

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<sup>589</sup> Ibid., 7; Gérard-Libois, *Sécession au Katanga*, 1963, 130.

<sup>590</sup> Coolsaet, Roosens, and Dujardin, *Buitenlandse Zaken in België*, 2014, 317-318.

<sup>591</sup> Larmer, and Kennes, *The Katangese Gendarmes*, 2016, 56.

<sup>592</sup> United Nations S/4741.

<sup>593</sup> United Nations, S/4790.

<sup>594</sup> See Verhaegen, *Congo 1961, 1962*, 512-526.

Alongside ONUC's anti-mercenaries offensives, Katanga's foreign policy's strong emphasis on the recruitment of mercenaries and military and civilian advisers is another signifier of the importance of foreign personnel for Katanga. As mentioned before, the continuity of Belgian assistance after Congolese independence and subsequent Katangese declaration of independence did also include military personnel. The call for foreign recruitment became urgent towards the end of 1960 with the retreat of Belgian troops as per UN Security Council Resolution 143 of 14 July and the rebellion of the Luba people in the north.<sup>595</sup> Tshombe approached Belgian Colonel Adelin Marissal, who organised the *Mission Marissal* in concert with the Belgian State Security Service, for mercenary recruitment.<sup>596</sup> 250 mercenaries left for Katanga by this recruitment channel, which existed alongside Delperkat.<sup>597</sup> Before Delperkat, a certain Jean Gérard also recruited manpower for Katanga from his home in Malonne and would subsequently work for Masangu's mission in Brussels.<sup>598</sup>

Similarly, in France, other ad hoc recruitment efforts existed besides Diur's mission. Katangese decision-makers made clear to French audiences that the gap left by Belgian relative disengagement could be compensated by increased covert French military support. France proved to offer a welcoming audience, since it was always trying to extend their influence on the African continent. The shared military interests between Katanga and France thus grew after the relative decline of Belgian involvement. Katanga used this shared interest to strengthen its authority.

Former court registrar and adviser to Tshombe, the Belgian Georges Thyssens was sent out to Paris by Tshombe at the start of January 1961 to recruit Colonel Roger Trinquier, recipient of the *Légion d'honneur*, and other officers for the Katangese army.<sup>599</sup> Trinquier, counterinsurgency specialist who served in Indochina and Algeria, received a letter on 5 January which stated that Katanga was looking to recruit an officer to take over the command of the Katangese army, as well as about a hundred officers and non-commissioned officers – “Frenchmen and Germans, if possible.”<sup>600</sup> Before Trinquier arrived in Elisabethville, he set up an office in the centre of Paris aimed at recruiting mercenaries for Katanga.<sup>601</sup> This office, called “ill-famed” by Diur, had to close down after just a few days by the French authorities. Diur

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<sup>595</sup> CRISP, “La politique “katangaise” de la Belgique. (juillet 1960-décembre 1962). I.”, 1963, 17.

<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18.

<sup>597</sup> Gérard-Libois, *Sécession au Katanga*, 1963, 184.

<sup>598</sup> Pasteger, *Le visage des affreux*, 2005, 31-33.

<sup>599</sup> Van Doal, *Une ténébreuse affaire*, 1979, 18; Genin, “La France et le Congo ex-belge”, 2013, 1070.

<sup>600</sup> Trinquier, Duchemin, and Le Bailly, *Notre guerre au Katanga*, 1963, 53.

<sup>601</sup> “Dans un immeuble parisien: Le colonel Trinquier recrute des légionnaires pour le Katanga”, *Gazette de Lausanne*, 8 February 1961 8.

added that Trinquier had jeopardised his work for a few months.<sup>602</sup> Trinquier would not stay long in Katanga: after he arrived at the end of February, Tshombe asked him to “delay the assumption of command in the interest of the Franco-Katangese friendship” and asked him to leave on 10 March, which he did the following day.<sup>603</sup>

The recruitment efforts of Thyssens are also noteworthy in the sense that a Belgian recruited French nationals to fight for Katanga and underlines the ‘fluid’ identity of certain actors within the State of Katanga complex. The multidimensional identity of Thyssens shows how certain Katangese officials are entangled between Katangese and international identities. Accused by local Belgian authorities of “active anti-Belgian policy”, Thyssens played a significant role in the internationalisation of direct assistance to Katanga, moving away from the overreliance on Belgium.<sup>604</sup> In his mind, Belgium was too “fastidious” in its engagement with Katanga.<sup>605</sup>

Some other recruitments happened via personal links. The pilot Jan van Risseghem, for instance, was recruited in Belgium through Jean Cassart, the Managing Director of Congolese company Mitraco, which shipped arms and planes to Katanga.<sup>606</sup> According to himself, Captain Paul Ropagnol was recruited together with officer of the Foreign Legion Robin Wrenacre, by Pierre Lefranc, adviser to President Charles de Gaulle.<sup>607</sup> After Ropagnol returned to France, Diur’s mission gave him funds to start a recruitment centre in Toulouse, but he was soon arrested and sent to prison.<sup>608</sup>

Diur’s office was the backbone of the recruitment of French mercenaries, despite the important ad hoc recruitments. The office was important for the internationalisation of foreign military personnel in Katanga, moving away from the Belgian near monopoly of advising the government and sending troops for the Katangese cause.<sup>609</sup> To the interested potential recruits for Katanga, it was clear that Diur’s mission was meant to attract recruits: some candidates wrote to the “recruitment office” or “recruitment for Katanga” to offer their services.<sup>610</sup> One

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<sup>602</sup> Letter Dominique Diur to Moïse Tshombe, 2 March 1961. Cited in Van Doal, *Une ténébreuse affaire*, 1979, 101.

<sup>603</sup> FMT, Box 6, Folder 1343 Affaire Trinquier, “Conclusions de M. l’avocat général Desangles (Notes)”.

<sup>604</sup> CRISP, “La politique “katangaise” de la Belgique. (juillet 1960-décembre 1962). I.”, 1963, 18.

<sup>605</sup> Pasteger, *Le visage des affreux*, 2005, 98.

<sup>606</sup> United Nations, A/73/973, §141.

<sup>607</sup> Picard, *Ils ont tué Monsieur H*, 2019, 331.

<sup>608</sup> *Ibid.*, *Ils ont tué Monsieur H*, 2019, 332.

<sup>609</sup> Gérard-Libois, *Sécession au Katanga*, 1963, 185.

<sup>610</sup> FMT, Box 3, Folder Demandes candidatures sans suite, Letter Leonardo Reselle Sanchez to Bureau des recrutements Pour KATANGA, November 26, 1961; FMT, Box 3, Folder Candidatures pilotes, mécaniciens, Letter Roland Van Laarhoven to Recrutement pour le Katanga, January 15, 1962.

important recruitment by Diur was Edgard Tupët-Thomé, recipient of the *Ordre de la libération* and the *Légion d'honneur*. Diur initially persuaded him to go to Leopoldville in May 1961 to help in the liberation of Tshombe, who was arrested at the Conference of Coquilhatville on 26 April, but would only be freed on 22 June through a political solution.<sup>611</sup> On 21 June, Tupët-Thomé arrived in Elisabethville to become the *Chef de cabinet* to National Defence Minister Joseph Yav. The *Compagnon de la libération* would not stay long in Katanga. Troubled by conflict between Yav and Tupët-Thomé, amidst the conflict between the Belgians and French in Katanga, Tshombe ordered Tupët-Thomé to leave Katanga on 21 July.<sup>612</sup>

Other recruitment centres did exist and point at the internationalisation of mercenaries. As a result of the arrests of thirty Katangese mercenaries at Kabalo on 7 April 1961, United Nations officials could establish “beyond reasonable doubt” that two recruitment centres existed at Johannesburg and Bulawayo. They further reported the existence of one centre in West Germany.<sup>613</sup>

The recruitment efforts in southern Africa are especially noteworthy. Welensky considered Tshombe the “first man inside Congo to try to bring order out of chaos and to prevent a slide into deeper catastrophe”.<sup>614</sup> Besides the economic ties that bind CAF and Katanga, Welensky’s opposition towards Lumumba – “the young paranoiac”<sup>615</sup> – and portrayal of Katanga as a dam against communism guaranteed the Katangese regime the goodwill of its southern neighbour and its President. Faced with possible spillover effects from the war situation into Northern Rhodesia, Welensky did not make great efforts to stop the recruitment of mercenaries for Katanga.<sup>616</sup>

South Africa was used as a base for recruitment as well. Although mercenary recruitment was not officially endorsed by the government, it did not proactively try to hinder the departure of military personnel to Katanga. Passemiers summarised that the south African government “significantly aided the Katangese government and its secession in various ways, albeit always in a cautious manner that would not jeopardise its own future and limit its already fragile international reputation.”<sup>617</sup>

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<sup>611</sup> Verhaegen, *Congo 1961, 1962*, 273-274.

<sup>612</sup> FMT, Box 12, Folder M. EDgard TUPET THOME, Letter Tupët-Thomé to Joseph Lambroschini, July 30, 1961; and Letter Tupët-Thomé to Tshombe, July 30, 1961.

<sup>613</sup> United Nations, S/4790.

<sup>614</sup> Welensky, *Welensky's 4000 Days*, 1964, 211.

<sup>615</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>616</sup> Hughes, “Fighting for White Rule in Africa”, 2003, 604.

<sup>617</sup> Passemiers, “Safeguarding White Minority Power”, 2016, 84.

In short, pragmatically searching for opportunities to recruit foreign military personnel was a strategy to strengthen Katanga's military apparatus, in order to preserve its authority.

### 1.1.3. Stanleyville

Partly as a consequence of the divisions within the Afro-Asian bloc with regard to the recognition of the Leopoldville or Stanleyville government, military aid to the Stanleyville government was limited. Fanon advised that “[i]f we [Africans] decide to support Gizenga, we must do so resolutely.”<sup>618</sup> However, African nations, or even African nations favourable to Lumumba never reached a consensus concerning the Stanleyville government. Jean-Paul Sartre mentioned that Gizenga “does not have Lumumba’s popularity. Nor his intelligence.”<sup>619</sup>

At the January 1961 conference that founded the Casablanca group, consisting of more determined pan-African states such as Ghana, the UAR, and Guinea, part of the delegates including Sékou Touré and Gamal Abdel Nasser argued that all African states should provide military support to the Lumumbists of Stanleyville. The Stanleyville government sent their delegate André Mandi to the conference to argue its case. Eventually, the conference reached a compromise by agreeing to withdraw troops from ONUC, but not agreeing on military support to the Stanleyville leadership.<sup>620</sup>

Gizenga and his allies did benefit from close ties with the UAR, as demonstrated by the diplomatic representation in Cairo, led by Mulele. Without alerting UN authorities, an Ilyushin 14 plane of the UAR under the ONUC flag landed at Lisala on 31 December 1960 and went on to Gemena where it landed on 1 January 1961.<sup>621</sup> The Leopoldville authorities protested against the presence of the plane to the Security Council, with Bomboko asserting that weapons seized in Bumba were supplied by this plane.<sup>622</sup> This was probably the only plane that landed in the region without the approval of the UN. The determining factor of the blockage of external assistance to Stanleyville was Sudan, which, of all African countries, accorded closest with the UN’s policy in the Congo and prohibited every transit through Sudan’s territory not approved by the UN.<sup>623</sup>

A notable absentee is the Soviet Union, which nominally backed Gizenga’s government but failed to provide any material support. Sergey Mazov summarised that “[n]obody rushed to help

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<sup>618</sup> Fanon, “Lumumba’s Death”, *Toward the African Revolution*, 1967, 191.

<sup>619</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre in Van Lierde, *La pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba*, 1963, XL.

<sup>620</sup> “Accord de compromis sur le Congo à Casablanca”, *Le Soir*, 6 January 1961, 3.

<sup>621</sup> “Letter dated 17 February 1961”, 17 February 1961 [S/4724].

<sup>622</sup> *La Libre Belgique*, 2 January 1961.

<sup>623</sup> *Congo 1961, 1962*, 189.

Gizenga.”<sup>624</sup> Specifically, it was “obvious that the Soviet Union had decided not to provide substantial material aid to the Stanleyville regime.”<sup>625</sup> The Stanleyville government was conceived by domestic pro-Lumumbist elite political actors, which shows that western actors often securitised the supposed communist threat to the Congo by exaggerating Moscow’s support. Ludo De Witte rightly concluded that many authors “interpret the Congo Crisis in light of East-West opposition, or give that opposition a prominent place in their analysis. [...] [T]he real role of Moscow in the Congo Crisis was very limited.”<sup>626</sup>

#### 1.1.4. South Kasai

Kalonji’s establishment of the Mining State of South Kasai necessitated a rapid access to military support. 250 policemen and 200 Baluba soldiers were at the disposal of Kalonji and searched for ways of arming them by appealing to Tshombe, and sending a delegation to western countries for mercenary recruitment.<sup>627</sup> He did obtain support from Belgium<sup>628</sup> and Katanga.<sup>629</sup> On 25 August, an agreement of common defence, and economics and customs union was signed between Kalonji and Tshombe in Elisabethville.<sup>630</sup> A tentative contact with South Africa did not fully materialise when three envoys of Kalonji went to Johannesburg on 8 and 9 September. Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs Jones and diamond tycoon Harry Oppenheimer met with the envoys, but the South African government notified its unwillingness to ship any arms.<sup>631</sup> Nevertheless, the unrecognised state succeeded in militarily establishing itself. Towards the end of the year, UN representative Dayal reported that “there is [...] a considerable Belgian presence” and “no apparent shortage of rifles”.<sup>632</sup>

Besides their obvious difficulties of mutual understanding, Leopoldville, Elisabethville, and Bakwanga had one enemy in common, namely the Stanleyville authorities. On 28 February 1961, they signed a military agreement, without mutually recognising each other’s legal claims

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<sup>624</sup> Mazov, *A Distant Front*, 2010, 161.

<sup>625</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>626</sup> De Witte, *Crisis in Kongo*, 1996, 419.

<sup>627</sup> *Congo 1960*, Tome II, 1961, 802.

<sup>628</sup> In Dayal’s report of 2 November 1960, the UN representative wrote that “Belgian military and para-military personnel as well as civilian personnel continue to be available to authorities in the Congo, notably in Katanga and South Kasai.” “Second Progress Report to the Secretary-General”, 2 November 1960, paragraph 39, 16 [S/4557].

<sup>629</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo From Leopold to Kabila*, 2002, 105.

<sup>630</sup> *Congo 1960*, Tome II, 1961, 802.

<sup>631</sup> *Ibid.*, 807.

<sup>632</sup> “Second Progress Report to the Secretary-General”, 2 November 1960, paragraph 52, 19 [S/4557].

to authority, but rather accepting *de facto* authority (*gouvernement de fait*).<sup>633</sup> In the document, they mentioned the “menace of the establishment of a communist tyrannical regime on the whole of the former Belgian Congo” and the “culpable passivity of the United Nations Organisation” as threats to their existence.<sup>634</sup> The follow-up conference in Antananarivo in March 1961 solidified the position of Katanga and Bakwanga, since the agreement signed during the conference was based on a draft from Tshombe, arguing in favour of a confederation of states.<sup>635</sup>

## 1.2. Second part of the Crisis: 22 January 1963 – 24 November 1965

### 1.2.1. Central government

The stabilisation of the internal political situation in the Congo legitimised the central government and engendered renewed closer links between the Congo and Belgium, including on the level of military assistance. In February 1963, one month after the final defeat of the Katangese secession, Adoula visited Brussels and discussed proposals for military cooperation. A real militarisation of international assistance to the Congo did however only take off after the instalment of the Tshombe administration. The shared interests between the central Congolese government and the US and Belgium were notable enough for directly supplying mercenaries to the Congo.

There was some continuity between Tshombe’s style of governance as the President of the State of Katanga and the Prime Minister of the Congo. Several well-known mercenaries active during the Katangese years resumed their service at the side of the Prime Minister, including South African pilot Jeremiah Puren and his fellow national, Colonel Michael Hoare. Initially, unlike a few years ago, these personalities operated independently from their home country.

The new administration was faced with rebellions that had occupied more than half of the country’s territory, and a continent hostile to the new government and its Prime Minister – a “travelling museum of imperialism”, according to Algeria’s President Ahmed Ben Bella.<sup>636</sup> Neither were the US or Belgium initially willing to allow mercenary recruitment on their territory to complement the Katangese gendarmes.

Despite the reluctance of the US and Tshombe’s traditional partner Belgium, the central

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<sup>633</sup> Roux, “L’accord Iléo-Tschombé-Kalondji s’explique en partie par les besoins financiers de Léopoldville”, *Le Monde*, 2 March 1961.

<sup>634</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>635</sup> *Congo 1961, 1962*, 34-40.

<sup>636</sup> Cited in Mazrui, “Moise Tshombe and the Arabs”, 1969, 291.

government began to strengthen the ANC by the return of the ex-Katangese gendarmes from Angola already in July 1964.<sup>637</sup> When Stanleyville was captured by the rebels on 5 August, Tshombe wrote a personal letter to Spaak, requesting the return of Frédéric Vandewalle as his personal military adviser. Two days later, the former commander of the Katangese gendarmes arrived in Leopoldville and drafted his Vandewalle plan to retake Stanleyville. This consisted of the establishment of several mixed military columns in which Katangese gendarmes and white mercenaries would be under the command of Belgian officers. Vandewalle contacted Hoare and Puren to recruit more mercenaries.<sup>638</sup> The prominent role of Vandewalle in the ANC underscored the twin-track approach of Spaak: while publicly denouncing the recruitment of mercenaries for the Congolese army, he was aware of the recruitment efforts. At the Congolese embassy in Brussels,<sup>639</sup> for instance, Military Attaché Jérôme Babia headed the recruitment, assisted by Belgian Major Charles Bertrand.<sup>640</sup>

The recapturing operation, called *Ommegang*,<sup>641</sup> commenced in October and was under the command of Vandewalle. As the anxiety grew by Gbenye's and Soumialot's troops, Belgian Lieutenant-Colonel De Coster was recognised by the rebels on 24 October.<sup>642</sup> The same day, US missionary and medical doctor Paul Carlson was put under house arrest, an event which brought renewed attention of the Johnson administration to the Congo Crisis. Since June 1964, the CNL has made several menacing declarations towards the white populations in areas under their control.<sup>643</sup> On 27 October, Gbenye decided to intern the Belgians located in rebel areas. Besides the unofficial support of the ANC by Belgium, US-American and Belgian decision-makers discussed the possibility of a joint rescue operation. During a meeting on 8 November between Spaak and US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Averell Harriman, veteran foreign policy expert, it became clear that both countries aligned on the necessity of the Congolese government to seek more goodwill from other African countries. Spaak denounced the bad advice of Minister Munongo and "a number of Belgians" in Tshombe's entourage.<sup>644</sup> US and Belgian decision-makers anticipated that a joint operation in the east of Congo would

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<sup>637</sup> *Congo 1964, 1965*, 352.

<sup>638</sup> Quanten, *Operatie rode draak*, 2014, 109 and 117.

<sup>639</sup> Located at 30 Rue Marie de Bourgogne, where Masangu used to represent Katanga (cf. chapter three).

<sup>640</sup> Quanten, *Operatie rode draak*, 2014, 139.

<sup>641</sup> Named by Vandewalle after a folkloric procession in Brussels, to underline the 'ragtag' character of the columns, consisting of ex-Katangese gendarmes, white mercenaries of different nationalities, using equipment and vehicles of different origins.

<sup>642</sup> Quanten, *Operatie rode draak*, 2014, 151.

<sup>643</sup> *Congo 1964, 1965*, 377. See also "Chronique de prese. Concernant l'intervention directe des forces de l'armée belge au Congo." *Remarques congolaises et africaines*, 14, 11 July 1964, 341.

<sup>644</sup> "313. Memorandum of Conversation", 8 November 1964, FRUS, vol. XXIII, 453-7.

be met with a near-universal condemnation at the OAU. One day after the Harriman-Spaak consultations, Secretary of state Dean Rusk had a conversation with Spaak. The consultations resulted in an agreement of a joint Belgo-US operation. Despite the opposition of Vandewalle, who was directly under ANC command, Belgium would send paratroopers whereas the US would provide logistical support, in the form of C-130 transport planes.<sup>645</sup> A few days later, Gbenye threatened to kill the European populations in the case of a bombardment.<sup>646</sup> Doctor Carlson was sentenced to death for espionage on 15 November. Eventually, the *Opération Dragon Rouge* took place on 24 November. Belgium and the US left the Congolese government deliberately uninformed about the preparation of the operation.<sup>647</sup>

### 1.2.2. Rebels

As predominantly grassroots rebellions, neither the Kwilu nor Simba rebellions could initially count on any substantial external military support. The failed Stanleyville government still loomed large for the Soviet Union and PRC. These external partners first had to be convinced of the seriousness of the rebellions before risking to embark on a new ill-fated support of progressive forces in the Congo. In a contemporary analysis, Renée Fox and two missionaries concluded that “[t]he rebels of the Kwilu may have received moral support from foreign sources such as Communist China, so frequently cited. However, there is no evidence that they were also given material aid, in the form of funds, munitions, military equipment or personnel.”<sup>648</sup>

Just like military support by the Soviet Union was all but marginal during the first part of the Congo Crisis, the subsequent phase was marked by only limited military support for the rebels. Jodie Yuzhou Sun, however, characterised China’s support as “firm and sustainable”, albeit exaggerated on the US side.<sup>649</sup>

The most important external military support for the Simba rebellion appeared after *Dragon Rouge* broke the spine of the rebellion. One month after the operation, Che Guevara spoke as a delegate for Cuba at the UNGA. He used his time at the rostrum to discuss the Congo Crisis by stating that “as a crowning insult, the recent actions that have filled the world with indignation are flung in our faces.”<sup>650</sup> He mentioned the betrayal of Lumumba’s hopes in the

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<sup>645</sup> The agreements are featured in “316. Telegram From the Department of State”, 9 November 1964, FRUS, vol. XXIII, 460-1. See also Quanten, *Operatie rode draak*, 2014, 178.

<sup>646</sup> *Congo 1964*, 1965, 387.

<sup>647</sup> Quanten, *Operatie rode draak*, 2014, 198.

<sup>648</sup> Fox, de Craemer, and Ribeaucourt, ““The Second Independence”: A Case Study”, 1965, 78.

<sup>649</sup> Sun, “Supplied Cash and Arms”, 2022, 3.

<sup>650</sup> *1299th Meeting*, 11 December 1964, 9 [A/PV.1299].

UN and reminded *Dragon Rouge* initiator Belgium that “sons of Belgium [sic] patriots who died in defence of their country’s freedom murdered with impunity thousands of Congolese in the name of the white race, just as they had suffered under the German heels because their blood was not sufficiently Aryan.”<sup>651</sup>

Afterwards, Guevara went on an African tour, during which he met several Simba leaders and combatants like Laurent-Désiré Kabila in Dar es Salaam. At the outset, Kabila made an “excellent impression” on the *guerrillero*.<sup>652</sup> Fidel Castro agreed to send military instructors to the rebels and at the end of April 1965, Guevara arrived in the Congo, accompanied by a small group of other Cubans including Víctor Dreke. About 120 Afro-Cubans would end up training the Simba rebels, as well as engaging in battles.<sup>653</sup> Since the remaining rebel pockets after *Dragon Rouge* did not pose a direct threat to the central government anymore, the Cuban presence did not make a great operational difference to the rebellion. Disillusioned, Guevara left the Congo in December 1965. The first words of his *Congo Diary* read: “This is the story of a failure.”<sup>654</sup> Only one rebel pocket survived the 1960s when in the hills of Fizi-Baraka, Kabila founded the *Parti de la Révolution du Peuple* (PRP). They were nominally Marxist-Leninist rebels, but in practice inspired by more disparate ideas.<sup>655</sup> Their only notable realisation was in 1975 when they crossed Lake Tanganyika and kidnapped four students of primate specialist Jane Goodall for a ransom of 200 000 GBP. Some ransom was paid which led to the release of the hostages.<sup>656</sup> Kabila would appear on the radar again as late as 1996, when Rwanda and Uganda handpicked the veteran rebel leader to spearhead the successful campaign to overthrow the Zairean President.

## 2. Shaba Wars

Two brief conflicts during the 1970s posed credible threats to Mobutu’s regime. Consisting of ex-Katangese gendarmes who sought refuge in Angola, their descendants and allies, the FLNC invaded the Shaba province in 1977 and 1978. A demoralised and by all means ineffective Zairean army (*Forces armées zairoises*, FAZ) could not have pushed back the rebels and saved the already weakened position of Mobutu without foreign support. The intervention of France, Morocco, the US, and Belgium was “a conflict misleadingly framed in exclusively Cold War

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<sup>651</sup> Ibid.

<sup>652</sup> Guevara, *Congo Diary*, 2012, 19.

<sup>653</sup> Gleijeses, “Dreke, Víctor”, 2006, 655.

<sup>654</sup> Guevara, *Congo Diary*, 2012, 15.

<sup>655</sup> Wilungula, *Fizi 1967-1986*, 1997, 64.

<sup>656</sup> Young, and Turner, *The Rise and Decline*, 1985, 250; Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters*, 2011, 85.

terms”,<sup>657</sup> according to Larmer and Kennes. Most of these Zairean partner countries were hesitant to intervene. Zairean politicians were, as the Shaba Wars confirmed once more, adept at structuring their actions to obtain favourable outcomes, such as instrumentalising their international partners’ sensitivities by emphasising the alleged threat of Cuban and Soviet intrusion at the centre of the African continent. This successfully persuaded them to intervene and restore Mobutu’s authority over Shaba.

## 2.1. Shaba I

About 1500 FLNC forces under the lead of Grégoire Mulombo entered Shaba during the night of 8 to 9 March 1977.<sup>658</sup> The FLNC members were not rallied behind a coherent political philosophy since they ranged from Katangese nationalists loyal to Tshombe, to Marxist fighters in the tradition of Mulele. Rather, they were united by their desire to overthrow Mobutu. The *modus operandi* of swiftly occupying Kapanga, Kisenge, Dilolo, Mutshatsha, and Sandoa, followed by a relatively slow advancement, led Larmer and Kennes to suggest that this first ‘eighty-days’ war’ was conceived as a war of recruitment, laying the groundworks for a further operation of larger scale.<sup>659</sup>

Despite Mobutu’s reputation as the US’s strong ally, the Carter administration was less than enthusiastic to intervene. The Vietnam War had just ended in 1975 and the covert CIA *Operation IA Feature* in Angola turned out to be a disaster. Interviewed by *New York Times* journalists, Nguza commented on US lethargy by saying that “the Africans, I am sorry to say, are losing their confidence in the United States. Wherever there is any trouble, the US says, ‘No more Vietnams’.”<sup>660</sup> Carter could probably have not had the approval of Congress if he had shown a stronger commitment.<sup>661</sup>

Belgium, which had intervened zealously in its former colony during the previous decade, suffered from intervention fatigue as well. Gbenye’s hostage-taking of Belgian residents in the rebel areas back in 1964 after Belgian Lieutenant-Colonel De Coster was recognised as part of the ANC’s *Ommegang* column,<sup>662</sup> still cast a shadow over a potential military intervention in Zaire.<sup>663</sup> This was a valid concern, as the second Shaba War would

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<sup>657</sup> Larmer, and Kennes, *The Katangese Gendarmes*, 2016, 4.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>659</sup> Larmer, and Kennes, *The Katangese Gendarmes*, 2016, 123.

<sup>660</sup> Evans, and Novak, “A Sombre Message from Africa”, *The New York Times*, 14 February 1976, A11, cited in O’Sullivan, *Kissinger, Angola and US-African Foreign Policy*, 2019, 167.

<sup>661</sup> Gleijeses, “Truth or Credibility”, 1996, 78; Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa*, 2016, 170.

<sup>662</sup> Quanten, *Operatie rode draak*, 2014, 151; cf. chapter three.

<sup>663</sup> See also Larmer, and Kennes, *The Katangese Gendarmes*, 2016, 125.

show. Moreover, Prime Minister Leo Tindemans presided over a caretaker government. Combined with the prospect of the federal election of 17 April, it deterred the government of a strong response. Eventually, at the request of Zaire, Belgium shipped 21 tons of light arms and ammunition on 15 March.<sup>664</sup>

Faced with the increasing reticence of his traditional partners, Mobutu needed to look elsewhere for substantial support. When the key mining town of Kolwezi was threatened by the FLNC in late March and early April, French military advisers in Shaba advocated for a military intervention, but Ambassador André Ross made the reservation that Africans should take the lead.<sup>665</sup> Giscard therefore gave the approval to Ross and René Journiac to pressure Mobutu to ask Moroccan King Hassan II to intervene.<sup>666</sup> According to General Yves Gras, Mobutu was hesitant to ask the Moroccan King and instead appealed to the OAU.<sup>667</sup>

Mobutu's diplomatic demarches were another display of his skilful framing and instrumentalisation of Cold War tensions. He appealed to the OAU by writing a letter to its acting President Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, on 2 April 1977, informing him of the "aggression of which my country is subjected to from the side of a horde of mercenaries on the payroll of the Russo-Cuban coalition. [...] Despite the fact that this aggression was made possible thanks to the participation of men and the most sophisticated equipment coming from a major power, we have preferred not to internationalise the war."<sup>668</sup> Five days later, the Zairean President called King Hassan II of Morocco to discuss the unfolding events.<sup>669</sup> According to Nguza, the appeal of 2 April was antedated, by mutual agreement with Morocco. Morocco responded on 8 April; its first troops arrived on 9 April.<sup>670</sup>

*Opération Verveine* started on 7 April, with the support of France which contributed eleven C-160 Transall planes, shipping 125 vehicles and large amounts of equipment for the Moroccan campaign in Shaba.<sup>671</sup> Although France first tried to keep their support under the radar, even painting the Moroccan insignia on their planes, Giscard disclosed the operation on 12 April by stating that France only took care of transportation between Morocco and Zaire.

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<sup>664</sup> Yakemtchouk, "Les deux guerres du Shaba", 1988, 435-6.

<sup>665</sup> Testimony of Yves Gras in Cohen and Smouts (eds.), *La politique extérieure de Valéry Giscard d'Estaing*, 1985, 320; see also Powell, "The 'Cuba of the West'?", 2016, 74.

<sup>666</sup> Powell, "The 'Cuba of the West'?", 2016, 75.

<sup>667</sup> Yakemtchouk, "Les deux guerres du Shaba", 1988, 451.

<sup>668</sup> "Document 3: Lettre du Président Mobutu à Sir Seewoosagur Rangoolam", cited in Yakemtchouk, "Les deux guerres du Shaba", 1988, 670.

<sup>669</sup> Boussaid, "Brothers in Arms", 2021, 7.

<sup>670</sup> Nguza, *Mobutu ou l'incarnation*, 1982, 27-8.

<sup>671</sup> Powell, "The 'Cuba of the West'?", 2016, 75.

The officially modest role of the French did not correspond with reality, as Nathaniel Powell demonstrated, since the mission included air and ground detachments to help with the maintenance of FAZ equipment, French officers occupied positions at the Zairean Defence Ministry soon after the start of the invasion, advisers established a logistics base at Kolwezi, and trained an FAZ mortar unit.<sup>672</sup> Furthermore, secret photoreconnaissance *Opération Libellule* supported Moroccans and FAZ troops in late April.<sup>673</sup>

As a surprising second African head of state engaging in the Shaba I war at the side of Mobutu, Uganda's Idi Amin Dada declared his full support to Mobutu after a visit by Nguza on 24 March.<sup>674</sup> Amin visited Mobutu on 22 April and one more time the following week. On 28 April, a 'suicide striking force' of Uganda's army flew to Kolwezi, at a time when the FLNC was already retreating.<sup>675</sup>

The successful search for alternative partners in light of the faltering traditional Belgian and US partners primarily shows two aspects of Zairean engagement with the international system.

First, Zaire's relations with both the US and Belgium were not unconditional. Carter's conflicting goals of promoting human rights and assertively defending Cold War interests did not create an enabling environment for a coherent Zaire policy. Although the US's Zaire policy was considered "too big to fail",<sup>676</sup> the response to the Shaba I crisis was measured.<sup>677</sup> The head of the US Interests Section in Havana, Wayne S. Smith, specifically stated that there was "no credible evidence at all of Cuban complicity."<sup>678</sup> Similarly, in the Belgian post-Leburton era, Mobutu gradually lost his close allies in successive governments whose decisiveness was oftentimes curtailed by strong divisions between politicians. The traditional ideological left-right divide was traditionally complemented by a religious fracture line – Catholics versus secular – and the communal fracture line – Dutch-speaking versus French-speaking, which also entailed an ethnic and regional divide.<sup>679</sup> Shared interests thus evolved over time.

Second, in the absence of the Americans and Belgians, Mobutu knew where he had to turn his attention to, and how to package the conflict as a readymade security issue. French decision-makers pushed for an African response. Instead of directly engaging with Morocco,

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<sup>672</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>673</sup> Ibid.

<sup>674</sup> Powell, *France's African Wars*, 90.

<sup>675</sup> Powell, *France's African Wars*, 2013, 91; Gleijeses, "Truth or Credibility", 1996, 77.

<sup>676</sup> Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa*, 2012, 166.

<sup>677</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>678</sup> Smith, *Closest of Enemies*, 121, cited in Gleijeses, "Truth or Credibility", 1996, 79.

<sup>679</sup> Cf. Hendrickx, "Belgium and Mobutu's Zaire", 2019, 82-9.

Mobutu approached the OAU, whose Secretary-General paid a visit to Kinshasa.<sup>680</sup> Giscard released a communiqué regarding his commitment to provide military planes in which he stressed the appeal of the government of Zaire to the member states of the OAU and the subsequent response of the Moroccan government.<sup>681</sup> With the multilateral appeal, Morocco could legally intervene.<sup>682</sup>

The strength of Zaire's diplomacy lay in the apt framing of the FLNC's invasion. Mobutu's letter to the OAU showed his eagerness to place the Cubans in the Shaba province. Two days later, on 4 April, Zaire suspended its links with Cuba.<sup>683</sup> Chief of Staff Bumba Moaso made the claim that Russians and Cubans were fighting alongside the ex-Katangese gendarmes.<sup>684</sup> In order to persuade European ambassadors to harden their stance, Nguza emphasised the left-wing character of the FLNC, which did persuade Belgian and French observers to construct the ex-Katangese gendarmes in Cold War terms.<sup>685</sup> There is, however, a glaring inconsistency between the various statements alleging Cuban involvement and tangible proof of its involvement in Shaba. Indeed, Cuba most likely did not approve of the conflict and was even taken by surprise when the conflict broke out. The Cuban attitude was confirmed by Gleijeses' examination of Cuban documents, statements of officials, and interviews with Cuban participants.<sup>686</sup> To Cuban Ambassador in Angola Risquet, Shaba I "offered the imperialists a golden pretext to intervene in Zaire through France-Morocco-Egypt, to strengthen Mobutu's rotting regime, to unleash a press campaign against the PRA, Cuba and the USSR, all of which could have been the prelude to armed action against Angola."<sup>687</sup> One year later, Zairean decision-makers used some of the same strategies again during a reinvasion of the country.

## 2.2. Shaba II

The second invasion of Shaba was shorter than the previous one, but it was more intense and the internal Zairean and international stakes were arguably higher. About 2500 FLNC troops invaded Shaba again on the morning of 13 May 1978.<sup>688</sup> This time, the attack was launched

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<sup>680</sup> Yakemtchouk, "Les deux guerres du Shaba", 1988, 442.

<sup>681</sup> "Document 6: Communiqué de la présidence de la République française", cited in Yakemtchouk, "Les deux guerres du Shaba", 1988, 673.

<sup>682</sup> Nguza, *Mobutu ou l'incarnation*, 1982, 28.

<sup>683</sup> Yakemtchouk, "Les deux guerres du Shaba", 1988, 449.

<sup>684</sup> Larmer, and Kennes, *The Katangese Gendarmes*, 2016, 124.

<sup>685</sup> *Ibid.*, 125-6.

<sup>686</sup> Gleijeses, "Truth or Credibility", 1996, 94.

<sup>687</sup> Memo Risquet to Neto, cited in *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>688</sup> Powell, "The 'Cuba of the West'?", 2016, 80; Willame, "La seconde guerre du Shaba", 1978, 16.

from Zambian territory, which was more closely located to Kolwezi. Within a couple of hours, the FLNC captured Kolwezi, a city which at that time was less secured by the FAZ since they moved a lot of troops from the city's garrison to the Angolan border after Shaba I.<sup>689</sup> Once more, the FAZ were not prepared to face the danger posed by the FLNC. During the first few hours, several African and European workers were killed as they were going to work. The military staff of Lubumbashi could only be reached in the afternoon. A major part of the FAZ elite Kamanyola battalion dispersed and sought refuge in the European quarters. Furthermore, a column of FAZ troops moved, together with civilians, to Kamina, city with an important military base. They were attacked the next few days by some Zairean Mirage planes whose pilots mistook them for rebels.<sup>690</sup>

Mobutu sought foreign assistance and requested "any kind of help" from the US, China, Morocco, Belgium, and France on 14 May.<sup>691</sup> Western response was more outspoken than the previous year, which crystallised around separate French and Belgian airborne operations, both supported by a US airlift. France and Belgium were divided in their goals and approach, leading Gleijeses to conclude that "the French and the Belgians fought each other more than they did the Katangans."<sup>692</sup>

France initially maintained a wait-and-see attitude to first understand what Belgium would do.<sup>693</sup> The killings of six French military advisers on the first day of the FLNC capture of Kolwezi was not known to the French. Instead, they were informed of killings of eight Belgians and one Italian on 16 May.<sup>694</sup> The same day, French Ambassador André Ross formally made a request for an urgent military intervention.<sup>695</sup> President Giscard then ordered General Méry to organise the intervention as soon as possible.<sup>696</sup> French goals of the intervention went beyond the mere evacuation of French and other European residents in Kolwezi. Regarding Shaba I, Giscard already wrote that "to *help President Mobutu*, we have provided transport planes to carry Moroccan units, sent by the King of Morocco."<sup>697</sup> Confronted with an even more precarious situation of the European residents and of the very survival of Mobutu's rule in 1978,

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<sup>689</sup> Powell, "The 'Cuba of the West'?", 2016, 81.

<sup>690</sup> Willame, "La seconde guerre du Shaba", 1978, 16.

<sup>691</sup> Powell, "The 'Cuba of the West'?", 2016, 81.

<sup>692</sup> Gleijeses, "Truth or Credibility", 1996, 85.

<sup>693</sup> Powell, "The 'Cuba of the West'?", 2016, 81.

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>695</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>696</sup> Giscard d'Estaing, *Le pouvoir et la vie*, 1988, 240.

<sup>697</sup> "En 1977, pour aider le président Mobutu, nous avons fourni les avions de transport pour acheminer les unités marocaines, envoyées par le roi du Maroc." *Ibid.*, 239 [My emphasis].

Giscard argued that “[i]f the massacres take place, there is no hesitation possible. The risk will be what it will be. A people which has access to military means cannot stand by when roughnecks break down doors and shoot with machine guns in houses.”<sup>698</sup> Belgium’s more prudent attitude jeopardised the French plan. Although Ministers of Foreign Affairs Louis de Guiringaud and Henri Simonet communicated with one another and Simonet urged de Guiringaud not to commence the intervention before the Belgians could arrive, a few hours before the Belgians, French paratroopers landed in Kolwezi on 19 May.<sup>699</sup> France refused to give permission to the Belgian troops to fly over their territory, citing the absence of a document according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, thereby delaying the Belgian operation.<sup>700</sup>

Zaire preferred to liaise directly with other countries through bilateral talks instead of opting for UN approval. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim declared on 20 May that he was informed about the French and Belgian interventions in Shaba by the respective governments but added that there could be no UN intervention in Zaire. That would be the responsibility of the Security Council, which did not receive any request in that respect.<sup>701</sup> Success would not have been guaranteed if Zaire would have appealed to the UN. It would have been highly unlikely for the Security Council to establish a threat to international peace and security. The relevant acts of aggression were defined a few years prior by the General Assembly in a non-binding resolution intended to provide guidance to the Security Council. These acts were defined as “[t]he sending by or on behalf of a State of armed bands, groups, irregulars or mercenaries, which carry out acts of armed force against another State of such gravity as to amount to the acts listed above [e.g. bombardment; blockade; attack on the land, sea or air forces, or marine and air fleets], or its substantial involvement therein.”<sup>702</sup> The FLNC was not sent out by or on behalf of a state and no tangible proof existed of the presence of Cuban or Soviet forces sent out by their respective governments. Jurist Jean Salmon argued that there was no invasion.<sup>703</sup> Shaba II, Yakemtchouk concluded, had both an internal and an international dimension.<sup>704</sup>

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<sup>698</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

<sup>699</sup> Powell, “The ‘Cuba of the West’?”, 2016, 83.

<sup>700</sup> Depoorter, *Verslag over de gebeurtenissen in KOLWEZI*, 2005, 29.

<sup>701</sup> Yakemtchouk, “Les deux guerres du Shaba”, 1988, 596.

<sup>702</sup> Article 3(g), in “Annex: Definition of Aggression”, Resolution 3314(XXIX). Definition of Aggression, 2319<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, 14 December 1974 [A/RES/3314(XXIX)].

<sup>703</sup> Jean Salmon in Vanden Driessche, “Shaba: Questions de droit”, *Spécial*, 31 May 1978, 16.

<sup>704</sup> “*En fait, l’affaire du Shaba était à la fois d’ordre interne et d’ordre international.*” Yakemtchouk, “Les deux guerres du Shaba”, 1988, 596.

Belgium wanted to portray its mission as a purely humanitarian evacuation mission, despite its stronger position as opposed to Shaba I. The new, fourth Tindemans government replaced the third one, a caretaker government during Shaba I. Henri Simonet replaced Van Elslande. The new Minister of Foreign Affairs chose one of the country's foremost diplomats and great admirer of the Zairean President, Alfred Cahen, to become his *Chef de cabinet*.<sup>705</sup>

Nevertheless, the Belgian response to Mobutu was more moderate than the French one. A possible explanation lies in the Belgian communal fracture line. The new coalition government consisted of Flemish and francophone socialists and Christian democrats, as well as the Flemish nationalist *Volksumie*, and the *Front démocratique des francophones* (FDF), defending the rights of francophone Belgians. The crisis committee that decided on steps to take during the conflict consisted of Prime Minister Tindemans (Flemish Christian democrat), Minister of Foreign Affairs Henri Simonet (francophone socialist), Minister of Defence Paul Vanden Boeynants (francophone Christian democrat), Minister of Cooperation Lucien Outers (FDF), Minister of Foreign Trade Hector de Bruyne, (*Volksumie*), Vice-Prime Minister Léon Hurez (francophone socialist) and Minister of Communication Jos Chabert (Flemish Christian democrat). Simonet explained that Minister of Foreign Trade de Bruyne “was allergic to any collusion with France.”<sup>706</sup> With perseverance, he expressed “the frustrations and even the hostility that dated back to his past as Flemish nationalist with regard to a military intervention profiting an African regime that many Flemings did not approve of.”<sup>707</sup> Giscard's memoir cites many occasions at the beginning of Shaba II when Simonet and de Guiringaud phoned one another, during the night of 18 to 19 May, during which Simonet asked to delay the French operation in order to arrive in Zaire at the same time. From his side, Simonet explained the request for delays in his memoir as originating from the indecisiveness from the government's Flemish nationalist wing on the subject of the military intervention. Stalling the decision gave the opportunity to de Bruyne to save face.<sup>708</sup>

In Flanders, public opinion was indeed unfavourable towards a joint Franco-Belgian operation to save an authoritarian African President. On the Flemish socialist's side, opposition against Mobutu grew steadily, as illustrated by the socialist's party congress a few years before the Shaba Wars broke out, in 1974. Socialist party leaders invited a delegation of the MPR headed by Nguza to the party congress, which took place during the time in office of socialist

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<sup>705</sup> Simonet, *Je n'efface rien*, 1986, 183-4.

<sup>706</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>707</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>708</sup> *Ibid.*, 193-4.

Prime Minister Edmond Leburton. Even before the congress, Manu Ruys concluded that not everyone in the party might be happy with the “Zairean intimacies” of Leburton.<sup>709</sup> President of the Young Socialists, Fleming Luc Van den Bossche, told the delegates in his speech at the congress that the MPR delegation was out of place, which caused several leaders, including Simonet, to expressively protest and gesticulate.<sup>710</sup> A few years later, a significant part of Flemish public opinion, from left to right, was opposed to military interventions in support of the Zairean President. Shared interests decreased due to the evolving political situation on the side of external partner Belgium.

Shaba II required a veritable diplomatic sparring match from the Zairean side to receive external help. They had to package their concerns in a way as to appeal to their international partners. Once again, the Zairean leaders had to create a climate that would suggest an orchestrated attack from Soviet and Cuban elements. This packaging corresponds to Erving Goffman’s sociological conception of *fabrication*, namely “the intentional effort of one or more individuals to manage activity so that a party of one or more others will be induced to have a false belief about what it is that is going on.”<sup>711</sup> In *Le Monde*, Mobutu declared that “On my honour as a soldier, I swear that [...] a motorized company of Cubans was in Kolwezi leading the rebels.”<sup>712</sup> *Spécial*, the weekly magazine under the direction of Pierre Davister, illustrated the line adopted by Zairean diplomacy.<sup>713</sup> In the 7 June edition, *Spécial* dedicated its front page for the third time to the Shaba conflict, running the headline: “Zaire: How to avoid a new Vietnam”.<sup>714</sup> Davister expressed his disappointment of the lukewarm French, Belgian, and US support to Mobutu later that month, bluntly writing that “the Lunda broth [*brouet*] spiced up with Cuban pili-pili is not really a ‘regional entity’ anymore but a kind of spearhead of Soviet penetration that Moscow instrumentalised there where damage could be done, namely today in Shaba and, if one has to believe the rumours, tomorrow in Namibia. With the blessing of Carter.”<sup>715</sup> Mobutu successfully fabricated a story of Cuban involvement with FLNC rebels by appealing to a shared interest between Zaire and anti-communist countries.

Despite the estimated 800 Zairean casualties during Shaba II, international attention was

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<sup>709</sup> Ruys, “Welke ambassadeurs voor Zaïre?”, *De Standaard*, 29 October 1974, 2.

<sup>710</sup> Zinzen, *Il était une fois... Mobutu*, 1995.

<sup>711</sup> Goffman, *Frame Analysis*, 1974, 83.

<sup>712</sup> Mobutu cited in L., “Dans une conférence de presse à Paris”, *Le Monde*, 27 May 1978.

<sup>713</sup> Davister is one of the Belgians mentioned in the notorious annex of the Blumenthal report. He allegedly brought twenty million Belgian Francs in a suitcase from Mobutu to Leburton in 1975. Dungia, *Mobutu et l’argent du Zaïre*, 1992, 163.

<sup>714</sup> “Zaïre: Comment éviter un nouveau Vietnam”, *Spécial*, 7 June 1978, 1.

<sup>715</sup> Davister, “Brouet lunda avec pili-pili cubain”, *Spécial*, 28 June 1978, 6.

predominantly aimed at the thirty-seven Europeans killed in a villa during the ‘P2 massacre’, named after the P2 area of town.<sup>716</sup> Although a pivotal event during Shaba II, the massacre is somewhat shrouded in mystery with regard to the perpetrators and even the date. FAZ helicopter pilot Pierre Yambuya wrote an important eyewitness account during his time in exile.<sup>717</sup> His oft-cited testimony of the P2 massacre dates the killing on 14 May:

“On that 14 May, at 17 o’clock, Colonel Bosange suddenly orders that all Europeans who are locked in the villa be shot down. According to him, they are all mercenaries. Bosange does not tolerate any dissent and General Tshikeva remains dead silent. Only the old Musangu protests. Bosange orders the head of intelligence services and security (S-2), Lieutenant Mutuale and three other soldiers, to execute his orders. Mutuale and his execution squad went to the villa where doors and windows are thoroughly barred. Through the blinds, the soldiers shoot until their automatic weapons are empty. The rapid-fire echoes like the noise of a collision. Mutuale and his men reappeared five minutes later: mission accomplished. Colonel Bosange goes on to establish with his own eyes that no survivors are left. ‘Come, we can go now.’”<sup>718</sup>

The testimony of European survivor ‘M.R.’ also mentions 14 May as the day of the killing, but does not confirm the identity of the perpetrators since the blinds were closed.<sup>719</sup> Larmer and Kennes nevertheless contended that it took place on 18 May, whereas Powell contended that French and other accounts made clear that the P2 massacre happened on 17 May.<sup>720</sup>

Both first-hand witnesses and other observers equally disagree on the perpetrators of the P2 massacre.<sup>721</sup> Yambuya provided the most substantial eyewitness account by concretely identifying Lieutenant Mutuale and three other soldiers as executing Colonel Bosange’s orders. Others, however, maintained that FLNC elements killed the Europeans. Sergent attributed the killings to ex-Katangese gendarmes.<sup>722</sup>

After Shaba II, France, the US, and Belgium sought ways to ensure stability in the Shaba province, without a direct involvement in the deployment of their forces. Belgium’s more minimalist vision of the Shaba II operation did not allow an extension of their mission.<sup>723</sup> In

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<sup>716</sup> Estimation of losses: Larmer, and Kennes, *The Katangese Gendarmes*, 2016, 138.

<sup>717</sup> Yambuya, *Zaire: Het abattoir*, 1991.

<sup>718</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>719</sup> Braeckman, *Le dinosaure*, 1992, 67.

<sup>720</sup> Larmer, and Kennes, *The Katangese Gendarmes*, 2016, 138; Powell, *France’s African Wars*, 2013, 125.

<sup>721</sup> Cf. Powell: “no clear consensus exists as to who actually killed them [the Europeans].” *Ibid.*

<sup>722</sup> Sergent, *La légion saute*, 1979, 87.

<sup>723</sup> Powell, *France’s African Wars*, 2013, 157.

order to divert the image of a western intervention towards a more intra-African appearance, French decision-makers pushed for an Intra-African Force (IAF) to provide stability.<sup>724</sup> Traditional ally of Zaire, Morocco, were to provide the bulk of the forces, but King Hassan II advocated for troops from several African countries.<sup>725</sup> Eventually, on 5 June 1978, 1500 Moroccans, 560 Senegalese, 150 Togolese, 50 Gabonese, and 200 Ivoirians were deployed, airlifted by French and US planes.<sup>726</sup>

Zaire had to take into account the interests of external partners such as France, the US, and Belgium, who did not want to have a long-term military presence in the country. It would take until the second half of the 1990s before rebels would again contest Mobutu's authority.

### **3. First Congo War**

Describing the final period of Zaire under Mobutu, opponent Aubert Mukendi noted that "it had become worse than a wooden beam, consumed by termites. When the termites are inside, after a while, the beam collapses by itself. Only a light breeze suffices. When a fly settles on it, that is enough for it to fall down. That is what happened: the whole country collapsed."<sup>727</sup>

Although the First Congo War is often and rightfully discussed within the context of the Rwandan genocide and its aftermath, the other conditions for the swift overthrow of Mobutu are to be found on the Zairean side, including the medium-term disintegration of the Zairean state, the end of the Cold War and, related to the latter point, Mobutu's loss of international credit. The violent transfer of authority was facilitated by the delegitimation of Mobutu's rule. Shared interests with external partners were no longer available for the President. The loss of his legitimacy also led to the impossibility to persuade foreign audiences through speech. Finally, the disintegration of the Zairean state meant a total disintegration of the state institutions. Mobutu retreated to Gbadolite and was only rarely present in the country's capital. On the other hand, the AFDL leaders gained authority over the whole territory at a record pace. Shared interests with African partners were numerous, partly because they were not part of the Mobutist system and did not rely on western backing.

#### **3.1. Mobutu's Final Years**

The First Congo War cannot be explained by monocausal interpretations. It was the product of several and sometimes interlinked crises. Besides the Rwandan Genocide and resulting refugee

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<sup>724</sup> Powell, "La France, les États-Unis et la Force interafricaine", 2012, 74.

<sup>725</sup> Boussaid, "Brothers in Arms", 2021, 10.

<sup>726</sup> Powell, "La France, les États-Unis et la Force interafricaine", 2012, 74-5.

<sup>727</sup> Testimony of Aubert Mukendi in Michel, *Mobutu: Roi du Zaïre*, 1999.

crisis, which will be briefly discussed later, the crisis of the Zairean state stands out as a main reason for the remarkably swift overtaking by the AFDL of the Zairean state. That crisis is both a cause and a consequence of the loss of international legitimacy. Finally, the end of the Cold War provided a catalyst for the interlinked process of state decline and loss of international support. According to de Villers, one cannot analyse this decline “without taking into account the fact that the state rose and declined in an autonomous way, conforming to its proper logic. The end of the Cold War only provided its *coup de grâce*.”<sup>728</sup>

As demonstrated in the chapter about the Second Republic’s political thought, Mobutu secured his authority over Zaire by making himself indispensable for the Zairean state system. The 1974 constitution gave him far-reaching executive powers. The musical chairs approach to government appointments further ensured that no politician could develop a power base large enough to depose the president in a coup d’état. Towards the end of the 1980s, however, more and more African dictatorships were forced to concede to popular protests, engendered by the final stage of the Cold War. At the early 1990s, Mobutu had to organise a democratisation process as well in order to maintain his position. Honoré N’Gbanda wrote in retrospect that he served two completely different personalities during his time at the inner circle of the Mobutu presidency from 1980 to 1997.<sup>729</sup> The final blow [*estocade*] to Mobutu was the *Conférence nationale souveraine* (CNS). In the short term, Mobutu maintained himself in power by resorting to ruses, false promises, and trying to obstruct the workings of the CNS.<sup>730</sup> N’Gbanda explained that since this episode, Mobutu retreated to Gbadolite in his ancestral Equator region.<sup>731</sup> Local matters were more and more prioritised over matters of state. The Zairean state system, with the President making himself indispensable, therefore collapsed partly by the personal retreat of Mobutu. To foreign partners, Mobutu became even more of an embarrassment through his growing incapacity to handle matters of state and its institutions.

One of Mobutu’s ways to make himself indispensable was the fracturing of the Zairean armed forces, as presented in the previous section. Since high-ranking and influential officers could develop their own power base and contest the ruling regime, Mobutu wilfully weakened

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<sup>728</sup> de Villers, *Histoire du politique*, 2016, 138.

<sup>729</sup> N’Gbanda, *Ainsi sonne le glas!*, 1998, 133. Cf. Hendrickx, “Histoire du politique au Congo-Kinshasa”, 2017, 101-3.

<sup>730</sup> Diangitukwa, *Qui gouverne le Zaïre?*, 1997, 126-30.

<sup>731</sup> N’Gbanda, *Ainsi sonne le glas!*, 1998, 136. Gbadolite is sometimes described as the ancestral town of Mobutu, but Mobutu was born in Lisala. When he was eight years old, he moved with his brothers and recently widowed mother mama Yémo to her birthplace Kawele, a few kilometres from Gbadolite, birthplace of Mobutu’s father Albéric Gbemani. Langellier, *Mobutu*, 2017, 9-11.

the FAZ. Helicopter pilot Pierre Yambuya remembered the state of dilapidation of the army in the 1970s in his memoir. A Sergeant-Major, for instance, earned 280 zaires, whereas a bag of rice cost 1200 zaires.<sup>732</sup> At the air force (*Force aérienne zaïroise*, FAZA), military personnel clandestinely sold fuel. Pilots and mechanics also sold spare parts as an additional source of income, resulting in many plane accidents.<sup>733</sup> A 1982 report drafted by the CIA highlighted Mobutu's own contribution to the situation of the FAZ. "Zaire's 42,000-man armed forces", the report indicated, "are in poor condition, largely as a result of actions he has taken to maintain their loyalty." The President was assessed by the report as "adroit at manipulating the armed forces and Zairian politics to assure his continued control."<sup>734</sup> Endemic corruption in the army was a mode of action by senior officers and politicians alike, despite the international training of the officers in countries like France, Belgium, Israel, and the US, which generated a technically proficient and competent officers' corps.<sup>735</sup> Mobutu capitalised on internal rivalries within the officers' corps. N'Gbanda elaborated in some detail in his memoir what he called the 'war of the generals' (*La guerre des Généraux*).<sup>736</sup> All ministers of defence and generals had their "opponent" within the inner circle of Mobutu or the highest ranks of the army, N'Gbanda noted. "Bumba suffered the incursions from Molongya; Singa faced the attacks of Lomponda; Likulia swallowed the insults of Eluki; Mahele had a hard time with Eluki; whereas Singa, who returned to Defence, suffered tremendous hits brought to him by Secretary of State at the Ministry of Defence Likulia..."<sup>737</sup> At the same time, even towards the end of Mobutu's time in office, Zairean leaders could count on the support of several high-ranking French officers such as Captain Paul Barril and General Jeannou Lacaze, who made trips to Gbadolite.<sup>738</sup>

At first sight, this overview of the internal disputes within the Zairean military concerns only the domestic security situation and domestic politics. From the standpoint of the Zairean leadership, however, the weakness of the FAZ paired with the possibility of a foreign intervention in favour of the Zairean regime was a calculated risk. In case of a significant threat to Mobutu's government, he hoped to create a shared interest of maintaining the country's

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<sup>732</sup> Yambuya, *Zaire: l'abattoir*, 1991, 24.

<sup>733</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 and 28-30.

<sup>734</sup> CIA Directorate of Intelligence, *Zaire: Mobutu and the Military*, 1982, iii-iv. <[cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP83S00855R000100080001-6.pdf](http://cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP83S00855R000100080001-6.pdf)>, consulted on 2 December 2021.

<sup>735</sup> N'Gbanda, *Ainsi sonne le glas!*, 1998, 42; Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory*, 2012, 114.

<sup>736</sup> N'Gbanda, "La guerre des Généraux", *Ainsi sonne le glas!*, 1998, 46-52.

<sup>737</sup> *Ibid.*, 48. Cf. Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory*, 2012, 113-6.

<sup>738</sup> Diangitukwa, *Qui gouverne le Zaïre?*, 1997, 132-3.

territorial integrity and appeal to friendly countries to help out the regime in place.<sup>739</sup> As shown in the previous chapter, France, Belgium, the US, and Morocco did indeed intervene with either a rescue mission, provision of logistical support, or an intervention in favour of the regime during the Shaba Wars. A weak Zairean military that could not pose any credible threat to Mobutu's presidency coupled with the possibility of a foreign intervention was a win-win situation for Mobutu, whose authority therefore remained safeguarded. In 1996, however, the domestic and international situation has drastically changed, as demonstrated above. The loss of international credit caused by the enduring human rights abuses, dilapidation of the Zairean state, and end of the Cold War brought about a situation of non-intervention by international partners. The absence of intervention, caused by the absence of shared interests, was a decisive element in the First Congo War.

The multilateral mediation efforts are another example of unsuccessful responses that did not lead to a cessation of hostilities. The UN Security Council adopted its five-point peace plan for eastern Zaire on 18 February 1997.<sup>740</sup> The senior diplomat charged with the implementation of the plan was the Algerian Mohamed Sahnoun, double-hatting the positions of envoy for the UN and of the OAU. In an interview with *Jeune Afrique*, he recognised his mission to be rather a good offices mission than a mediation effort, since "contrary to a mediator, 'mister good offices' is listening. First of all, his goal is to create communication between the people."<sup>741</sup> In the end, Sahnoun's efforts did not bear fruit, partly because the Zairean and the AFDL leadership were insincere in their willingness to cooperate, partly because there were not many hostilities to cease between the rebels and a fleeing FAZ.<sup>742</sup> According to Reyntjens, diplomatic efforts during the First Congo War were "characterised by ambiguity and a good deal of hypocrisy" from the outset.<sup>743</sup>

Since the AFDL's march to Kinshasa met with few domestic military resistance and would not be halted through international pressure, Kabila needed no negotiated solution to the conflict. Weeks before the Zairean capital fell into the hands of the AFDL, Kabila and Mobutu met aboard the *SAS Outeniqua*, a South African military vessel anchored near Pointe-Noire, Republic of the Congo. Nelson Mandela mediated the meeting between the ailing President and the rebel leader on 4 May 1997. One week before, Mobutu was towed on the ship because he

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<sup>739</sup> CIA Directorate of Intelligence, *Zaire: Mobutu and the Military*, 1982, 8.

<sup>740</sup> "Resolution 1097 (1997)", 18 February 1997 [S/RES/1097 (1997)].

<sup>741</sup> Gharbi, and Fall, "Grands Lacs. Mohamed Sahnoun: 'Je ne suis pas un faiseur de miracles!'", *Jeune Afrique*, 12-18 February 1997, 7.

<sup>742</sup> de Villers, and Willame, *République Démocratique du Congo*, 1998, 281.

<sup>743</sup> Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 2009, 130.

was too sick to walk the steps onto the boat, but Kabila failed to show up.<sup>744</sup> The 4 May meeting equally turned out to be a humiliating experience for Mobutu, since Kabila accepted no concessions.<sup>745</sup> Finally, two days before Kinshasa fell to the rebels, another meeting in Pointe-Noire was convened. Mandela, Mobutu, and Sahnoun were present, but Kabila announced the same day that he will not be attending the meeting. N’Gbanda recounted that Mobutu was in an indescribable state of anger and disappointment. Mandela lashed out against Kabila, pointing out his “lack of political culture and respect vis-à-vis the Heads of State and the elders.”<sup>746</sup>

### **3.2. Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL)**

On 18 October 1996, four representatives of disparate political and military groupings gathered in Kigali to sign an agreement establishing the umbrella organisation *Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire* (AFDL).<sup>747</sup> Veteran Mobutu opponent Laurent-Désiré Kabila of the PRP, met André Kisase Ngandu, ageing rebel leader of the *Conseil national de résistance pour la démocratie* (CNR), Déogratias Bugera, young architect from North Kivu, and a young Sergeant in the Rwandese army called Anselme Masasu.<sup>748</sup>

In a study about the agency of Congolese political elites, the AFDL poses a challenging entity to discuss. Kabila, who officially became the spokesperson and later the chairman for the coalition, was one of the few politicians or rebel leaders under Mobutu who never made any compromises with the Zairean political establishment. Besides high-level politicians such as Nguza Karl-I-Bond who oscillated between opposition and reconciliation with Mobutu, the most prominent civil opposition leader under Mobutu Etienne Tshisekedi also accepted many governmental positions, including the premiership for several terms. Kabila’s ‘untainted’ opposition to Mobutu was one of his strengths, but also meant that he operated in the margins of Zairean politics. Certainly at the beginning of the formation of the AFDL, evidence does not point to a skilful exercise of agency by domestic Zairean AFDL actors when interacting with external partners. As Stearns summarised, the AFDL was a “grandiose name for a group that initially had little political or military significance other than providing a smoke screen for Rwandan and Ugandan involvement.”<sup>749</sup>

Stearns’ statement reveals a major difficulty: this thesis has emphasised the agency of

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<sup>744</sup> De Smet, “Mobutu gooit handdoek in ring”, *De Standaard*, 5 mei 1997, 1.

<sup>745</sup> Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory*, 2012, 159.

<sup>746</sup> N’Gbanda, *Ainsi sonne le glas!*, 1998, 320.

<sup>747</sup> de Villers, and Willame, *République Démocratique du Congo*, 1998, 19.

<sup>748</sup> Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory*, 2012, 87.

<sup>749</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

Congolese/Zairean political actors, despite the many constraints they have been facing. Even in a state of civil war such as the Congo Crisis, or when working under an authoritarian President Mobutu, these individuals were able to exercise agency, but in the case of the AFDL, it seems as if it consisted of Zairean puppets on the strings of Rwanda and Uganda. On the other hand, however, Reyntjens cautioned against the belief

“that the Congolese were passive objects at the receiving end of events. All the actors, including many Congolese, have exercised various degrees of agency and have engaged in violence and plunder, and, in [Ian] Taylor’s words, they were ‘not simply automatons carrying out the wishes of outside forces.’”<sup>750</sup>

Mwenzé Kongolo, close aide of Kabila whose *All North America Conference on Zaire* (Anacoza) was first put in contact with the rebel leader in 1996 through the internet, declared that it was dead wrong (*archi-faux*) to think that the Rwandan and Ugandan armies fought against the FAZ. Every country involved in the war had its own interests, with Rwanda being concerned with the Hutu militias. “The Rwandans did not even think that it was possible to reach Kinshasa. Only Mzee [Kabila] believed in it.”<sup>751</sup>

Kabila’s ambition to reach Kinshasa, establish his authority, and depose Mobutu, differed from the goals of Rwanda and Uganda. The arrival of over a million mostly Hutu refugees in North and South Kivu after the RPF victory in 1994 posed a major security risk for the newly installed Rwandan leadership.<sup>752</sup> This emergency has to be considered from a wider and longer-term perspective of the alteration of the ethnic composition in the Kivu regions. The presence of Kinyarwanda-speaking people in eastern Congo predates colonial times.<sup>753</sup> In South Kivu, the Banyamulenge are a predominantly Tutsi population group which arrived in the nineteenth century. More Tutsi people arrived in South Kivu after the anti-Tutsi pogrom of 1959.<sup>754</sup> Under Mobutu, the Kinyarwanda-speaking community in Zaire alternated between the precarious position of perceived outsiders and growing influence in Kinshasa. The President’s *Chef de cabinet* between 1969 and 1977 was a Tutsi named Barthélémy Bisengimana Rwema. He was believed to have arrived in the country in 1959.<sup>755</sup> He introduced the 1972 Citizenship Decree,

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<sup>750</sup> Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 2009, 5.

<sup>751</sup> Mwenzé Kongolo, “Mzee, stratège militaire et politique”, in Tambwe and Dikanga Kazadi (eds.), *Laurent-Désiré Kabila*, 2008, 79.

<sup>752</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 2001, 234.

<sup>753</sup> Vlassenroot, “Citizenship, Identity Formation & Conflict”, 2002, 502.

<sup>754</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, “The Politics of Citizenship”, in Nugent, Hammett, and Dorman (eds.), *Making Nations, Creating Strangers*, 2007, 74.

<sup>755</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 2001, 243.

extending Zairean citizenship, but the 1981 Citizenship Law stated that only people who could prove an ancestral connection in the territory before 1 August 1885 could be citizens of Zaire.<sup>756</sup> Despite problems regarding the implementation of the law, it showed the increasingly precarious situation of Kinyarwanda-speaking inhabitants of Zaire.

During the first half of the 1990s, the number of refugees in eastern Zaire increased in an unprecedented manner. Besides the 200 000 individuals fleeing to South Kivu from Burundi after President Melchior Ndadaye's assassination in 1993, 500 000 Rwandans fled to the region during and after the 1994 genocide. An additional 700 000 Rwandan refugees fled to North Kivu.<sup>757</sup> Fearing retaliation from the Tutsi-led RPF, the Rwandan refugees were mostly Hutu, including many perpetrators of the genocide. This influx jeopardised the position of the Banyamulenge in Zaire. At the end of August 1996, the Banyamulenge launched a rebellion. Although they had their own grievances, the decision to start military actions was taken in Kigali. According to Museveni, Rwandan Vice-President and Defence Minister Paul Kagame recruited 2000 Zairean Tutsi in the RPA to carry out military actions against the Zairean refugee camps, probably as early as 1995.<sup>758</sup> With RPA support, the Banyamulenge soon conquered South Kivu.<sup>759</sup>

The reappearance of Laurent-Désiré Kabila at the forefront of armed anti-Mobutist resistance remains partly unclarified. According to Kennes, he connected with Museveni in November 1995 who, possibly at the recommendation of Nyerere, put Kabila in contact with Kagame.<sup>760</sup> Prunier contrasted Kennes' conclusion with his own research. According to his interview with a Tanzanian security officer, Museveni and Kagame were looking for 'suitable Congolese' people as a local cover for their operations somewhere in the first half of 1996. Kagame's choices were the Tutsi Bugera and Masasu Nindaga. Museveni suggested a former collaborator of the Ugandan External Service Organisation Kisase Ngandu. Concerned with this divergence, Nyerere suggested Kabila's name as a fourth founding member of the AFDL.<sup>761</sup> Despite the ostensibly external machinations that propelled Kabila to renewed prominence, he did not waste the crisis to solely carry out the wishes of his patrons. Kabila's number one ambition was to reach Kinshasa and oust Mobutu. Two phases of the First Congo War can be

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<sup>756</sup> Jackson, "Sons of Which Soil?", 2006, 121; Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 2001, 244.

<sup>757</sup> Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 2009, 16 and 21.

<sup>758</sup> Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 2009, 48.

<sup>759</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>760</sup> Kennes, *Essai Biographique sur Laurent Désiré Kabila*, 2003, 319. Although Nyerere left the presidential office in 1985, he still enjoyed considerable clout in Tanzanian politics as an elder statesman.

<sup>761</sup> Prunier, *Africa's World War*, 2009, 115.

distinguished. After the fall of Bunia on 24 December 1996, the rebel advance halted. At the time, less than 5 percent of the Zairean territory was under rebel control.<sup>762</sup> *The Washington Post* journalist John Pomfret, who extensively reported on the conflict, wrote that “[w]ith eastern Congo captured, the rebel factions began bickering.”<sup>763</sup> Rwanda and Uganda were mostly interested in the creation of a buffer zone in eastern Zaire. In an interview with Pomfret, Kagame put forward three goals in his battle plan. Firstly and most importantly for Rwanda, the refugee camps had to be dismantled. Secondly, the structure of the Hutu army and militia units had to be destroyed, either by repatriating the Hutu combatants back to Rwanda and “dealing with them there or scattering them.”<sup>764</sup> Only the third goal was to topple Mobutu. Kagame defended the Rwandese decision to continue to Kinshasa by saying that the Zairean rebels were not fully prepared to proceed alone.<sup>765</sup>

The real impetus to support the AFDL rebels in their march towards Kinshasa came from Angola. Zaire’s western neighbour was threatened by Jonas Savimbi’s UNITA rebels which were supported by Mobutu. This threat was not solved by the eastern buffer. As a result, several thousand ex-Katangese gendarmes (*Tigres*) were airlifted from Angola to Kigali in February 1997.<sup>766</sup> Only in April did the *Forças Armadas Angolanas* (FAA) get directly involved in the conflict. From the arrival of the *Tigres* in mid-February, it only took until mid-May to capture the whole Zairean territory. The AFDL skilfully used the *Tigres’* military support without making any concessions with regard to possible future political participation or pro-Katangese demands by the *Tigres*. General Jean-Delphin Muland, one of the military leaders of the *Tigres*, was either unable or unwilling to spell out his demands to the AFDL leadership.<sup>767</sup>

Despite the foreign character of both the reinstatement of Kabila as a rebel leader and the foundation of the AFDL, the alliance was soon able to achieve their own goal of taking over power in Zaire which went beyond the immediate goals of Rwanda and Uganda of securing eastern Zaire. The international mediation efforts were not useful to Kabila since his alliance constantly had the upper hand against the non-performing FAZ. One humiliating episode for Sahnoun took place in the stadium of Kisangani after the AFDL captured Zaire’s second-most populous city. In the presence of the UN and OAU Ambassador, Kabila asked the crowd what they thought about the presence of Sahnoun, if they desired a cease-fire, or if they wanted the

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<sup>762</sup> Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 2009, 61.

<sup>763</sup> Pomfret, “In Congo, Revenge Became Rebellion”, *The Washington Post*, 6 July 1997.

<sup>764</sup> *Ibid.*, “Rwandans Led Revolt in Congo”, *The Washington Post*, 9 July 1997, 1.

<sup>765</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>766</sup> Cf. Reyntjens, *the Great African War*, 2009, 62-3.

<sup>767</sup> Larmer, and Kennes, *The Katangese Gendarmes*, 2016, 169-70.

AFDL to move forward. As expected, the crowd reacted in favour of the continuation of the AFDL to Kinshasa.<sup>768</sup> A similarly humiliating episode for Mandela and Mobutu took place during the meeting and proposed meetings aboard the *Outeniqua* near Pointe-Noire. An initially reluctant Mobutu agreed to meet Kabila – “a compatriot, a Zairean citizen like any other”, according to the President – but, in an almost farcical way of retaining his dignity, he added that “I will receive him if he asks it nicely.”<sup>769</sup> The purpose of the AFDL’s preservation of a façade of readiness to sit around the table was twofold. First, it served as a lightning rod to distract from their military progress. Second, it could bolster their international legitimacy after the transfer of authority in Kinshasa.

Finally, the lack of cooperation with partners outside the African continent was a point of honour for the AFDL. Supporters of the AFDL emphasised the anti-imperialist and African alignment of Kabila and the AFDL in order to distance themselves from Mobutu’s closeness to his western partners.<sup>770</sup> Founding member Déogratias Bugera explained that the fall of Kisangani “represented the downfall of a myth of a dictatorship supported by the West. [...] The failure of Kisangani, of Mobutu, with his mercenaries and his western friends who wanted once more to maintain [Mobutu in power], even in poor health, and the unity of African action, was something very laudable that occupied an essential position in the conscience of the Africans.”<sup>771</sup> Emmanuel Bebe Beshelemu, media professional favourable to Kabila’s project, underlined Kabila’s independence of mind and summarised that he

“wanted to reshuffle the cards of the Congolese economy with the genuine interests of the country in mind, called into question certain monopolies, particularly mining monopolies. Regarding international politics, he demonstrated the same independence of mind, free in his diplomatic relations, his sympathies or dislikes, be they political or ideological.”<sup>772</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

The provision of military support proved to be harder to attract than the mere enunciation of political and moral support. When external actors are deciding on a possible military support,

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<sup>768</sup> The event is documented in El-Tahri, *L’Afrique en morceaux*, 2000. Further in the documentary, Sahnoun explained that the crowd expressed their sentiment in an emotional way, which did not mean that they wanted war.

<sup>769</sup> Andriamirado, “Zaire. Les secrets d’une rencontre.”, *Jeune Afrique*, 7-13 May 1997, 6.

<sup>770</sup> See, for instance, professor and government minister Mukendi Tshimuanga, “Laurent-Désiré Kabila: L’acteur politique et ses options idéologiques”, in Tambwe, and Dikanga Kazadi (eds.), *Laurent-Désiré Kabila*, 2008, 148-9.

<sup>771</sup> El-Tahri, *L’Afrique en morceaux* 2000.

<sup>772</sup> Bebe Beshelemu, “L’homme des ruptures avec les systèmes établis”, in Tambwe, and Dikanga Kazadi (eds.), *Laurent-Désiré Kabila*, 2008, 94-5.

they needed to assess whether they could take the risk of a potential backlash and reputation of fuelling a Cold War conflict. Even the central government, in the person of Gizenga, did not succeed in attracting the US directly to their cause. On the other hand, Belgian support for the Katangese secession was covert but significant. During the Shaba Wars, some partner countries were more reserved than others to buttress Mobutu's authority. No international partner was willing to salvage the Mobutist system, just like the FAZ was unwilling to provide resistance against the AFDL.

Nevertheless, Congolese political elites were never totally at the mercy of external forces. Some succeeded in steering the background of Cold War competition to their benefit. The advancement of their political thought at the international level set the stage for military support.

The attraction of military support in order to confront security crises relates more to goals of authority than legitimacy. Nevertheless, to be accepted as a legitimate ruler was a prerequisite to gain military support. Lumumba's assassination was a clear example of changes in legitimacy. UN resolutions condemned Katanga in a firmer tone and the secessionist state lost some international support. Later, the Mobutist system was saved in the 1970s through the support of external actors, but was delegitimised by the 1990s which led to the non-intervention of traditional partners. On the other hand, the AFDL could count on external support because it was not a part of the Mobutist system.

The breakdown of authority right after independence heralded a time period where different political actors and factions sought to retain or gain authority over the Congolese territory, or at least part thereof. Mobutu subsequently established and maintained his authority for decades, although it was severely threatened by the ex-Katangese gendarmes of the FLNC. Finally, unlike Rwanda's and Uganda's priorities, the AFDL gained the upper hand in the First Congo War and gained authority over the renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo in record time. The lack of support outside the African continent for the rebels was a point of honour for them, since they could show their independence from western powers and international institutions.

The triad of institutions, performativity of speech, and instrumentalisation of shared interests of epistemic agency reappears within the realm of security issues. The performativity of speech was the foremost strategy used by Congolese political elites in the field of security. This conclusion is reminiscent of broader political science literature, where performativity of speech acts has been notably worked out in the field of security studies. Presenting certain issues as an

existential threat, which then becomes accepted by a target audience and warrants emergency measures, lies at the heart of securitisation as developed by the Copenhagen School of security studies.<sup>773</sup> Several scholars have argued, however, that only very select actors are able to securitise issues. The question about who can act as a securitising actor was not spelt out by Buzan et al. Their identification depended more on the nature of the logic that shapes the action rather than who performs the speech.<sup>774</sup> Lene Hansen discussed the absence of gender in the Copenhagen School and illustrated her article with the case of honour killings against women in Pakistan. The ‘speech act’ in securitisation theory, Hansen claims, obfuscates instances where speaking up about insecurity could aggravate this situation of insecurity.<sup>775</sup> Drawing on Judith Butler’s scholarship on bodily performance, Hansen included bodily practices as an epistemological point of inquiry.<sup>776</sup> Claire Wilkinson argued that securitisation theory is unfit for discussions on non-western empirical studies due to what Buzan and Little called the ‘Westphalian straitjacket’, namely to take seventeenth-century Europe as a standard model for the international system at all time and all places.<sup>777</sup> Her case study on the overthrow of the Kyrgyz government in 2005 also highlighted other actors than the classic political leaders, notably in the domestic sphere. Securitisation does, however, remain applicable to the case under discussion. First, the securitising actors from the First Republic and Mobutu’s Zaire are political leaders instead of the general population. Second, the Congolese juridical state – as opposed to the empirical state – follows the logic of statehood that has been developed by European states since 1648 and subsequently solidified by the formation of the UN system. Congolese political elites expressed their concerns when the integrity of the Congo’s national territory was violated, or when its sovereignty in a broad sense was questioned or violated. In other words, despite the western origins of the modern state-system, Congolese political actors were not only forced to play by the rules of the game, they were able to make use of these rules and norms in their speeches.

In 2020, the discussion on the scope and applicability of securitisation theory provoked an exceptionally heated debate in the journal *Security Dialogue*. Alison Howell and Melanie Richter-Montpetit argued that securitisation theory is “fundamentally and inextricably structured not only by Eurocentrism but also by civilizationism, methodological whiteness, and

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<sup>773</sup> Cf. Buzan, Waeber, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework*, 1998.

<sup>774</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>775</sup> Hansen, “The Little Mermaid’s Silent Security Dilemma”, 2000, 287.

<sup>776</sup> Cf. Hansen, “Are ‘Core’ Feminist Critiques”, 2020, 382.

<sup>777</sup> Buzan, and Little, “Why International Relations has Failed”, 2001,

antiblack racism.”<sup>778</sup> The authors’ critique encompassed the full scope of the theory, leading to a comprehensive refutation of securitisation theory and its methodology. To name one crucial feature, the dichotomy in securitisation theory between ‘normal politics’ and an exceptional security situation was criticised since, according to Howell and Richter-Montpetit, the theory’s “civilizationist idealization of ‘normal politics’” left out “racial violence of normal (liberal) politics.”<sup>779</sup> Furthermore, Hansen’s seminal article was criticised, particularly her exploratory cases of honour killings in Pakistan and rape of Muslim women in Bosnia, allegedly constructing a racial opposition between “white Western women, who have achieved legitimacy as vocal political actors, versus ‘silent’ subaltern women”.<sup>780</sup> Hansen responded to the criticisms, refuting the claim that she portrayed Pakistani women to be silent, as well as the existence of a dichotomy between ‘white western’ and ‘subaltern’ women.<sup>781</sup> Ole Waever and Barry Buzan, whose scholarship was more at the centre of critique than Hansen’s, did not ease the tension by responding to Howell and Richter-Montpetit with a reply in *Security Dialogue* and a different 98-page dissection of the original article.<sup>782</sup> “The methodology and academic standards of the H&RM piece are so profoundly and systematically flawed as to void the authors’ argument”, they replied, “and we think the lack of credible supporting evidence makes their charge libellous.”<sup>783</sup>

The critiques and flagging of factual errors of the Howell and Richter-Montpetit article led to several corrections to the original article and does show a sloppiness in the authors’ citation practices.<sup>784</sup> Furthermore, given the absence of a definition of racism in the article, while at the same time refuting the notion of racism of “interpersonal prejudices of openly bigoted individuals”,<sup>785</sup> one cannot assess precisely enough how flawed securitisation is supposed to be according to Howell and Richter-Montpetit’s standards. A final important aspect

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<sup>778</sup> Howell, and Richter-Montpetit, “Is Securitization Theory Racist?”, 2020, 4.

<sup>779</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>780</sup> The original point of critique was aimed against Hansen’s “empirical evidence” (instead of ‘exploratory case’) of “raped Muslim women ‘ who are deemed to be ‘silent’”. Hansen replied that the Pakistani was not empirical evidence but an exploratory case study, but the wording was not corrected in subsequent corrigenda of the article. The addition of “honour killings”, complementing the Bosnian case of “raped Muslim women”, on the other hand, was included in the corrigenda. Hansen, “Are ‘Core’ Feminist Critiques”, 2020, 378-85; “Corrigendum”, 2020, 96.

<sup>781</sup> Hansen, “Are ‘Core’ Feminist Critiques”, 2020, 382.

<sup>782</sup> Waever, and Buzan, “Racism and Responsibility”, 2020, 386-94; Waever, and Buzan, *Racism, Reading and Responsibility*, 15 May 2020 [online only].

<cric.ku.dk/publications/racismreply/Racism\_response\_WebDoc\_15May2020.pdf>, consulted on 15 February 2022.

<sup>783</sup> Waever, and Buzan, “Racism and Responsibility”, 2020, 386.

<sup>784</sup> “Corrigendum”, 2020, 96.

<sup>785</sup> Howell, and Richter-Montpetit, “Is Securitization Theory Racist?”, 2020, 4. Hansen and Waever and Buzan mention this notable absence as well.

of the article relates to the state of ‘normal politics’ as laid out by securitisation theorists. Howell and Richter-Montpetit claim that normal politics was conceptualised by these theorists as “reasoned, civilized dialogue” as opposed to securitisation as a “potential regression into an uncivilized ‘state of nature’”.<sup>786</sup> The passage remains unsourced and is criticised by Waever and Buzan, who specify that ‘normal politics’ does not have any specific attributes.<sup>787</sup> Securitisation does not prescribe any intrinsic qualities to normal politics, only that referent objects are perceived not to be existentially threatened. ‘Normal politics’ might as well mean an authoritarian state in dire economic straits such as Zaire. As long as this referent object – Zaire – does not seem to be existentially threatened, normal politics can mean, in this case, a state which is a far cry from the ideal type of a liberal democracy.<sup>788</sup>

Several Congolese political actors have successfully securitised certain issues as existential threats to several referent objects. The most obvious referent object was the Congolese or, later, Zairean state. Within the Cold War context, the potential communist domination of the country could mean the takeover of the larger region in the imaginary of western decision-makers at the time.

Finally, the instrumentalisation of shared interests was ubiquitous in Congolese security issues. The preservation of the Congo under the auspices of the western bloc, for instance, coincided with the goals and strategies of Congolese politicians. Tshombe’s anti-communism and far-reaching willingness to cooperate with Belgians and, later, French, were fundamental to Katanga’s military build-up. As demonstrated, the Soviet Union was not a solid partner for any Congolese political actor. Soviet influence in the Congo was overstated during the Congo Crisis despite Lumumba’s non-communist politics, barely existent Soviet backing of the Gizenga government, and local origins of the Kwilu and Simba rebellions. The hysteria in western policy-making circles about Lumumba’s request for Soviet aid was unwarranted, not only since both Lumumba and Kasa-Vubu signed the telegram to Khrushchev, but additionally because the SU never developed into a major player in the Congo during the crisis. Several authors suggested that Khrushchev’s and the SU’s role were “rather limited and determined by self-

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<sup>786</sup> Howell, and Richter-Montpetit, “Is Securitization Theory Racist?”, 2020, 13.

<sup>787</sup> Waever, and Buzan, “Racism and Responsibility”, 2020, 391.

<sup>788</sup> The extensive discussion on the securitisation theory controversy is warranted, since Howell and Richter-Montpetit’s absolutist conclusions need to be contextualised when securitisation theory is used in a non-western case such as in the present study. Cf. Nexon, and Jackson, “It Isn’t Just About Waever and Buzan”, 27 May 2020. <[duckofminerva.com/2020/05/it-isnt-just-about-waever-and-buzan.html](https://duckofminerva.com/2020/05/it-isnt-just-about-waever-and-buzan.html)>, consulted on 15 February 2022.

interest.”<sup>789</sup> The SU’s leverage over the Congo, in Mazov’s words, was “rather limited.”<sup>790</sup> The central government, from its side, obtained more pronounced military support from ONUC after the assassination of Lumumba, when multiple Security Council resolutions progressively expanded the mission’s mandate, including the use of force in Katanga. In other words, the worldwide indignation of Lumumba’s assassination increased ONUC’s interest in putting an end to the Katangese secession. Later, the central government under Tshombe showed once more the importance of the instrumentalisation of shared interests when Tshombe’s old military advisers and personnel returned to quell the Simba rebellion.

During the Shaba Wars, the absence of Cuban advisers at the ex-Katangese gendarmes’ side illustrated the lack of international support for them, despite supplies of Soviet equipment through the MPLA before the wars. Cuba even discouraged rebel support since it prioritised the stability of recently independent Angola.<sup>791</sup> On the other side of the conflicts, the interest of the Zairean leadership in maintaining the country’s territorial integrity was packaged as a communist threat against a capitalist country by the leaders in their interaction with their international partners. The FLNC was more homegrown and motivated by local grievances than Zairean politicians claimed. Ex-Katangese gendarmes had no comprehensive ideology and were mainly concerned with the overthrow of Mobutu and return to Shaba. The purported presence of a Cuban motorised brigade was highly likely a useful *fata morgana*. The perceived communist threat resonated well with French, Belgian, and US decision-makers. Moroccan aid was less motivated by Cold War concerns, but rather by a desire to solve African problems through African solutions.<sup>792</sup> The FAZ were carefully curtailed by the President in order to prevent the potential rise of alternative power bases able to contest the current political leadership. This was only made possible by the presence of international actors willing to save the domestic leaders in place. In this respect, the levels of domestic and international politics were connected, through the intermediary of Mobutu.

The First Congo War occurred at a time when shared interests between Zairean leaders and their traditional Belgian and US partners were overshadowed by the disintegration of the Zairean state and human rights abuses. In this context, the relative salience of the end of the Cold War should be mentioned since human rights abuses were less condoned towards the end of the Cold War. The stunted democratisation process of the 1990s with its National

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<sup>789</sup> Mazov cites Ludo De Witte as one of these authors. Mazov, *A Distant Front*, 2010, 78.

<sup>790</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>791</sup> Larmer, and Kennes, *The Katangese Gendarmes*, 2016, 120.

<sup>792</sup> Boussaid, “Brothers in Arms”, 2021, 7-8.

Conference, a phenomenon which took place in many African countries, also fuelled the disintegration of the state.<sup>793</sup> At the domestic level, the decay of state institutions were root causes for the First Congo War and the success of the AFDL. When N’Gbanda served Mobutu from 1980 to 1997, he “served two completely different people.”<sup>794</sup> From 1993, Mobutu retreated to Gbadolite, where he secured the community’s allegiance to him by distributing money to the local population.<sup>795</sup> His move took place at the expense of state institutions.

The decline in importance of Zaire in the west provided opportunities for neighbouring countries to mobilise local Zairean anti-Mobutist actors and further their agenda of securing the western borders of Uganda and Rwanda in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide. Created by Uganda and Rwanda, the AFDL was nevertheless a grouping which pursued its own interest of reaching Kinshasa and changing the leadership of the country. AFDL leaders oversaw a weak coalition of armed forces, but through the support of international partners, coupled with the lack of support on the Zairean side, they overran the Zairean territory with little resistance from the FAZ’s side. Members of the AFDL showed that they had different goals than Ugandan and Rwandan decision-makers to engage in battle but still reached Kinshasa. In order to dismantle the refugee camps and take care of other security issues in eastern Zaire, Kagame and Museveni needed the AFDL to show that local Zairean opponents to the country’s leadership were leading the rebellion instead of external actors. AFDL forces were successful in part because they were unequivocally not a part of the Mobutist system. Laurent-Désiré Kabila was one of the very few political opponents in the country that could not be challenged by an affiliation with the President, unlike most politicians from the *Conférence nationale souveraine*. Main opposition leader under Mobutu, Étienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba was one of the instigators of the open letter to Mobutu in 1980, denouncing the MPR.<sup>796</sup> Additionally, however, he was one of the authors of the 1967 *Manifesto of N’Sele*, held several ministerial portfolios under Mobutu, and became Prime Minister of Zaire on several occasions during the 1990s. Although he was appointed to this position through popular pressure and despite Mobutu’s protestations, it showed a willingness to reform the Zairean state ‘from within’ instead of resolutely opting for armed resistance. Kabila, however, never made any compromises. He wanted to be part of the

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<sup>793</sup> On the wave of democratisation and its successes and failures, see Bratton, and van de Walle, “Popular Protest and Political”, 1992, 419-42.

<sup>794</sup> N’Gbanda, *Ainsi sonne le glas!*, 1998, 133.

<sup>795</sup> Nagifi, “Les largesses du Président”, *Les derniers jours de Mobutu*, 2003, 27-31.

<sup>796</sup> Ngalula Pandanjila, Tshisekedi wa Mulumba et al., “Lettre ouverte au Citoyen Président-Fondateur”, 1981, 94-140.

CNS and had telephone contact with its First President Isaac Kalonji, but was not admitted and was therefore not involved in the workings of the CNS.<sup>797</sup>

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<sup>797</sup> Kennes, *Essai biographique*, 2003, 315-5.

## Chapter Five: Economics

### Introduction

Between 1960 and 1997, Congolese/Zairean elites held intricate economic discussions with bilateral partners and international financial institutions. Gilpin outlined the tension between the political and economic spheres in *The Political Economy of International Relations*:

“Whereas powerful market forces in the form of trade, money, and foreign investment tend to jump national boundaries, to escape political control, and to integrate societies, the tendency of government is to restrict, to channel, and to make economic activities serve the perceived interests of the state and of powerful groups within it.”<sup>798</sup>

Right before Congolese independence, Belgium secured its continuing strong economic position in the Congo through several last-minute decisions. Consequently, the future Congolese rulers were deprived of important economic levers. After independence, the new rulers fought back in their attempt to establish their authority over the country’s economy through bilateral negotiations. Thanks to some forceful and unilateral actions from Congolese decision-makers, they managed to agree with Belgian decision-makers on key economic and financial levers for the country, such as the nationalisation of UMHK, restructuring of colonial debt, and shares of chartered companies with concessionary authority.

In the 1970s, Mobutu embarked on a campaign to undo the economic ‘suffocation’<sup>799</sup> of Zaire by non-Zairean citizens. Businesses were confiscated and redistributed to Zaireans. The potential international outcry against the economic damage and questionable legality of Mobutu’s decisions had to be counteracted. Mobutu succeeded in maintaining his legitimacy at the international level despite the damage done to foreign nationals.

Finally, Zairean diplomacy made maximum efforts to gain favourable conditions during debt restructuring talks in the 1980s. At times, Zaireans played the role of model pupil of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Other times, they hardened their stance and conducted bilateral talks with creditor country Belgium which resulted in a full-fledged bilateral crisis.

The current chapter on the agency related to economic and financial dossiers is divided in four parts. First, it discusses the immediate post-independence economic and financial negotiations between the Congo and Belgium, the so-called *contentieux*. This discussion is divided in two sections. It starts right before independence during the Economic Roundtable Conference until

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<sup>798</sup> Gilpin, *The Political Economy*, 1987, 11.

<sup>799</sup> “Les décisions du 30 novembre”, *Salongo*, 27 March 1974, 3.

the conclusion of the agreements between Tshombe and Spaak. This is followed by a discussion on the evolution of the bilateral talks under Mobutu. The second part treats the Zairianisation of the country's economy under Mobutu in two sections. Initially, the three-stage acquisition process is discussed, before a second section which considers its international repercussions and Zairean efforts to mitigate loss of international credit. The third part considers the debt restructuring talks between Zaire and international financial institutions, and between Zaire and Belgium. A first section shows an overview of relations with the IMF after the second Shaba War, before a section on the Belgo-Zairean confrontation called the *grand affrontement*. Finally, a conclusion fleshes out the main outcomes of the empirical discussion regarding the goals and strategies of Congolese/Zairean political elites.

### 1. Belgo-Congolese *Contentieux*

Immediately after Congolese independence, the military conflict in general and the suspension of diplomatic relations between the Congo and Belgium on 14 July in particular put any discussion on the settlement of outstanding bilateral economic and financial issues on hold. Most notably, the colonial portfolio, which included the direct shareholdings of the colonial state in several companies with activities on the Congolese territory, and division of the public debt of the former Belgian Congo, were contentious issues. During the Lovanium conference in August 1961, Prime Minister Adoula first coined the expression '*contentieux belgo-congolais*' to describe these pending problems not resolved before the diplomatic rupture.<sup>800</sup> Although overshadowed by civil war, secessionism, and interventionism, the management of the *contentieux* shaped the relations between the Congo and Belgium for the first few decades of Congolese independence. The *contentieux*, was also at the centre of the Congolese/Zairean political elites' economic concerns, both during the First Republic and under Mobutu's presidency. Just like the Congo Crisis was not an exclusively military conflict but encompassed questions pertaining to domestic and international public law, the *contentieux* went beyond the purely economic sphere and included discussions on state succession, international law, and some predominantly political and diplomatic issues.<sup>801</sup>

After the first period of the Congo Crisis, the premiership of Cyrille Adoula paved the way for renewed negotiations regarding the public debt of the former colony, as well as the so-

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<sup>800</sup> CRISP, "Le contentieux belgo-congolais", 1965, 2.

<sup>801</sup> Regarding the so-called congolisation of UMHK, Verwilghen wrote that the case "offers the internationalist [international law scholar] a large field of investigation. The phenomenon touches on questions of state succession and those pertaining to juridical aspects of foreign investment." Verwilghen, "Les principaux aspects juridiques", 1970, 159.

called colonial portfolio, which included the assets and liabilities of the former colony. Despite the Simba and Kwilu rebellions, Adoula's successor Tshombe negotiated an agreement with Belgian Foreign Affairs Minister Spaak about these outstanding issues. After Mobutu's second coup d'état, however, Congolese decision-makers demanded the reopening of the *contentieux* while declaring Tshombe a "traitor" for signing an agreement "to the detriment of the Congolese people."<sup>802</sup> A series of mostly unilateral actions by the Congolese government, including the expropriation of UMHK, confirmed the hardening of the new rulers' position in economic matters and underlined explanatory patterns that also take into account the exercise of agency from Congolese over Belgian decision-makers.

### **1.1. From the 1960 Economic Roundtable to the 1964 Spaak/Tshombe Agreement**

The transfer of sovereignty on 30 June 1960 did not imply a fully-fledged independence. Émile Janssens' idea of a continuation of Belgian military command in the Congo was an important cause of the mutiny of the *Force Publique*. At the economic level, as well, two main intertwined issues persisted between the newly independent state and its former coloniser. Firstly, the statute of the public debt of the former Belgian Congo has not been fully disambiguated. Belgium and the Congo adopted a different legal framework to approach this issue. Belgium considered the Belgian Congo a separate state from the Kingdom of Belgium with its separate assets and liabilities, as well as separate laws. On the other hand, the Congo recognised the relationship between Belgium and the Belgian Congo as one of guardianship [*tutelle*] where the borrowing arrangements of the colony largely benefited the motherland instead of exclusively benefiting the colony. As such, the legal framework adopted by the Congolese decision-makers was inspired by private law.<sup>803</sup>

Secondly, the division of the colonial portfolio was also an outstanding issue.<sup>804</sup> Particularly contentious parts of the portfolio were the shares held by the colonial state in the chartered companies with concessionary authority [*pouvoirs concédants*] *Compagnie du Katanga* (CK), *Compagnie des chemins de fer du Congo supérieur aux Grands Lacs africains* (CFL), *Comité national du Kivu* (CNKi), and the *Comité spécial du Katanga* (CSK).

According to Lejeune, a statement from Abako leader Joseph Kasa-Vubu released during the Economic Roundtable on 14 April 1960 essentially opened the *contentieux*. As a successor to

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<sup>802</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1966*, 1967, 146.

<sup>803</sup> CRISP, "Le contentieux belgo-congolais", 1965, 5-6.

<sup>804</sup> An annex of a CRISP study lists the portfolio's companies. "Annexe 2: Portefeuille congolais", in CRISP, "Le contentieux belgo-congolais", 1965, 19-21. Cf. the 1960 budget of the Belgian Congo in *Projet de loi contenant le budget ordinaire du Congo Belge pour l'exercice 1960*, 412/1, 28 January 1960.

the Political Roundtable of January-February 1960, where the date of independence was set, the Economic Roundtable was presided over by Raymond Scheyven, Minister Charged with Finance and Economy in the Congo. It was meant to settle certain outstanding economic and financial issues. The future Congolese President wrote that Belgium had to present, at the day of independence, “an inventory of Congolese holdings [*patrimoine congolais*] and a clear presentation of its management and then leave the Congolese government to freely decide in full knowledge of the situation.”<sup>805</sup> Congolese leaders then interpreted this phrasing as retaining the possibility for them to refuse the liabilities of the colonial balance sheet [*bilan colonial*], including its public debt.<sup>806</sup>

In any case, the Congolese representatives at the April-May 1960 Economic Roundtable Conference were in an especially weak position. Congolese negotiators were mostly university students who represented a political entity that was yet to be created, against technicians representing the colonising country. Furthermore, at the time of the Roundtable, politicians in the Congo were occupied with the general elections. François Ryckmans summarised that towards the end of the conference, the Congolese lost all the economic levers that were in the hands of the colonial state.<sup>807</sup> Jean Nsele, one of the Congolese representatives and later Director at the Central Bank of the Congo, later described that “it was an absolutely unequal negotiation. On the one hand, there was a structured team, including the president of the conference, Minister Raymond Scheyven, who knew his dossiers by heart. [...] We had no way of making the Belgian delegation see sense.”<sup>808</sup>

The tenacious issue of the chartered companies was discussed at the Roundtable. Since Belgium accepted the legal base of the succession of states, the Congo would become the largest shareholder of UMHK without having to pay any kind of compensation.<sup>809</sup> This would be made possible through the transfer of the CSK to the new Congolese state. The discussions on CSK

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<sup>805</sup> Cited in Lejeune, “Le contentieux financier”, 1969, 536.

<sup>806</sup> *Ibid.*, 536.

<sup>807</sup> Ryckmans, “Congo 1960-2020, épisode 5”, *rtbf.be*, 27 April 2020.

[rtbf.be/info/monde/afrique/detail\\_congo-1960-2020-episode-5-avril-1960-la-table-ronde-economique-hold-up-sur-l-economie-congolaise-toutes-les-cles-restant-a-bruxelles?id=10490391](https://rtbf.be/info/monde/afrique/detail_congo-1960-2020-episode-5-avril-1960-la-table-ronde-economique-hold-up-sur-l-economie-congolaise-toutes-les-cles-restant-a-bruxelles?id=10490391), consulted on 10 July 2021.

François Ryckmans is a Belgian journalist, son of André Ryckmans, colonial civil servant who was murdered during the mutiny of the *Force Publique*, and the grandson of Pierre Ryckmans, Governor-General of the Belgian Congo.

<sup>808</sup> Cited in Ryckmans, “Congo 1960-2020”, 2020.

<sup>809</sup> CRISP, “Le contentieux belgo-congolais”, 1965, 7. Despite the generally descriptive content of the CRISP works, the unspecified authors showed quite some understanding towards the Belgian negotiators such as Raymond Scheyven, described as a “dynamic and brilliant politician”, or Pierre Harmel, “whose objectivity, patience, tact and polite firmness are unanimously appreciated.” By contrast, the characters and positions of the Congolese negotiators are less fleshed out in the CRISP publications, despite the much larger impact of the issues on the Congolese side. CRISP, “La table ronde économique belgo-congolaise”, 1960, a and 2.

at the Roundtable and later meetings were of such importance that Radmann wrote that it “may well have been the single most decisive factor behind much of the political confusion and endless difficulties including the Katangan secessionary attempts which Zaire had to endure until orderly administration could be established throughout the country by one single government.”<sup>810</sup> CSK predated UMHK, being founded in 1900 by the Congo Free State and concession company *Compagnie du Katanga* (CK) with a 99-year operational term. It was originally founded to facilitate the development of lands owned by either the Congo Free State or the CK and all profits and interests would be divided as two thirds to the Congo Free State and one third for the CK. Together with British mining company Tanganyika Concessions Ltd., CSK founded UMHK in 1906.<sup>811</sup> At the eve of independence, CSK was still the largest shareholder of UMHK.

The Belgian delegates wanted to avoid the passing of possession of the largest amount of shares to the Congolese state and convinced the Congolese delegates at the Roundtable, not without any struggle, that the chartered companies with concessionary authority were anachronistic vehicles of a bygone colonial era.<sup>812</sup> Six days before independence, the Belgian colonial authorities signed an agreement with the CK to liquidate CSK.<sup>813</sup> Two-thirds of the portfolio were to be held in trust by the Belgian government and the shares in UMHK of the CK held by CSK were to be handed over to the *Compagnie*.<sup>814</sup> CNKi was transformed into an ordinary business corporation [*société par actions ordinaire*] called *Société belgo-africaine du Kivu* (SOBAKI) on 21 June 1960, securing the shareholders of SOBAKI compensation amounting to 125 million Belgian francs.<sup>815</sup> Belgian government representatives justified these démarches by claiming it to be in accordance with the wishes expressed at the Economic Roundtable.<sup>816</sup>

The convention of 24 June and decree of 27 June 1960 regarding the dissolution of CSK were not applied in its entirety.<sup>817</sup> Article 9 of the convention stipulated that if the convention was not approved by the “Congolese government”, existing conventions would remain in

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<sup>810</sup> Radmann, “The Nationalization of Zaire’s Copper”, 1978, 29.

<sup>811</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-7.

<sup>812</sup> CRISP, “Le contentieux belgo-congolais”, 1965, 8.

<sup>813</sup> Radmann, “The Nationalization of Zaire’s Copper”, 1978, 31.

<sup>814</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>815</sup> Joye, and Lewin, *Les Trusts au Congo*, 1961, 293-4.

<sup>816</sup> *Ibid.*, 295.

<sup>817</sup> “*La dissolution du Comité spécial du Katanga ne semble pas s’être concrétisée dans les faits.*” Kovar, “la congolisation de l’Union Minière du haut-Katanga”, 1967, 752; Cf. Radmann, “The Nationalization of Zaire’s Copper”, 1978, 32.

place.<sup>818</sup> The two different interpretations of the article suggested that with ‘*gouvernement congolais*’, either the colonial authorities or the authorities in place after 30 June 1960 were meant.<sup>819</sup> At the time of independence, CSK was not truly dissolved. In 1961, the ongoing legal uncertainty regarding CSK led the State of Katanga to declare the requisitioning of CSK.<sup>820</sup>

Immediately after Congolese independence, the military conflict in general and the suspension of diplomatic relations between the Congo and Belgium on 14 July in particular put any discussion on the portfolio and public debt on hold. In 1961, the World Bank Group’s International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) made an assessment of the financial relations between the Congo and Belgium at the invitation of the Congo and with the agreement of Belgium. The report was submitted to both governments in September 1962.<sup>821</sup>

Despite the international criticisms on Belgium’s unilateral intervention in the newly independent Congo, some Belgian parliamentarians called for compensation for Belgian residents in the Congo suffering damages sustained by the events of 1960. Belgium put forward the thesis that the Congo became fully independent on 30 June 1960 and was fully responsible for the maintenance of law and order, whereas the Congo argued that the disorder of early independence was caused by the unlawful Belgian intervention.<sup>822</sup> The idea was never taken forward, but was an additional form of pressure during the negotiations.

Formal discussions between the Congolese and Belgian governments were resumed with the reestablishment of diplomatic relations in early 1963. Adoula, Foreign Affairs Minister Bomboko and Finance Minister Emmanuel Bamba travelled to Brussels in February 1963 to discuss financial matters with Spaak but failed to agree on a definitive solution. The joint communiqué mentioned the continuation of discussions where rights and obligations of both countries would be examined with the IBRD report functioning as a basis for discussion.<sup>823</sup> Six months later, Belgium recognised that the Congo was the owner of the colonial portfolio and that Belgium would hand it over to the Congo when the “technical conditions” for the handover would be met.<sup>824</sup> A first substantial protocol between the governments was signed in

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<sup>818</sup> “*Si la présente convention n’était pas approuvée par le gouvernement congolais, les convention existantes resteraient d’application.*” *Moniteur congolais*, 1960, I, 2503.

<sup>819</sup> Verwilghen, “Les principaux aspects juridiques”, 1970, 118-9.

<sup>820</sup> “Arrêté n° 454/17 du 19 janvier 1961”, *Moniteur katangais*, 13, 15 June 1961, 349.

<sup>821</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>822</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>823</sup> “Communiqué conjoint belgo-congolais”, *Chambre des représentants, session 1964-1965*, 976/2, 11 March 1965, 19-20.

<sup>824</sup> CRISP, “Le contentieux belgo-congolais”, 1965, 3.

Leopoldville during new negotiations between Adoula and Spaak in March 1964. The communiqué, which was still not a full-fledged treaty, stipulated that the portfolio will be transferred to the Republic of the Congo as soon as possible.<sup>825</sup> Some solutions entailed in the agreement in principle specified modalities about the division of the former Belgian Congo's debt and the foundation of a joint Belgo-Congolese institution that would manage the conversion of the debt expressed in foreign currencies and not guaranteed by Belgium into a loan expressed in Belgian francs to a rate of 3,5% per year for a duration of maximum 40 years. Furthermore, the shares previously in the possession of the Belgian Congo in CSK, CFL, and CNKi would only be transferred to the Congo after the conventions with those companies would be approved or amended after examination.<sup>826</sup>

Due to the Kwilu and Simba rebellions, the purely financial discussion of the portfolio and public debt became intertwined with international discussions on the security situation in the Congo. Adoula's successor Tshombe attempted to both solve the *contentieux* and suppress the rebellions, but knew that he needed Belgium's support for both occasions.<sup>827</sup> Besides counting on Belgium's support, however, Tshombe took great care to profile himself as a moderate African leader.<sup>828</sup> As demonstrated in chapters three and four, Tshombe was harshly criticised by his African political colleagues because of his close collaboration with Belgium during Katanga's secession, his image of a sell-out and murderer of Lumumba, and restoration of the 'Katangese model' of mercenary recruitment and foreign intervention. He therefore needed to restore his legitimacy in the eyes of other African leaders as well as the Congolese decision-makers and population. In order to accomplish this, Congolese decision-makers made use once of skilful discourse. They signed a decree-law which was high in discursive value, but low in actual substance. Tshombe, Kasa-Vubu, and Finance Minister Ndinga signed the law of 29 November 1964 in which the independent Congo dissolved CSK and refused to approve the convention between the Belgian Congo and the CK of 24 June 1960. This happened five days after *Operation Dragon Rouge*. This time, the signing was executed according to modalities favourable to the Congolese government. The rights granted to CSK in 1900 were to be transferred to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Furthermore, the land, forestry, and

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<sup>825</sup> "Communiqué conjoint belgo-congolais", *Chambre des représentants, session 1964-1965*, 976/2, 11 March 1965, 20-1.

<sup>826</sup> "Projet de loi portant", *Chambre des représentants, session 1964-1965*, 976/1, 22 February 1965, 2-3.

<sup>827</sup> Several authors have established this link, cf. CRISP, "Le contentieux belgo-congolais", 1965, 4; CRISP, *Congo 1965, 1966*, 291-2; de Villers, *De Mobutu à Mobutu*, 1995, 24.

<sup>828</sup> Quanten, *Operatie Rode Draak*, 2014, 153.

mining rights conceded to the CFL, without any mention of compensation.<sup>829</sup> The fact that the decree-law was not published in the Congo's official gazette *Moniteur congolais* suggested that the Prime Minister's manoeuvrings were more guided by political strategy than legal or economic considerations. Concerned about being considered a neo-colonial pawn after *Dragon rouge*, Tshombe needed to show his government's independence from his international partners in order to strengthen his legitimacy. At the same time, the military operation ensured the survival of his rule and increased his popularity on the home front.

Spaak did not hide his anger in front of journalists: "I have reacted with firmness and passion. [...] Negotiations are ongoing since March and Mr. Tshombe unilaterally broke them off."<sup>830</sup> The Congolese Prime Minister was nonetheless able to politically capitalise on the economic disagreement. He promised not to implement the decree-law before meeting with Spaak in January 1964. In this way, Tshombe showed his independence vis-à-vis Belgium to his domestic opposition and African counterparts, while at the same time avoiding to jeopardise future discussions on the *contentieux* as well as the security situation in the country.

Tshombe managed to postpone his trip to Brussels several times, citing the presence of Adoula in Brussels as a reason to provisionally call off the talks.<sup>831</sup> Finally, a Congolese delegation led by Tshombe stayed in Brussels from 28 January to 8 February 1965. Despite the continuing divergent legal positions between the Congo and Belgium, the two Spaak/Tshombe agreements were signed on 6 February 1965. They were meant to solve the *contentieux* once and for all while preserving both parties' legal viewpoints.<sup>832</sup>

The first agreement dealt with a part of the public debt and the colonial portfolio. It affirmed that the Congo is the owner of the colonial portfolio, including all rights and obligations associated with the portfolio, irrespective of their origin or date of establishment. These rights included voting rights, composition of the board of directors, and collection of levies, whereas obligations included the conventions signed by the Congo following the decree-law of 29 November 1964. Regarding the colonial debt, the debt expressed in Congolese francs (about 23 billion francs) remained the responsibility of the Congolese state, whereas the debt expressed in foreign currencies and guaranteed by Belgium (about 11 billion francs) became the responsibility of Belgium. For a number of companies (of the so-called 'list 6'), the transfer process would only take place after agreements between the Congo and the company. Those

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<sup>829</sup> "Décret-loi du 29 novembre 1964", in CRISP, *Congo 1964*, 1965, 514-5.

<sup>830</sup> De Vos, "M. Paul-Henri Spaak", *Le Monde*, 9 December 1964, 5.

<sup>831</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1965*, 1966, 292.

<sup>832</sup> Mulumba Lukoji, *Succession d'Etats*, 1971, 117.

companies included air carrier *Société anonyme belge d'exploitation de la navigation aérienne* (Sabena), the mining societies of Kasai, Luebo, Lueta, and the *Société internationale forestière et minière du Congo* (Forminière).<sup>833</sup> With regard to CSK, Tshombe made far-reaching concessions. On the terms of the decree-law of November 1964, the Congo could have demanded 315 675 shares of UMHK as opposed to the now 225 000 shares on the terms of the Spaak/Tshombe agreements. Furthermore, the Congo, owner of CK, had to transfer another 143 000 shares of CK and 1 800 priority shares. A CRISP study added that Tshombe made considerable concessions on that specific point where the juridical position of the Congolese government was the strongest.<sup>834</sup>

The second agreement covered the colonial debt expressed in foreign currencies and not guaranteed by Belgium (about 10 billion francs) through the establishment of a Belgo-Congolese Fund for Amortisation and Cash Management [*Fonds Belgo-Congolais d'Amortissement et de Gestion, Belgisch-Kongolees Fonds voor Delging en Beheer*]. The whole subset of non-guaranteed debt was to be converted on 1 July 1965 to a loan in Belgian francs at a rate of 3,5% for a duration of maximum 40 years. It was financed by the Congo to an amount of 300 million Belgian francs and by Belgium to an amount of 210 million Belgian francs per year. Important aspect of the agreement for the later developments of the *contentieux* was that the instalments by the Congo had to be made through automatic debit from the account of the Congolese National Bank at the National Bank of Belgium.<sup>835</sup>

As a series of political acts, the issuing of the decree-law, and stalling and signing of the Spaak/Tshombe agreements were rewarding for the Prime Minister. The diplomatic taunts in his reaction towards Brussels only increased his popularity among the Congolese population.<sup>836</sup> He was an active and diligent participant in institutionalised bilateral talks when it worked out well for him, but was also willing to take unilateral measures. On top of that, he wanted a visual representation of the portfolio [*portefeuille*] to take home to Leopoldville. Spaak therefore sent someone to obtain a Delvaux briefcase for Tshombe.<sup>837</sup> The anecdote is less trivial than it seems, since the photograph of Tshombe arriving in Leopoldville with the briefcase representing the homecoming of the portfolio turned out to be an important visual representation of the *contentieux*. A *New York Times* report concluded that the Prime Minister “has far more support

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<sup>833</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1966*, 1967, 145.

<sup>834</sup> CRISP, “Le contentieux belgo-congolais”, 1965, 15.

<sup>835</sup> “Projet de loi contenant”, *Sénat de Belgique*, 25 February 1965, 23.

<sup>836</sup> “Congo de janvier 1965 à mars 1966”, 1967, 9.

<sup>837</sup> Davignon, “Témoignage: Du 30 juin 1960 au contentieux belgo-congolais”, in Dumoulin, Gijs, and Plasman (eds.), *Du Congo belge*, 2012, 187.

than his critics suggest.”<sup>838</sup>

On the other hand, the agreements were concluded at a time when the Congolese government found itself in a weak position in relation to Belgium. *Jeune Afrique*, which at the time was close to Tshombe’s predecessor Adoula,<sup>839</sup> noted that Tshombe gained nothing from the agreements that was not already agreed upon and even made more concessions than conceded to earlier.<sup>840</sup>

## 1.2. Mobutu Enters the Scene

After 24 November 1965, the Congolese government became tougher on Belgium and took more unilateral decisions in that respect. During his thirty-two years in power, Mobutu would be more focussed on political than economic issues. “As brilliant a communicator as Mobutu,” Van Reybrouck concluded, “he was an equally great flop as an economist.”<sup>841</sup> Nissé Nzereka Mughendi summarised that the crisis orchestrated by Mobutu was based on an affirmation or claim to dignity for the Congo.<sup>842</sup> He thereby broadened the scope of a financial issue.

Similar to Tshombe’s demarches, Mobutu addressed both domestic and foreign audiences when he launched new measures in his pursuit of Congolese economic independence. The idea took shape among the entourage of the new Congolese President that the agreements of February 1965 were Tshombist acts of betrayal against the Congolese nation in favour of the Belgian business community.<sup>843</sup> Prime Minister Léonard Mulamba travelled to Belgium in May 1966 to reopen Belgo-Congolese talks on the colonial portfolio.<sup>844</sup> He had quite some ground to cover since the new authorities had many criticisms of the previous agreements, including the direct debit for the budgetary contribution to the *Fonds belgo-congolais*, the minoritisation of Congolese in the same fund,<sup>845</sup> the pending question of the ‘list 6’ companies, and the transfer

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<sup>838</sup> Lukas, “Tshombe’s Popularity; His Support Strong, But Congo’s Winds Shift Frequently”, *The New York Times*, 18 January 1965, 4.

<sup>839</sup> For instance, the magazine published Adoula’s ‘Plan for a solution of the Congolese problem’, critical of Tshombe’s past and present, in January 1965. Cyrille Adoula, “Mes propositions pour une solution du problème congolais”, *Jeune Afrique*, 215, 17 January 1965. Cf. also CRISP, *Congo 1965*, 298: “L’hebdomadaire Jeune Afrique, fort proche à l’époque de l’ancien Premier congolais Cyrille Adoula [...]”

<sup>840</sup> “À Léo, on joue aux élections, mais la révolution sort ses griffes”, *Jeune Afrique*, 28 February 1965, 22.

<sup>841</sup> Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, 2015, 358.

<sup>842</sup> Mughendi, “Entre « souveraineté » et « droit de regard »: Les crises belgo-congolaises”, in Mova Sakanyji, and Tambwe Kitenge Bin Kitok (eds.), *50 ans de relations belgo-congolaises*, 2011, 125.

<sup>843</sup> Lejeune, “Le contentieux financier belgo-congolais”, 1969, 557; CRISP, *Congo 1966, 1967*, 145.

<sup>844</sup> Mulamba was not welcomed by Belgian prime minister Paul Vanden Boeynants at his arrival. CRISP, *Congo 1966, 1967*, 147.

<sup>845</sup> Both the President and Director General, for instance, were Belgians, and the head office was located in Brussels. CRISP, *Congo 1966, 1967*, 146.

of ownership titles of Congolese parastatals and buildings in Belgium.<sup>846</sup> On 26 May, a series of agreements were signed on some issues, but Brussels maintained a firm stance on keeping the head office of the *Fonds belgo-congolais* in Belgium and continuity of the direct debit.<sup>847</sup>

The outstanding issues needed follow-up negotiations. The new Congolese authorities tried to gain the upper hand by playing hardball, for instance by demanding a Belgian delegation on ministerial level instead of negotiating through the intermediary of the yet to be accredited Ambassador Paul Bihin.<sup>848</sup> Belgium conceded to Congo's request and sent Foreign Affairs Minister Harmel to Kinshasa on 25 June. The visit turned out to be a failure for Belgium, both in terms of protocol and substance. First, Harmel was received neither by Mobutu nor Mulamba on the tarmac of N'Djili, but by Deputy Secretary of State to the Prime Minister Kulumba.<sup>849</sup> Second, he signed no agreements since the Congolese decision-makers requested conversations and work meetings prior to the signing of agreements. Harmel's trip to Kinshasa ended without signing the planned agreements.<sup>850</sup> In the course of the next month, the Congolese authorities proceeded with the announcement of several unilateral measures, including the retreat of their country out of the *Fonds belgo-congolais* but without cessation of their financial contributions, the blocking of certain companies' bank accounts, appropriation of eight buildings of Sabena in Kinshasa but dropping their claims for the Otraco buildings in Belgium, among other decisions.<sup>851</sup> The carefully crafted image of a country which could independently carve out its own economic course was an effort made to enhance the new leadership's legitimacy.

The evolution towards unilateralism under Mobutu continued and was most outspoken in the case of the nationalisation, or 'congolisation' of UMHK.<sup>852</sup> As the foremost mining company of the country, *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga* was responsible for 6,7% of the world's copper production in 1960, was the world leader in cobalt production, held a quasi-monopoly on radium production, and produced notable amounts of zinc, germanium, cadmium, as well as precious metals like gold and silver.<sup>853</sup>

The original purpose for UMHK was the exercise of mining rights and accessory rights accorded to the company by the CSK for the development [*mise en valeur*] of the wealth of the

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<sup>846</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1966, 1967*, 145-6.

<sup>847</sup> Lejeune, "Le contentieux financier belgo-congolais", 1969, 559.

<sup>848</sup> *Ibid.*, 560.

<sup>849</sup> Dujardin, *Pierre Harmel: Biographie*, 2004, 315-6.

<sup>850</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1966, 1967*, 150.

<sup>851</sup> *Ibid.*, 152-3.

<sup>852</sup> For a discussion on the terminology, see Verwilghen, "Les principaux aspects juridiques", 1970, 161.

<sup>853</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1966, 1967*, 153.

soil and subsoil of Katanga.<sup>854</sup> Its head office was first located in the Congo Free State but an administrative office was established in Brussels.<sup>855</sup> A few days before Congolese independence, however, UMHK's board of directors decided to move the head office from Elisabethville to Brussels.<sup>856</sup> During the Katangese secession, UMHK strongly supported the secessionist authorities, until the plan of UN Secretary-General U Thant laid down the obligation for UMHK to pay taxes to the Leopoldville government.<sup>857</sup> Given the urgency of the deteriorating security situation and outstanding political and economic conflict regarding the portfolio and public debt, the question of UMHK's nationality was not tackled head-on under the First Republic.

On 26 April 1966, under the new leadership of Mobutu, UMHK announced a copper price increase, taking into consideration the higher prices of Chilean and Zambian copper, without alerting the public authorities.<sup>858</sup> This unilateral decision was followed by another unilateral decision by the Congo on 6 May 1966, imposing that every main office of companies registered under Congolese law have to be moved to the country no later than 1 January 1967. UMHK, however, was not a company under Congolese law.<sup>859</sup> This was followed by two ordinance-laws on 7 June 1966. Number 66-341 imposed the transfer of the head office of companies having their main activities in the Congo to the country at the latest 1 January 1967 and prescribed accordance with Congolese law. The second ordinance-law, number 66-343, enacted the so-called Bakajika Law which provided the state with all land, forest, and mining rights conceded or granted before independence without compensation.<sup>860</sup> Conversations between UMHK and the Congolese government regarding a possible separation of the company into an *Union Minière du Congo* and an *Union Minière et Métallurgique* were broken off by the Congolese government as a consequence of what they perceived to be unacceptably high demands regarding the transportation and commercialisation of copper by UMHK.<sup>861</sup> On the side of the company, administrators refused to yield and move the head office to the Congo. In anticipation of a Congolese company replacing UMHK, the national government suspended

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<sup>854</sup> "Société 'Union Minière du Haut-Katanga'", 28 October 1906, *État indépendant du Congo: Bulletin officiel*, 1906, 433.

<sup>855</sup> "Société 'Union Minière du Haut-Katanga'. Statuts", 30 October 1906, in *Ibid.*, 435.

<sup>856</sup> *Moniteur belge*, 18 June 1960, *addendum Moniteur belge*, 29 June 1960. See also Verwilghen, "Les principaux aspects juridiques", 1970, 124.

<sup>857</sup> Gérard-Libois, "Le Plan Thant de réconciliation nationale", *Sécession au Katanga*, 1963, 271-89.

<sup>858</sup> CRISP, *Congo 1966*, 1967, 158; Verwilghen, "Les principaux aspects juridiques", 1970, 130.

<sup>859</sup> Verwilghen, "Les principaux aspects juridiques", 1970, 133.

<sup>860</sup> "Ordonnance-loi 66/341 du 7 juin 1966", *Moniteur congolais*, 1966, I, 523; CRISP, "L'affaire de l'Union Minière du Haut-Katanga", 1967, 13-7.

<sup>861</sup> Saquet, *De l'Union Minière du Haut-Katanga à la Gécamines*, 2001, 138-9.

UMHK's copper export and established a provisional governing board to manage the assets of the company until the end of 1966.<sup>862</sup> Passing the deadline of the transfer of UMHK's head office on 1 January 1967, the Congolese government created the *Générale congolaise des minerais* (GECOMIN) which acquired the activities of UMHK, a company in liquidation in the country.<sup>863</sup> The same day, they retracted the decree of 28 October 1966 creating UMHK. Former Finance Minister of the State of Katanga Jean-Baptiste Kibwe became the President of the Board of Directors of GECOMIN, Emmanuel Kini became its Vice-President and Managing Director.<sup>864</sup> Reactions by UMHK and Tanganyika Concessions Ltd. were only verbally assertive since they did not accept the legality of the course of events. The large majority of UMHK agents refused a contract for dealing with the new company proposed by UMHK's acting Director General Gonze.<sup>865</sup> A joint press release of the major shareholders of UMHK, namely the *Société Générale*, Tanganyika Concessions Ltd. and the *Compagnie Financière du Katanga*, stated that they accepted the position of the Belgian government of non-acceptance of the unilateral creation of GECOMIN and considered that anyone who acquired shares of GECOMIN "associates themselves with that spoliation."<sup>866</sup>

Eventually, Belgian diplomacy under the leadership of Harmel, as well as UMHK were appealing towards GECOMIN and the Congolese government. On 15 February 1967, a convention for technical cooperation between GECOMIN and the *Société Générale des Minerais* (SGM) was signed. The latter company used to be the sales agent of UMHK and depended on the *Société Générale*. Through the agreement, SGM assumed "overall direction of the industrial and commercial operations."<sup>867</sup> The technical agreement thereby solved the last piece of the *contentieux* puzzle. Mobutu successfully achieved his goals to show Congolese economic independence vis-à-vis the former coloniser through a pragmatic approach to institutionalised bilateral talks. Finally, in 1972, GECOMIN, by then renamed to *Générale des Carrières et des Mines* (Gécamines), was put under the direct control of the Zairean president.<sup>868</sup>

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<sup>862</sup> Kovar, "La congolisation de l'Union Minière", 1967, 766.

<sup>863</sup> *Ibid.*, 768.

<sup>864</sup> Saquet, *De l'Union Minière du Haut-Katanga à la Gécamines*, 2001, 158.

<sup>865</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>866</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>867</sup> Article 2(c). The agreement is reproduced in Kovar, "La congolisation de l'Union Minière du Haut-Katanga", 1967, 777-81. The citation is from a translation in *International Legal Materials: "Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa)"*, 1967, 910.

<sup>868</sup> Lumumba-Kasongo, "Zaire's Ties to Belgium", 1992, 35-6.

## 2. Zairianisation

Mobutu and the Zairean leadership might have emerged victorious in their search for legitimacy by showing Congolese economic independence, but the political and economic crises in the country followed each other at a rapid pace in the 1970s. In 1978, Crawford Young made a diagnosis of the seemingly unending crisis that beset Zaire. “From 1973 on,” he wrote, “things fell apart, internally and externally.”<sup>869</sup> After a long period of high international copper prices, with an unparalleled high price in early 1974, the copper price began to drastically decrease.<sup>870</sup> At the domestic level, the Zairean political elites went forward with a three-stage reorganisation of the Zairean economy from 1973 to 1976. The Zairianisation of 30 November 1973 redistributed foreign-owned businesses to Zairean citizens. At the turn of the year from 1974 to 1975, the radicalisation measures anticipated a takeover by the state of large companies. Finally, during several stages in 1975 and 1976, the policy of retrocession was intended to return parts of Zairianised businesses to their original owners. Marked by policy improvisation and *ad hoc* decisions and clarifications, the series of actions disrupted the whole national economy and proved to be a total economic failure. Yet, the reorganisation was partially prompted by political motives such as the demonstration to domestic and foreign audiences that the Zairean decision-makers had the authority to control their country and its economy.

### 2.1. Three Stages of Zairianisation

The common thread of the engagement of Congolese/Zairean political elites with their international partners in economic matters was their strife for economic independence. This goal related at times to authority, and to legitimacy. In this regard, Zairianisation contained within itself elements of change as well as continuity. Kawela Ka Bantu Mayala Ntanda, Regional Commissioner for Haut-Zaire, explained Zairianisation through the lens of resistance against the economic “suffocation” by foreign colonisers and process of total economic and political independence.<sup>871</sup> The harbinger of the economic reorganisation was the ‘congolisation’ of UMHK. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, this amounted to a *de facto* nationalisation and later, in 1972, a *de jure* nationalisation of the company. Michel Verwilghen tackled the question of nomenclature: “was there a nationalisation, spoliation, illicit expropriation...?” he asked. He clarified that “the case of UMHK merits in itself a comprehensive study on that

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<sup>869</sup> Young, “Zaire: The Unending Crisis”, 1978, 171.

<sup>870</sup> Radmann, “The Nationalization of Zaire’s Copper”, 1978, 46.

<sup>871</sup> “Les décisions du 30 novembre ont rendu au Zaïre son corps, son sang et son souffle”, *Salongo*, 27 March 1974, 3.

aspect. In fact, the problem of qualifying the action persists since the neologism ‘congolisation’ has not been accepted in the terminology of international law.”<sup>872</sup> The subsequent series of economic reorganisation are partly similar to the congolisation of UMHK relative to their underlying political purpose, but the modalities of the operations were different. Authors used conflicting terminology when discussing precise cases of nationalisation, indigenisation, or expropriation. Rood noticed that differences in terminology were oftentimes blurred in “United Nations resolutions, national legislation, court decisions, and legal writings.”<sup>873</sup> Williams’ working definition of nationalisation described it as “an act whereby government takes into ownership, by compulsion if necessary, private property for a public purpose” while using the term synonymously with expropriation, confiscation, and take-over.<sup>874</sup> Zairianisation, however, can better be described as indigenisation.<sup>875</sup> According to Rood’s definition, indigenisation is “the process by which a government limits participation in a particular industry to citizens of the country, thus forcing alien owners to sell.”<sup>876</sup>

#### 2.1.1. Zairianisation

The first step of the three-stage reorganisation was taken at the Zairean parliament, the Legislative Council, on 30 November 1973. In front of the foreign diplomats based in Kinshasa, Mobutu accused Belgium of “scandalously exploiting Zaire.”<sup>877</sup> Belgian Ambassador Jan Vanden Bloock immediately left the parliament. The speech announced the beginning of the Zairianisation measures.<sup>878</sup> Concretely, this amounted to the confiscation of businesses and property owned by foreigners such as Greek, Portuguese, Belgian, Pakistani, and other owners, combined with redistribution to Zairean citizens.<sup>879</sup> This happened without real prior consultation, not even with the political leadership.<sup>880</sup>

The precise policy planning behind the Zairianisation remains somewhat obscure. Given his lack of economic knowhow, Mobutu was surrounded by advisers who made recommendations on economic matters. The idea of Zairianisation took shape among this

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<sup>872</sup> Verwilghen, “Les principaux aspects juridiques”, 1970, 161.

<sup>873</sup> Rood, “Nationalisation and Indigenisation”, 1976, 429-30.

<sup>874</sup> Williams, “The Extent and Significance of the Nationalization”, 1975, 263.

<sup>875</sup> Cf. Schatzberg, “The State and the Economy”, 1980, 242: “[Zairianisation] really amounted to an indigenization of these economic sectors rather than their nationalization.”

<sup>876</sup> Rood, “Nationalisation and Indigenisation”, 1976, 430.

<sup>877</sup> Langellier, *Mobutu*, 2017, 231.

<sup>878</sup> Kestergat, *Du Congo de Lumumba*, 1986, 267.

<sup>879</sup> Schatzberg, “The State and the Economy”, 1980, 242.

<sup>880</sup> Smith, Merrill, and Meditz, “Chapter 3. The Economy”, in Meditz, and Merrill (eds.), *Zaire: A Country Study*, 1994, 144.

group. Several Belgian journalists with extensive knowledge of Mobutu's entourage wrote about these actors. Jean Kestergat mentioned that "several 'experts' succeeded in convincing the President that the foreign colonists are excessively benefiting from their businesses and that the best antidote to the Zairean poverty would be to confiscate those businesses and hand them over to Zairean nationals."<sup>881</sup> Manu Ruys identified the advisers more concretely, writing that Zairianisation "was recommended to Mobutu by his *Chef de cabinet*, engr. Bisengimana, a refined Tutsi from Kivu, who was not fond of Belgium, and by several Belgian advisers"<sup>882</sup> By this time, Belgian citizens still held key positions in government-controlled enterprises and assumed advisory roles in Zairean national politics. According to Vanthemsche, for example, Mobutu's military attaché and Ordinance Officer, Commander John Powis de Tenbossche played a decisive role in the resolution of the crisis in the wake of the nationalisation of UMHK.<sup>883</sup> He became Mobutu's deputy Chief of Personal Staff and was characterised by another Belgian journalist as "an irreplaceable neo-colonial pawn who [...] serves Belgium and Zaire in his way."<sup>884</sup> Just like some Belgian advisers to Congolese politicians in the 1960s, the Belgian advisers under the Second Republic were not always advantageous to Belgian interests.<sup>885</sup> In 1974, newly appointed Belgian Ambassador Charles Kerremans warned Prime Minister Tindemans about four Belgians in the entourage of Mobutu.<sup>886</sup>

Next to Bisengimana, evidence points to Belgian economist Hugues Leclercq as one of the main driving forces behind Zairianisation. As a professor at the University of Lovanium, he became an adviser to the Minister of Finance in the Lumumba government, Pascal Nkayi.<sup>887</sup> With the establishment of the College of Commissioners-General, he became the adviser to Nkayi's former Secretary, the Vice-President of the College and Commissioner-General for Finance Albert Ndele.<sup>888</sup> Under Mobutu, Leclercq became one of the President's chief economic advisers. Furthermore, he was mobilised to carry out certain diplomatic tasks for Mobutu, such as making initial contacts with Belgian ministers in preparation of more formal meetings.<sup>889</sup> Ruys, but also CEO of state transportation company ONATRA, Honoré Paelinck, identified

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<sup>881</sup> Kestergat, *Du Congo de Lumumba*, 1986, 266.

<sup>882</sup> Ruys, *Een levensverhaal*, 1999, 115.

<sup>883</sup> Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 2012, 230.

<sup>884</sup> WDB [Walter De Bock], "Kolonel Powis: een Belg aan de top in Zaïre", *De Morgen*, 21 February 1984.

<sup>885</sup> Cf. Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 2012, 230.

<sup>886</sup> Tindemans, *De memoires*, 2002, 268.

<sup>887</sup> Willame, "Les 'conseillers' belges d'hier et d'aujourd'hui", in de Villers (ed.), *Belgique/Zaïre*, 1994, 46.

<sup>888</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>889</sup> See for instance Tindemans, "Mobutu en Mao", *De memoires*, 2002, 267-77.

Leclercq as one of the main instigators of Zairianisation.<sup>890</sup> His role underlines once more the existence of certain actors within the structure of the Congolese/Zairean state who are neither home-grown, nor externally imposed political actors.<sup>891</sup>

The precise implementation of the Zairianisation measures remained unclear. Schatzberg performed fieldwork during 1974-1975 in Lisala, Equateur province, which resulted in the valuable monograph *Politics and Class in Zaire*. One chapter explained the implementation and impact of the 30 November announcement on the decision-makers and broader population of the Mongala subregion.<sup>892</sup> It showed that the implementation was marked by improvisation: decision-makers in the Zairean capital sent out instructions that were nearly impossible to apply, for instance due to lack of personnel to carry them out.<sup>893</sup> Policy directives sometimes only arrived weeks later in the zone headquarters of the Mongala region.<sup>894</sup> Clarifications and adjustments followed each other at a rapid pace. At the high-level Tripartite meeting<sup>895</sup> on 26 December 1973, the highest dignitaries of the nation decided that the state would assume 'strategic' agro-industrial and commercial units. Ranches and plantations would go to members of the Tripartite and the People's Commissioners.<sup>896</sup> During his New Year's speech, Mobutu declared that the economic activities affected by Zairianisation would be taken over by the state with the exception of retail trade. This intention would not be implemented until the next stage of radicalisation. Furthermore, at a meeting of the National Executive Council (the government) in March 1974, a Commission of Requests was created which had to ensure the "correction of certain abuses identified in the application of the economic measures of 30 November."<sup>897</sup> Until the radicalisation of 1 January 1975, these clarifications and adjustments did not amount to more than a politics of announcements, meant to create legitimation for the measures through speech, rather than a genuine attempt to mitigate any concrete economic damage inflicted through 'certain abuses'. As an example, spokesperson of the government Sakombi Inongo laid

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<sup>890</sup> Ruys, *Een levensverhaal*, 1999, 115; Hendrickx, *Interview with Honoré Paelinck*, Ekeren, 21 January 2017, in Hendrickx, "Belgium and Mobutu's Zaire", 2019, 94.

<sup>891</sup> A similar point is made about several key players in the State of Katanga in Hendrickx, "Tshombe's Secessionist State of Katanga", 2021, 1811-2.

<sup>892</sup> Schatzberg, "Economic Independence: 30 November and the Politics of Class Formation", *Politics and Class in Zaire*, 1980, 121-52.

<sup>893</sup> Schatzberg, *Politics and Class in Zaire*, 1980, 123.

<sup>894</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>895</sup> Consisting of the *Bureau politique*, National Executive Council, and Legislative Council.

<sup>896</sup> Schatzberg, *Politics and Class in Zaire*, 1980, 126.

<sup>897</sup> "Création d'une commission de requêtes", *Salongo*, 23 March 1974, 1-2.

more emphasis on the publication of a critical article in *Le Monde* and the publication of Chomé's *L'ascension de Mobutu* in his announcement of the Commission of Requests.

### 2.1.2. Radicalisation

By the time of Zairianisation, it became clear that Mobutu's reign was in the process of radicalising even further. Despite the prominent authoritarian undertakings of the early Second Republic such as the hangings of four government ministers, kidnapping of Tshombe, nationalisation of UMHK, and adoption of the 1967 constitution, the radicalisation gained momentum in the first half of the 1970s. In a PhD thesis which particularly emphasised patron-client relationships between the US and Zaire, Elise Forbes Pachter wrote that "while maintaining the overall [patron-client] relationship without a rupture, there was a period – 1972-1975 – in which Mobutu considered alternative patrons and loosened ties with his American patron."<sup>898</sup> Mobutu, she stipulated, gained "political legitimacy within his own country with the economic means to pay his clients."<sup>899</sup> Sean Kelly, as well, noted that the relationship between the US and Zaire was marked by patron-client dynamics, "although it was occasionally difficult to determine which side was playing what role."<sup>900</sup> Although first introduced in scholarly literature to relate to domestic politics, dynamics of patron-client relationships has since extended to ties between domestic and international actors. A concept of patron-client relationships needs three characteristics. The relationship needs to be between unequal actors, based on reciprocity, and consists of particularistic and private ties as opposed to public law or community norms.<sup>901</sup> Pachter wrote that "[p]atron-client relations in the international sphere concern a dyadic relationship between countries of unequal power and socioeconomic status which has evolved from mutual need and continues for the same reason."<sup>902</sup> She further specified that the "relationship is always open to the threat of the client choosing another patron (in a bi-polar world, this is the other pole) or playing off potential patrons of the same pole against each other."<sup>903</sup> As demonstrated in chapter three, however, Mobutu constantly played off his international partners against each other. He struck a balance between alignment with the west and maintaining good relations with African states, the PRC, North Korea, and Romania. The present thesis thus tries to offer alternative explanations of Mobutu's leadership

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<sup>898</sup> Pachter, *Our Man in Kinshasa*, 1987, 174.

<sup>899</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>900</sup> Kelly, *America's Tyrant*, 1993, 2-3.

<sup>901</sup> According to Kaufman, "The Patron-Client Concept", 1974, 285. Like the broader literature on dependency, Kaufman based his article predominantly on Latin American politics.

<sup>902</sup> Pachter, *Our Man in Kinshasa*, 1987, 31.

<sup>903</sup> *Ibid.*

which defied the application of rigid patron-client frameworks, but agrees with Pachter that during the period from 1973 to 1975 included, the President tried to broaden his horizon in order to increase his legitimacy by his non-aligned colleagues. At least through speech, he demonstrated his independence from the US and Belgium by the Zairianisation measures and his 1973 speech at the UN General Assembly where he connected more with African and non-aligned nations than North Atlantic ones.

In early 1974, Mobutu caused a bilateral diplomatic crisis with Belgium over the publication of a compromising book about Mobutu and Zairean politics in Belgium (cf. chapter three). In his search for alternative diplomatic ties, Mobutu visited the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in December 1974, where he drew a lot of inspiration from their leaders' cult of personality and state-led economic systems. The powerful Zairean *Bureau politique* met aboard the presidential yacht *Kamanyola* from 28 to 30 December 1974 in the aftermath of Mobutu's 'study trip'.<sup>904</sup> In a characteristically ironic way, the political leadership embarked on a "radical self-critique". While accepting the fundamentals of the political, economic, social, and cultural base contained in the Manifesto of N'Sele and the 1974 constitution as "flawless" [*parfaites*], the *Bureau* has identified "ten scourges which beset our system."<sup>905</sup>

The scourges were a set of diverse issues such as unemployment, inflation, consumption society, and the costly Zairean armed forces. Most importantly, the scourge called "social injustice" outlined the decisions of the *Bureau politique* that corresponded to the second stage of economic reorganisation, called *radicalisation*. From 1 January 1975, the state was supposed to take over five sectors, namely all construction firms, all large production units, all large distribution units, all manufacturers of building materials, and all large public transportation companies. Moreover, foreign banks could only open counters in Kinshasa. In order to encourage foreign investments, foreign companies were exempted from the takeover of the five economic sectors.<sup>906</sup> Like the Zairianisation, the radicalisation was ill-conceived and far from scrupulously implemented.<sup>907</sup>

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<sup>904</sup> According to the wording in MPR, *Décisions historiques du Bureau politique*, 1974, 5.

<sup>905</sup> "Les 10 fléaux qui rongent notre système." MPR, *Décisions historiques*, 1974, 5-6.

<sup>906</sup> MPR, *Décisions historiques du Bureau politique*, 15-6.

<sup>907</sup> Cf. Schatzberg, "The State and the Economy", 1980, 244.

### 2.1.3. Retrocession

Despite the potential and contradictory political benefits to the Zairean President, the economically disastrous consequences of Zairianisation and radicalisation were untenable, even to the highest level of the country's political elite. On 25 November 1975, Mobutu announced the third economic reform, called *retrocession*. He proposed that forty percent equity of the Zairianised and radicalised enterprises would be returned to the previous owners, with exceptions made for petty trade, certain plantations, radicalised businesses owned by Zaireans, and enterprises that were first Zairianised and then radicalised.<sup>908</sup> The former owners, however, had no interest in retaking the non-performing enterprises.<sup>909</sup> In September 1976, the second stage of retrocession or *deradicalisation* was proposed, which aimed at raising the equity retroceded to the previous owners to sixty percent, provided that they attract Zairean buyers for forty percent of the ownership.<sup>910</sup>

If Zairianisation and radicalisation could be regarded as anti-colonial political actions meant to increase the Zairean leadership's legitimacy by showing domestic and international audiences that Zaire was on its way toward a 'total' political and economic independence, retrocession was a self-inflicted humiliation for the leadership. Mobutu publicly admitted that "a responsible statesman should have the political courage to rectify the situation [*rectifier le tir*] when he sees that his decisions did not deliver the expected results."<sup>911</sup>

### 2.2. International Reactions and Repercussions

The often improvised actions against the economic interests of foreign stakeholders and questionable legality of the measures could have formed a perfect storm for international outrage against the Zairean political leaders who seemed to break away more and more from their traditional western partners. They showed their authority over the Congolese people and economy, and showed legitimacy by striving for economic independence, but needed to improvise even more to 'rectify the situation'. Nonetheless, international practice and soft law were favourable to the strive of developing countries for economic independence. The 1962 UN General Assembly Resolution 1803 (XVII) regarding the permanent sovereignty over natural resources declared that

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<sup>908</sup> Young, and Turner, *The Rise and Decline*, 1985, 357.

<sup>909</sup> Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, 2015, 358.

<sup>910</sup> Young, and Turner, *The Rise and Decline*, 1985, 358.

<sup>911</sup> Ndaywel è Nziem, *Nouvelle histoire du Congo*, 2009, 548.

“[n]ationalization, expropriation or requisitioning shall be based on grounds or reasons of public utility, security or the national interest which are recognized as overriding purely individual or private interests, both domestic and foreign. In such cases the owner shall be paid appropriate compensation, in accordance with the rules in force in the State taking such measures in the exercise of its sovereignty and in accordance with international law.”<sup>912</sup>

Rood accurately mentioned that, despite the mention of compensation, the wording of the resolution is favourable to the governments targeted by the resolution.<sup>913</sup> The vague mention of appropriate compensation remains undefined and without predetermined deadline.

Belgium suffered the biggest blow from the Zairianisation measures. Despite significant attention in the Belgian press by the major journalists working on Zaire, the political world paid relatively little attention to the events. Only one meeting in the Senate on 20 December 1973 and one meeting in the Chamber of Representatives on 6 November 1974 were notable for the attention devoted to Zairianisation. At the time of Zairianisation and the Senate debate, the Belgian government was led by socialist Prime Minister Edmond Leburton and consisted of a coalition of Christian democrats, socialists, and liberals. The Senators of the majority were divided over the approach towards Zairean state representatives. The liberal Franz Janssens, for instance, emphasised the need for friendly relations with Zaire, whereas his party colleague Hilaire Lahaye regretted that expropriation laws were implemented without the Belgian government invoking article eight of the UDHR,<sup>914</sup> and pleaded to end personal friendship ties with Mobutu.<sup>915</sup> Leburton answered that Belgium’s relationship with Zaire was one of an independent state with another independent state and has to be based on mutual respect. The Prime Minister told the Belgian Senate that the government “took note” of the announced measures. He further mentioned that international practice considers nationalisation and, in this case, Zairianisation, matters of sovereign rights of states if equitable compensation is granted.<sup>916</sup>

De Villers observed that “[t]he thunderclap of Zairianisation struck during a period characterised by the multiplication of private visits and the triumph of the diplomacy of

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<sup>912</sup> “1803 (XVII). Permanent sovereignty over natural resources”, *Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly during its seventeenth session, 18 September – 20 December 1962*, 1963, 15 [A/5217].

<sup>913</sup> Rood, “Nationalisation and Indigenisation in Africa”, 1976, 442.

<sup>914</sup> “Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.”

<sup>915</sup> Franz Janssens and Hilaire Lahaye in “Interpellations jointes de M. Strivay”, *Sénat – Annales parlementaires*, 20 December 1973, 1062-4.

<sup>916</sup> Leburton in *Ibid.*, 1064-5.

affection. It did not suffice to break the charm.”<sup>917</sup> How, then, to interpret the rather cautious and appeasing attitude of the Belgian government? The ‘diplomacy of affection’ detected by de Villers was most remarkably embodied by Leburton. Future Prime Minister Wilfried Martens wrote in his memoir that Leburton was notorious “for his alcohol consumption, his inclination towards curvaceous women and his alienating sympathy for strong leaders of totalitarian [sic] regimes: Tito, Ceaușescu, Mobutu and the Shah of Persia.”<sup>918</sup> Tindemans opted for a more cautious wording in his memoir: “In Belgium, the story goes that the President of Zaire and the Belgian Prime Minister Edmond Leburton were best friends [*de beste maatjes*].”<sup>919</sup>

Some sources point to illicit financial flows between Leburton and Mobutu. The Zairean President withheld property rights to some and distributed them to others in order to keep people under his control.<sup>920</sup> The IMF sent a team of experts led by banker Erwin Blumenthal to Zaire to the Central Bank of Zaire. His secret *Blumenthal Report* was not only damning in describing the deeply corrupt Zairean economy, but also mentioned the role of Belgians. In 1982, the exiled Nguza Karl-I-Bond answered some questions of Blumenthal, added in annex to the report.<sup>921</sup> The former Zairean politician restated the existing rumour that Pierre Davister delivered twenty million Belgian francs to Leburton coming from the Zairean President.<sup>922</sup>

The personalised and economic links at the top Zairean political level thus extended to the international level as well. Under the heading ‘Mobutu’s Empire of Graft’, *Africa Now* reported in 1982 that, in order to “oil the wheels of friendship in Europe and elsewhere large amounts of money are needed, and it is also in this light that the black marketeering and corruption should be seen.”<sup>923</sup> Speculating on a possible internal Zairean uprising or coup, the same magazine argued that “[a]ny successor to Mobutu would have to guarantee the same level of payoffs and kickbacks to the vested interests who now profit from the Zairean dictator.”<sup>924</sup> Corruption in Zaire reached, according to Delamaide, “an intensity [...] that goes beyond shame

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<sup>917</sup> de Villers, *De Mobutu à Mobutu*, 1995, 54.

<sup>918</sup> Martens, *De Memoires*, 2013, 114.

<sup>919</sup> Tindemans, *De memoires*, 2002, 204.

<sup>920</sup> Kisangani, “Implementation of Stabilization Policies”, 1987, 194.

<sup>921</sup> The *Blumenthal Report*, including the annex “*Questions à M. Karl-I-Bond*”, is featured in Dungia, *Mobutu et l’argent du Zaïre*, 1992, 136-69.

<sup>922</sup> Regarding the existing rumour, see Reynebeau, “Dokument: Aktie beschadig de tegenstander”, 13 October 1982, 273; Nguza’s response cited in Dungia, *Mobutu et l’argent du Zaïre*, 1992, 163. Leburton called the revelations “lies”, stating that the Belgian government leaked the document during electoral times. W.D.B. [Walter De Bock], “Blumenthal: Wespennest in Zaïre”, *De Morgen*, 28 September 1982, 7. Walter Zinzen stated that Leburton was certainly corrupted by Mobutu. The author, *Interview Walter Zinzen*.

<sup>923</sup> “Mobutu’s Empire of Graft”, *Africa Now*, March 1982, 14.

<sup>924</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

and almost beyond imagination.<sup>925</sup> It is, however, difficult to gauge the exact extent of the corruption and mismanagement at the highest level as well as the Zairean economy as a whole. Due to his personal fortune, Mobutu is often singled out as an exceptionally blatant example of a kleptocrat.<sup>926</sup> The figure of five billion USD is often cited as a rough estimate of his personal fortune. Those citations could often be traced back to a remark by Trevor Parfitt, who was generally more cautious than the authors who cited him: “In Brussels it is rumoured”, he wrote, “that Mobutu’s personal holdings in Swiss bank accounts amount to some US\$5 billion.”<sup>927</sup> Political dissident Serge Mukendi also accused Mobutu of amassing 5 billion USD.<sup>928</sup> *Africa Now* cited unnamed sources, revealing that he held 4 billion USD on a numbered Swiss bank account, next to owning two castles and five other residences. In total, Mobutu and his close family owned 26 properties in Belgium and France.<sup>929</sup>

Furthermore, it is likely that Mobutu anticipated the lacklustre response by the Belgian government. Delannoy and Willocx made a convincing case, citing the difficult cooperation within the coalition, especially between Leburton and Foreign Affairs Minister Renaat Van Elslande, as one of the causes that weakened the government’s response to the Zairianisation measures. Mobutu was well-connected in Belgian political circles and was an avid reader of the Belgian press, which kept him well informed about the country’s political meanderings.<sup>930</sup> Moreover, Mobutu promised Leburton to allocate a Zairean public contract of four turbines as part of the Inga II dam complex to ACEC, a company marred by social unrest and based in Charleroi, Belgium. Delannoy and Willocx put forward this hypothesis to explain the ambiguous attitude of the Belgian Prime Minister in the dossier of Zairianisation and has been repeated by former Zairean Prime Minister Évariste Mabi Mulumba in his memoir.<sup>931</sup> Through the parallel diplomacy, Mabi recounted, Mobutu was able to “create discord within the Belgian government by succeeding in momentarily diverting the attention of the Belgian authorities

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<sup>925</sup> Parfitt, “Zaire: Debt in an Absolutist Kleptocracy”, in Parfitt, and Riley (eds.), *The African Debt Crisis*, 1989, 128; Delamaide, *Debt Shock*, (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1984), 60.

<sup>926</sup> For instance Acemoglu, Verdier, and Robinson, “Alfred Marshall Lecture”, 2004, 162-92.

<sup>927</sup> Parfitt, “Zaire: Debt in an Absolute Kleptocracy”, in Parfitt, and Riley (eds.), *The African Debt Crisis*, 2011, 128. Examples of publications that mention Parfitt include Bontrager Unzicker, “From Corruption to Cooperation”, 2000, 659; A UNGA study *Global Study on the Transfer of Funds of Illicit Origin*, 28 November 2002, 3 [A/AC.261/12] (referencing indirectly through the Bontrager Unzicker reading, citing the wrong page); and Transparency International, *Global Corruption Report 2004*, 2004, 13 (referencing indirectly through the UNGA study).

<sup>928</sup> Farnsworth, “Mobutu Sees Himself as Disinformation’s Victim”, *The New York Times*, 14 December 1986.

<sup>929</sup> “Mobutu’s Empire of Graft”, 12.

<sup>930</sup> Delannoy, and Willocx, *Secret d’État*, 2007, 32.

<sup>931</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-3; Mabi Mulumba, *Congo-Zaire: Les coulisses du pouvoir*, 2011, 74-5.

away from the consequences of the Zairianisation.”<sup>932</sup> In short, Mobutu mitigated potential loss of international legitimacy by exploring shared interests between him and certain Belgian decision-makers. More than a decade after Zairianisation, the Zairean political system was eroded, but the political leaders could still exert their authority over international financial institutions and bilateral relations with Belgium.

### 3. Debt Restructuring Talks

When the dust slowly settled after the ill-fated Zairianisation, radicalisation, and retrocession measures, Zaire was hit by the existential threats of Shaba I and Shaba II. Some of Zaire’s main creditor countries and the IMF have used the conflicts as leverage to request reforms in the country’s governance, stabilisation of the economy, and a stimulus programme for production and investments.<sup>933</sup> The IMF strengthened its grip over the Zairean economy even further by installing a team at the Zairean national bank, but abandoned those efforts in 1979 at the time of IMF expert Erwin Blumenthal’s departure from the country. Four years later, however, the Zairean leaders were not able anymore to hold off the international creditors and proceeded to diligently implement reforms previously demanded by the IMF. After playing the Fund’s model pupil for a few years, Zaire hardened its stance once more in 1986 in order to obtain more favourable conditions, but it had to break the front of creditor countries first.<sup>934</sup> Mobutu opened a frontal attack on Belgium in 1988, called *le grand affrontement* [the great confrontation] in academic literature, which would lead to a bilateral debt restructuring beneficial to Zaire. It set the course for a virtual standstill in bilateral Belgo-Zairean relations. During the 1980s, the Zairean leaders were thus still able to exercise their authority in economic matters and legitimise their rule by retaining the image of an independent economic policy vis-à-vis the Bretton Woods institutions and major bilateral partners.

#### 3.1. Post-Shaba II Relations with the IMF

The major indebtedness which caused Zaire’s reimbursement difficulties with the Bretton Woods institutions and bilateral creditors did not originate from the two Shaba Wars in 1977 and 1978. Rather, it was a combination of domestic and international factors. As the most important domestic factor, the economically destructive Zairianisation measures stand out.

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<sup>932</sup> “Mobutu était ainsi parvenu à créer la zizanie au sein du gouvernement belge en réussissant à détourner, momentanément, l’attention des autorités belges des conséquences de la zairianisation.” Mabi Mulumba, *Congo-Zaïre: Les coulisses du pouvoir*, 2011, 75.

<sup>933</sup> See for instance Yakemtchouk, “La concertation internationale relative à la relance économique du Zaïre”, in Yakemtchouk, “Les deux guerres du Shaba”, 1988, 647-52.

<sup>934</sup> de Villers, *Belgique-Zaïre: Le grand affrontement*, 1990, 2.

Additionally, several megalomaniac projects, the ‘White Elephants’ like the construction of the Inga dam complex, were not economically profitable and obeyed more to a political than an economic logic.<sup>935</sup> On the international level, the rise of the oil price combined with the deep fall of the world copper price led to significant indebtedness for the country.<sup>936</sup> After an unprecedented peak in early 1974, copper prices began to drop.<sup>937</sup> The Zairean leaders had to agree with several stabilisation plans under the auspices of the IMF starting in 1976, before the Shaba Wars broke out. The relationship between the country’s leaders and the IMF would be marked by ups and downs, ranging from periods of seemingly exemplary compliance with the conditions laid out by the IMF, to fierce confrontations. Perhaps the sole constant throughout was Mobutu’s political dexterity, despite his lack of economic expertise.

During the initial period of stabilisation plans, the IMF took radical measures that surpassed the common ingredients of financial restructuring through devaluations, salary cuts, austerity measures in public spending, reduction of public spending, and credit restrictions. Zaire has lost its relatively strong bargaining position of the Second Republic’s early years, as well as its credibility and creditworthiness.<sup>938</sup> The IMF therefore sent experts to the Zairean Central Bank to effectively run the financial affairs of Zaire. Team leader Erwin Blumenthal, former Bundesbank official who already gained experience in the Congo by acting as an adviser to Prime Minister Tshombe in 1964,<sup>939</sup> was criticised by the political and economic elites due to his thorough assessment of financial doings at the very top of the country’s society. An oft-quoted passage in his report summarised his findings in explicit terms, namely that it was

“alarmingly clear that the corruptive system in Zaire with all its wicked and ugly manifestations, its mismanagement and fraud, will destroy all endeavours of institutions, of friendly governments, and of the commercial banks towards recovery and rehabilitation of Zaire’s economy. Sure, there will be new promises by Mobutu, by members of his government, rescheduling, and rescheduling again of a growing external public debt, but no (repeat: no) [sic] prospect for Zaire’s creditors to get their money back in any foreseeable future.”<sup>940</sup>

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<sup>935</sup> Cf. Elongo Ongona, *Bâtir l’émergence*, 2021, 72-3; Willame, *Zaire, l’épopée d’Inga*, 1985. Located in Mobutu’s ancestral region, Gbadolite airport was large enough to land a Concorde plane on the tarmac.

<sup>936</sup> Parfitt, “Zaire: Debt in an Absolutist Kleptocracy”, in Parfitt, and Riley (eds.), 1989, 125.

<sup>937</sup> Radmann, “The Nationalization of Zaire’s Copper”, 1978, 46.

<sup>938</sup> See Peemans, “Le Zaïre sous le régime Mobutu”, *Le Congo-Zaïre au gré du XXe siècle*, 1998, 35.

<sup>939</sup> Reynebeau, “Dokument: Aktie beschadig de tegenstander”, *Knack*, 13 October 1982, 271.

<sup>940</sup> Translation of Parfitt, “Zaire: Debt in an Absolutist Kleptocracy”, in Parfitt, and Riley (eds.), *The African Debt Crisis*, 1989, 133. Blumenthal, *Zaire: Rapport sur sa crédibilité financière internationale*, 20 April 1982, 26. A

Many of his efforts were successful, such as a cutback of commercial debts and serious reductions of imports of non-priority sectors.<sup>941</sup> These efforts were however met with obstructions and sabotage. Parfitt concluded that the conflict between the Zairean leadership and Blumenthal's team resulted in a "decisive defeat" for the IMF.<sup>942</sup> Blumenthal had to leave the country in 1979. The IMF never took actions which were controversial to such a degree.<sup>943</sup>

The Blumenthal episode showed that the Zairean leaders were far from docile actors who easily complied with the conditions set out by the IMF. Parfitt argued that, with the IMF "effectively tamed" in 1979, and Zaire's rise of international legitimacy by recruiting investment banking firms Lazard Frères, Lehman Brothers, Kuhn Loeb, and S.G. Warburg in the same year, "the heavily indebted Zairean state was winning its battle with the IMF hands down".<sup>944</sup> Such a course of events, he succinctly wrote, "directly conflicts with the account of those commentators who saw Zaire's relations with the IMF as an example of debt-induced Third World dependency."<sup>945</sup>

Towards the end of 1986, the relations of Zaire with the Bretton Woods institutions soured once again. Debt servicing reached about half of the national budget in 1986 whereas the cost of living rose as a result of the compliance with the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) by Prime Minister Kengo wa Dondo's team.<sup>946</sup> The twelfth session of the MPR's Central Committee in September and October 1986 resulted in a volte-face on Zaire's debt repayment policy with its international creditors. Based on the Central Committee's recommendations, Mobutu declared that only twenty percent of the national budget and ten percent of the export receipts will be allocated to debt servicing.<sup>947</sup> Several other proposals were tabled by the President, including the suspension of the zaire's free flotation and restoration of parity with the Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), and augmentation of the provision for salaries by twenty percent.<sup>948</sup> Significantly, Mobutu dismissed Kengo and appointed the IMF critic Mabi Mulumba

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copy of the report is located in WDB, "5.02 Parl. Onderzoek Moord Lumumba 2001, Pierre Davister", Zaire Rapport Blumenthal IMF.

<sup>941</sup> Kisangani, "Implementation of Stabilization Policies", 1987, 190.

<sup>942</sup> Parfitt, "Zaire: Debt in an Absolutist Kleptocracy", in Parfitt, and Riley (eds.), *The African Debt Crisis*, 1989, 132.

<sup>943</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>944</sup> *Ibid.*, 133-4.

<sup>945</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>946</sup> Mabi, Mulumba, *Congo-Zaire: Les coulisses du pouvoir*, 2011, 77.

<sup>947</sup> The recommendations of the Committee's twelfth session are quoted in Mabi Mulumba, *Congo-Zaire: Les coulisses du pouvoir*, 2011, 92-106.

<sup>948</sup> Cf. Parfitt, "Zaire: Debt in an Absolutist Kleptocracy", in Parfitt, and Riley (eds.), *The African Debt Crisis*, 1989, 148.

as the Minister of Finance, before promoting the latter to First State Commissioner in January 1987. The reasoning behind these demarches was not to break off ties with the IMF and the World Bank. Instead, the political leadership has laid the foundation to renegotiate with the international institutions by using Zaire's leverage in the political sphere in its relations with the US.

Many events of an anecdotal nature demonstrate Mobutu's tactic to play off his international partners against one another in order to achieve a favourable outcome in either the economic or political sphere. At a meeting with OECD ambassadors intended to clarify the decisions of the twelfth session of the Central Committee, the World Bank representative Quy Lan Bui objected to the financing of the hydroelectric plant of Mobayi Mbongo, meant to provide Gbadolite with electricity. Together with international experts, Zairean leaders were convinced of the economic unfeasibility of the project, but no one dared to contradict Mobutu, leading Elongo Ongona to conclude that in the case of Zairean elites, "one can find oneself cornered between economic logic and political logic."<sup>949</sup> When Quy Lan Bui explained that it went against the commitments to the IMF and the World Bank, Belgian Ambassador Putman expressed his indignation by echoing Mobutu's remarks that Zaire is a sovereign country. The turbines for the Mobayi project were manufactured by Belgium-based ACEC.<sup>950</sup>

In December, Mobutu's working visit to the US was coupled with visits to IMF Managing Director Jacques de Larosière and World Bank Group President Barber Conable. The IMF could not agree with a five dollar pay rise for civil servants, leading the Zairean President to complain to his American counterpart Ronald Reagan: "By refusing a ridiculously low pay rise of barely five dollars per public employee," he declared, "everything points to the IMF plotting with those who want my head. Mister President, we need your support to move forward with our dossier at the IMF."<sup>951</sup> Reagan promised that he would ease the way in the IMF negotiations. The Zairean President even claimed to have received formal promises by Reagan to that effect.<sup>952</sup> On the political level, Mobutu promised base rights to the US for the strategically important Kamina air base.<sup>953</sup> This opened a channel for US arms shipments to the UNITA rebels led by Jonas Savimbi in neighbouring Angola.<sup>954</sup> To quote Parfitt, Mobutu

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<sup>949</sup> Elongo Ongona, *Bâtir l'émergence du Congo*, 2021, 72.

<sup>950</sup> Mabi Mulumba, *Congo-Zaire: Les coulisses du pouvoir*, 2011, 113-4.

<sup>951</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>952</sup> Farnsworth, "Mobutu Sees Himself as Disinformation's Victim", *The New York Times*, 14 December 1986, 3.

<sup>953</sup> Parfitt, "Zaire: Debt in an Absolutist Kleptocracy", in Parfitt, and Riley (eds.), *The African Debt Crisis*, 1989, 152.

<sup>954</sup> Brooke, "C.I.A. Said to Send Weapons via Zaire to Angola Rebels", *The New York Times*, 1 February 1987, 1.

succeeded by pulling off “his old trick of exploiting his strategic value to his western guarantors in order to maximize his autonomy in the economic sphere.”<sup>955</sup> One senior IMF official resigned over the US pressuring the organisation to minimise conditionalities to Zaire and Egypt.<sup>956</sup> In the new 1987 standby arrangement with the IMF, a US government source confirmed that the Fund met Zaire halfway on the issue of public sector wage increase.<sup>957</sup>

### 3.2. The ‘Great Belgo-Zairean Confrontation’

The conflict between Zaire and Belgium did not start out as an opportunity for the Zairean leaders to instrumentalise Belgian internal political divergences in order to break the front of creditors. The Zairean leaders tried to restore their legitimacy on the international and domestic level.<sup>958</sup> Mobutu framed the bilateral crisis more in terms of dignity of the Zairean people as opposed to a mere question of money.<sup>959</sup>

Several lesser troubles between the two countries functioned as a prelude to a severe crisis containing both political and economic elements. In December 1985, Ronald Van den Bogaert, Belgian national affiliated with the Flemish socialist party (SP), was condemned to ten years in prison by a Zairean court after he was apprehended with press clippings and recordings of the UDPS representative in Belgium. After mediation efforts by External Relations Minister Tindemans and King Baudouin, he was pardoned.<sup>960</sup> During April 1986, an even more substantial conflict arose when a Belgian judge ordered that a plane owned by *Air Zaire* be grounded, meant to pressure the company to pay 5.2 million Belgian francs of indemnifications and interest to a Belgian pilot previously employed by *Air Zaire*.<sup>961</sup> Finally, in 1987, Zairean asylum seeker M’Bisha was killed by asphyxiation during his forced expulsion from Belgium at the hands of the gendarmerie.<sup>962</sup>

The real start of the crisis between Zaire and Belgium was Belgian Prime Minister Martens’ and External Relations Minister Tindemans’ visit of 30 October to 6 November 1988 to Kinshasa. The visit was ill-prepared and a diplomatic failure, mainly because the new government could not formulate any coherent policy towards Zaire. Christian democrats and

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<sup>955</sup> Parfitt, “Zaire: Debt in an Absolutist Kleptocracy”, in Parfitt, and Riley (eds.), *The African Debt Crisis*, 1989, 152.

<sup>956</sup> *West Africa*, 30 March 1987, 625.

<sup>957</sup> *Africa Research Bulletin. Economic Series*, 30 April 1987, 8627.

<sup>958</sup> de Villers, *Belgique-Zaire: Le grand affrontement*, 1990, 3.

<sup>959</sup> Mobutu, *Dignité pour l’Afrique*, 1989, 186-9.

<sup>960</sup> de Villers, *De Mobutu à Mobutu*, 1995, 145-6.

<sup>961</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>962</sup> The ‘pillowing’ technique that killed M’Bisha was put under scrutiny, and eventually discontinued, when Nigerian asylum seeker Semira Adamu was killed under similar circumstances in 1996.

socialists were in disagreement with regard to the government's engagement with Zaire. The socialists, Zairean Ambassador Jean-Pierre Kimbulu Moyanso wa Lokwa wrote, played a lead role in the constant deterioration of Belgo-Zairean relations.<sup>963</sup> Within the Flemish Christian democratic party CVP, Martens and Tindemans were at times political rivals. Although it mostly manifested itself in domestic affairs such as the ongoing reform of the Belgian state structure and the devaluation of the Belgian franc, the discord between the two Flemish Christian democratic leaders strained their Zaire policy as well.<sup>964</sup> The personal rift between the two leading Christian democrats did not go unnoticed in Zaire: after a visit of Tindemans to Kinshasa in January 1989, Mobutu informed Kimbulu that he “did not think they could rescue Leo [Tindemans] [...]. Between him and his Prime Minister, something is broken. Let us wait for the arrival of [future Foreign Affairs Minister] Mark Eyskens to take other initiatives.”<sup>965</sup>

Two months before the visit, Mobutu set the scene by voicing his grievances towards both the IMF and Belgium in an interview in *Jeune Afrique*. On board of the presidential ship *Kamanyola*, the President told Siradiou Diallo that Director-General of the IMF Michel Camdessus jumped on a plane after his meeting with him in Washington, to “engage in a real plot with the Belgians, against Zaire and its leader!”<sup>966</sup> Against this backdrop, Mobutu talked about a ‘moral debt’ of Belgium during Martens’ visit. The discursive strategy of broadening up economic and financial disputes to also include political, historical, and even moral dimensions, was frequently pursued by the Zairean leaders. When the question of debt restructuring was tabled, Mobutu became irritable.<sup>967</sup> Several proposals regarding debt relief, such as the reduction of one-fifth of Zaire’s five billion public debt to Belgium and efforts towards the commercial debt guaranteed by the Belgian Delcredere service, an organisation which insures investors investing in countries with poor creditworthiness, were all refuted by Mobutu. Canada namely waived the whole debt of 1.4 billion Belgian francs accumulated through bilateral cooperation, Mobutu argued. The details regarding the Delcredere service, commercial debt, and other technical issues were deemed too “cerebral” by him.<sup>968</sup>

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<sup>963</sup> Kimbulu, *Persona non grata*, 2017, 25.

<sup>964</sup> Years after the 1982 devaluation of the Belgian franc, Tindemans declared that it was “particularly embarrassing” that Martens did not involve him in those discussions on monetary policy. bbd, “Martens tegen Tindemans (alweer)”, *De Standaard*, 5 April 2006.

<sup>965</sup> Kimbulu, *Persona non grata*, 2017, 60.

<sup>966</sup> Mobutu in Diallo, “Nous ne céderons pas aux diktats du FMI”, *Jeune Afrique*, 28 September 1988, 1.

<sup>967</sup> “*nors*”. Martens, *De memoires*, 2013, 504.

<sup>968</sup> de Villers, *Belgique-Zaire: Le grand affrontement*, 1990, 92.

After the ministerial visit, the MPR's ideologues made use of Belgium's erratic Zaire policy to start an offensive. At the *Bureau politique* of 3 December 1988, they instructed that all Zairean students in Belgium should leave the country before the end of the academic year and that every Zairean owner of Belgian property should sell those assets before 31 December.<sup>969</sup> Several days later, a 'clarification mission' arrived in Brussels, led by Deputy Secretary-General of the MPR and party hardliner Maître Kamanda wa Kamanda. A widely watched confrontation between the delegation and Belgian journalists on the francophone public broadcaster only fuelled the crisis. The well-prepared and soft-spoken Zairean leaders, claiming that one franc invested in Zaire contributed four francs to Belgium, contrasted sharply with the mostly fervent anti-Mobutist journalists. Tindemans described the performance of journalist Paul Goossens "beneath all dignity". Even the socialist coalition partners called the Zairean delegates "composed and eloquent."<sup>970</sup> On the Zairean side, Kimbulu was convinced of the delegation's success, just like his President: "we went to them, we confronted them, and we crushed [*écrasés*] them on their own premises."<sup>971</sup>

The crisis reached cruising speed when AZAP reacted to an article in a Belgian newspaper calling into question Mobutu's biological father. The members of the MPR's Central Committee, convening from 10 to 13 January 1989, were frequently attacking the Belgian royal household. "Juicy stories [*histoires croustillantes*] and scandals", AZAP declared, "are not lacking in royal palaces".<sup>972</sup> During the presentation of his letters of credence to King Baudouin, Kimbulu observed that something was broken between Mobutu and Baudouin. The King, the Ambassador concluded, was strongly affected by AZAP's press release.<sup>973</sup>

On the last day of the Central Committee, the MPR denounced the 1960 friendship treaty with Belgium<sup>974</sup> as well as the general cooperation convention of 1976. They also reopened the *contentieux* because, according to them, Belgium abused its power to impose the Spaak/Tshombe agreements on the Congo at a time when there were virtually no competent Congolese cadres yet. Additionally, the MPR decided to suspend the payment of public debt to Belgium.<sup>975</sup> From his side, Mobutu threatened to submit the Spaak/Tshombe agreements to the

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<sup>969</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>970</sup> Tindemans, *Een politiek testament*, 2009, 553.

<sup>971</sup> Kimbulu, *Persona non grata*, 2017, 41.

<sup>972</sup> Cited in de Villers, *De Mobutu à Mobutu*, 1995, 191.

<sup>973</sup> Kimbulu, *Persona non grata*, 2017, 70.

<sup>974</sup> The 1960 friendship treaty was never entered into force and became obsolete after Belgium's invasion following the Congo's independence. The 1970 friendship treaty, which was denounced in 1974 following the publication of Chomé's *L'ascension de Mobutu*, was not mentioned in the press statement. Cf. de Villers, *Belgique-Zaire: Le grand affrontement*, 1990, 105.

<sup>975</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

International Court of Justice.<sup>976</sup> The Belgian government notified that the *contentieux* cannot be reopened.<sup>977</sup> At the height of the crisis, the IMF refused to grant a new SAP to Zaire before the Belgo-Zairean crisis was settled.<sup>978</sup>

Finally, efforts to bring about détente between Zaire and Belgium crystallised around Moroccan mediation from May to June 1989. Relations between Zaire and Morocco under King Hassan II were strong and could be traced back to Morocco's involvement in the Congo Crisis, especially to the personal relations between ANC Chief of Staff Mobutu and Major-General Kettani Ben Hamou. Furthermore, Moroccan troops intervened during the Shaba Wars.

At the Belgian side, External Relations Minister Tindemans became increasingly frustrated with leaked information to the press about his discrete contacts with Zairean and Moroccan leaders. Confidential talks with Moroccan Foreign Minister Abdellatif Filali were leaked, according to Tindemans, even when he only talked to Martens about his contacts.<sup>979</sup> Kamanda and Tindemans met in May 1989 in Rabat. The External Relations Minister, who would soon move to the European Parliament and be replaced by Mark Eyskens, faced an uncompromising Kamanda, who refused to cast aside the *contentieux*. Kamanda, who was at the time an MPR party official and not a government official, refused to concretise what the *contentieux* exactly entailed. Tindemans admitted that he did not know what the Zaireans actually wanted.<sup>980</sup>

A first informal agreement between the two governments was made at the summit of francophone countries in Dakar on 25 May. Mobutu met with Martens and Belgian Deputy Prime Minister Philippe Moureaux. Although the commitments made by the Belgian government were not disclosed, Martens later mentioned that they proposed a full cancellation could be considered with regard to the bilateral government loans and a “meaningful effort” would be made with regard to the commercial debt guaranteed by the Delcredere service.<sup>981</sup> Mobutu framed this as the ‘spirit of Dakar’ and interpreted it as a commitment by the Belgian government as a full cancellation of all debt.<sup>982</sup> Zaire's bargaining position was even more strengthened through several successful diplomatic manoeuvres. During a summit in Gbadolite on 22 June, Mobutu succeeded in bringing together Angolan President José Eduardo dos Santos

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<sup>976</sup> Kimbulu, *Persona non grata*, 2017, 64

<sup>977</sup> Kimbulu, 49.

<sup>978</sup> *Le Soir*, 24 April 1989.

<sup>979</sup> Cf. Tindemans, *Een politiek testament*, 2009, 555 and 596

<sup>980</sup> *La Libre Belgique*, 20-21 May 1989.

<sup>981</sup> Martens, *De memoires*, 2013, 509.

<sup>982</sup> Martens, 509.

and UNITA rebel leader Jonas Savimbi at the same table. US Secretary of State James Baker called the handshake an “extraordinary diplomatic success”.<sup>983</sup> One week later, the Paris Club, a group of creditor countries that looked at debt rescheduling, granted a new and favourable debt treatment of 1 645 million USD of a provisional total of 1 864 million USD, despite the pending Belgo-Zairean crisis. A hypothesis put forward by de Villers on the reason of the favourable restructuring conditions reads that Belgium argued in favour of Zaire and convinced its partner creditors to show some goodwill towards Zaire.<sup>984</sup> The reappointment of Kengo as the First State Commissioner is most likely a second reason for Zaire’s better standing at the international financial institutions.

Zaire’s series of diplomatic successes did not come to a halt. Mobutu made an official visit to the US from 28 to 30 June. Next to the hearty welcome by George H.W. Bush, who did not address the human rights situation in Zaire, Mobutu also talked with officials from the IMF and the World Bank. The Bush administration pleaded in favour of Zaire for an increase, by the Congress, of the annual aid to Zaire for the fiscal year 1990.<sup>985</sup>

With their recent diplomatic victories in Gbadolite and Washington and renewed good standing at the Paris Club, IMF, and the World Bank, the Zairean leaders had a strong negotiating position towards their Belgian counterparts. Despite the authoritarian nature of the Zairean state, however, politicians still could oppose one another and have divergent views. A more moderate view of government members such as Kengo and Nguza contrasted with the more radical view of the MPR cadres such as Kamanda. In the margins of the fifteenth G7 summit in July in Paris, Belgian and Zairean politicians concluded an informal agreement on the end of the bilateral crisis. Belgium would cancel the bilateral debt, amounting to 4.982 billion Belgian francs, as well as a third of the commercial debt (5.75 billion out of 17.3 billion BEF). For the remaining two-thirds, Belgium would apply debt restructuring over a period of twenty-five years with a fourteen years’ grace period.<sup>986</sup> Paris was the “golden opportunity”, according to the moderate Kimbulu, since Kamanda would not be present.<sup>987</sup>

Kamanda and the other members of the clarification mission were present at the final stage of the Moroccan mediation in Rabat at the end of July 1989. Despite the “electrical atmosphere”<sup>988</sup> at the Zairean delegation, the final Rabat protocol was signed by Nguza and

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<sup>983</sup> Gaye, “Zaire/ Etats-Unis: Un succès diplomatique pour Mobutu”, *Jeune Afrique*, 12 July 1989, 12.

<sup>984</sup> de Villers, *Belgique-Zaire: Le grand affrontement*, 1990, 127.

<sup>985</sup> Kimbulu, *Persona non grata*, 2017, 80.

<sup>986</sup> Kimbulu, *Persona non grata*, 2017, 86.

<sup>987</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>988</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

Eyskens on 26 July. Notable difference with the Paris agreement was that Belgium demanded that the application of the protocol be conditioned on the compliance of Zaire with its engagements with the Bretton Woods institutions. In de Villers' assessment, the Rabat protocol was an "unbalanced text providing a net benefit to Zaire."<sup>989</sup> Finally, the Kinshasa agreements were signed on 27 March 1990, which effectively ended the Belgo-Zairean crisis. Important addition to the Rabat protocol was the mention of human rights in the preamble, which would later on become instrumental in the final break between Mobutu's Zaire and Belgium (cf. chapter three).

#### 4. Conclusion

The economic history of the Congo between 1960 and 1997 lends itself to integrate the economic and financial level into a political matrix. The two main political actors on the Congolese side in the context of the *contentieux*, Tshombe and Mobutu, both had fundamentally political motives to show their independence from and strong negotiating position vis-à-vis Belgium. Regarding the Spaak/Tshombe agreements, the CRISP specified that "it is in light of reasons of political opportunity rather than juridical reasons that the two parties have led the negotiations until the end."<sup>990</sup> Tshombe carefully balanced between the need to reach a settlement of the *contentieux* favourable to the Congolese government's conditions and the continuing military support of Belgium. Through his unilateral actions, he could portray himself as a moderate African leader, but his refusal to push through the November 1964 decree-law enabled him to keep the Belgians on his side. Later, Tshombe's death sentence, partly because of the alleged 'alienation of the economic independence of the country' by signing the Spaak/Tshombe agreements was a signifier of the strengthening of Mobutu's grip on domestic politics.

From a political perspective, the three-stage Zairianisation process did not mark a watershed in Zaire's history. Rather, it was a continuation of the Zairean political elites to boast the total political and economic independence from foreign powers. Along these lines, Zairianisation had both domestic and international political repercussions. Despite the obvious detrimental economic repercussions, Mobutu and his supporters at the *Bureau politique* and elsewhere went forward with Zairianisation in order to show both international and domestic audiences that Zaire was an independent, proud, and sovereign nation which could autonomously decide on its economic future. The measures of 30 November 1973 were

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<sup>989</sup> de Villers (ed.), *Belgique/Zaire*, 1994, 196.

<sup>990</sup> CRISP, "Le contentieux belgo-congolais", 1965, 12.

announced when Mobutu was at the apex of his reign, boosted his international legitimacy with his speech at the UNGA and profited from a high international copper price. Depelchin explicitly linked Mobutu's speech of 30 November to Lumumba's independence speech in its aim for political independence. The fundamental difference, according to him, was that the populism of Zairianisation catered to the same class which considered the Mulelist uprising the continuation of Lumumba's populism.<sup>991</sup> The development slogan that independent African states adopted from the former colonisers, according to Cooper, "had become either tragedy or farce" by the 1970s.<sup>992</sup> Zairianisation could be considered both at the same time.

Finally, during the second half of the 1980s, the severely weakened Zairean political establishment still succeeded in playing off international partners against one another. On Young and Turner's rise-and-fall chronology of the Zairean state, the 1980s was firmly entrenched in the period of state crisis and decay.<sup>993</sup> Nevertheless, even after the damages incurred by the Shaba Wars, Zairianisation, and other internal and external events, Zairean leaders could still hold their ground in their interaction with external partners as diverse as IMF expert Blumenthal, Belgian journalists, and US President Reagan.

From a political perspective, the goals of the actors under discussion are similar to the goals of security and epistemic contestation. In international economic discussions, their goals namely also related to authority and legitimacy. To decide on Congolese/Zairean economic policy in an independent capacity means to exercise authority over the Congo's territory and its population through economic means. It contrasts with the implementation of an economic model imposed by external actors on domestic actors. Adoula, Tshombe, and Mobutu counteracted the unequal economic and financial arrangements made right before independence. The Zairianisation process was started to reach the goal of gaining independent economic authority in the country. Finally, the Zairean leaders actively resisted programmes for structural adjustment and played hardball when negotiating debt restructuring with international financial institutions and partner countries.

The aspirations for an independent economic course were linked to the search for economic legitimacy. When Tshombe took measures that had to shield him from allegations of neo-colonialism or Mobutu chose the path of unilateralism over institutionalised Belgo-Zairean talks, their goals were intended to legitimise their authority. Zairianisation was not

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<sup>991</sup> Depelchin, *De l'État indépendant du Congo*, 1992, 189-90.

<sup>992</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 2002, 156.

<sup>993</sup> Young, and Turner, *The Rise and Decline*, 1985, 71.

predominantly conceived to improve the economic situation of the Zairean population, since the President had more political ambitions. Defying the IMF, defending the Zairean side of the *grand affrontement* on Belgian television, and assertively negotiating a debt restructuring agreement beneficial to Zaire bolstered the legitimacy of Zairean leaders.

In order to achieve their goals of authority and legitimacy, institutions and the bilateral course of affairs between the Congo/Zaire and Belgium changed at the discretion of the Congolese political elites. Tshombe decided to move forward with unilateral measures, before signing the agreements with Spaak. His unilateral measures therefore did not jeopardise subsequent bilateral agreements. Under Mobutu, Belgium's refusal to change the headquarters of the *Fonds belgo-congolais* and the automatic direct debit was met with unilateral actions from the Congo's side. On the other hand, the Bakajika Law and the so-called congolisation of UMHK were met with an appeasing approach on Belgium's side. Congolese political elites decided pragmatically how to relate to these talks. Bilateral talks ensured the goodwill of Belgium's side, whereas, at the right time, hardening their stance was not penalised by Harmel, who acted appeasingly towards UMHK and the Congolese government.

On the other hand, the Zairianisation measures showed the economically disastrous consequences of a lack of institutions. Lutumba-Lu-Vilu na Wundu noted that "the rigid application of law results or risks of resulting in an injustice."<sup>994</sup> Policy improvisation, a lack of concrete implementation tools, and an erratic allocation of Zairianised businesses to Mobutu's confidants set the course to even more economic hardship. Circumventing the official bilateral channels, however, did serve to mitigate international outcry. Personal and financial ties softened the blow of international repercussions, as outlined in the Blumenthal Report and publications by Delannoy and Willocx, Mabi Mulumba, and others.

The game of intermittently respecting international institutions and at times rejecting those institutions reached its apex in the 1980s. Dispelling Blumenthal in 1979 tamed the IMF, but was followed by Kengo's first tenure as a First State Commissioner between 1982 and 1986. Afterwards, Zairean leaders decided to reject rigid compliance once more and used bilateral relations with the US as leverage for renegotiations. During the *grand affrontement* with Belgium, institutionalised bilateral talks interspersed with an offensive AZAP press release and hostile comments by the Central Committee.

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<sup>994</sup> Lutumba-Lu-Vilu na Wundu, *De la Zairianisation*, 1976, 27.

Speech, including formal characteristics of public discourse, was a second important strategy used by the individuals under discussion to exercise agency in the economic sphere. During the talks about the *contentieux*, they used procedural rules to their own ends, or dismissed bilateral talks altogether in favour of unilateral and sometimes legally questionable demarches. Harmel's unsuccessful visit to Kinshasa would not have happened if Congolese decision-makers would not have requested talks on ministerial instead of ambassadorial level. The broadening of the scope, namely that resolving the *contentieux* between former coloniser and former colonised was a question of dignity and decolonisation, further underlined the importance of rhetoric. Furthermore, Tshombe expressly asked for a Delvaux briefcase to obtain a visual representation of the portfolio to bring back to Kinshasa. This did not change anything on the financial level, but boosted his popularity at the home front before the planned presidential election.

Zairianisation fit within the strive for 'total independence'. Mobutu took ownership of this narrative when he made various speeches without consulting other political leaders and without any preliminary schedule of implementation. Similar to the *contentieux*, Zairianisation was more than an economic issue. It was embedded into a larger narrative of economic independence. Without much substance to accompany the President's speeches, the three-stage process could not be salvaged by words alone.

During the 1980s, however, the bargaining power of the Zairean political elites was amplified by their skilful framing of economic discourse. Again, in their overarching conception of the country's situation, economics was integrated in a larger political matrix of dignity, ownership, and anti-imperialism. Regarding the bilateral crisis with Belgium, Mobutu claimed to express the "unanimous reaction of all Zaireans" when he emphasised that "it is not a question of money, but of dignity."<sup>995</sup> MPR cadres swayed Belgian audiences during a televised debate. Despite the institutional backsliding of Zaire in the 1980s, the country's political leaders could still exercise agency through speech.

Finally, shared interests were employed in order to exercise agency over international actors. When interests between the Congo and external interlocutors diverged, these interests needed to be moulded into an acceptable format for both parties. At the time of the *contentieux*, the Congo's interests clearly diverged from Belgium's, but both parties signed several agreements. Only when they could both retain their respective legal viewpoints on state succession, the Spaak/Tshombe agreements were signed in 1965.<sup>996</sup>

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<sup>995</sup> Mobutu, *Dignité pour l'Afrique*, 1989, 188.

<sup>996</sup> Mulumba Lukoji, *Succession d'Etats*, 1971, 117.

Sometimes, the domestic and international spheres were entangled. While on the payroll of Mobutu, for instance, Belgian advisers were not necessarily incorporating the views of Belgium. Their links to Belgium, however, were instrumentalised by Mobutu, such as the example of Hugues Leclercq showed when he carried out certain diplomatic tasks. Furthermore, his role in the elaboration of the Zairianisation measures was detrimental to the interests of Belgian businessowners in Zaire. The case of Leclercq, a Belgian who implemented anti-Belgian measures for Zaire, is reminiscent of the Belgian Georges Thyssens who implemented anti-Belgian measures for the State of Katanga.

Furthermore, the Zairean leadership made use of corruption as a mode of political action. Typical notions of clientelism were not limited to the domestic level, but extended to the international level as well. Corruption is a global phenomenon – Mobutu never lost an opportunity to affirm that corruption in Zaire was a Belgian import<sup>997</sup> – but it turned into a particularly important phenomenon under the Zairean President. He built political alliances, such as with Belgian Prime Minister Edmond Leburton, through close personal contact and, reportedly, illicit financial ties. This softened the potential international repercussions of a legally questionable demarche, detrimental to mostly Belgian interests. The accumulation of wealth and targeted redistribution of it obeyed a political logic, beyond a purely economic motive of hoarding money. For Bayart, the “figure of Mobutu springs readily to mind” when discussing the link between “holding positions of power within the State apparatus and the acquisition of wealth” which is related to political hierarchy.<sup>998</sup>

In their collective work on *The Criminalization of the State in Africa*, Bayart, Stephen Ellis, and Béatrice Hibou observed an upsurge of patent criminal practices within governmental institutions in the years leading up to the publication of their work (1999).<sup>999</sup> Although their temporal scope does not overlap with the current study, their finding that criminalisation can barely be quantified rings true for Zaire as well.<sup>1000</sup> The predictable lack of reliable data on corruption should not eliminate it as an element in the practice of agency within certain decision-making behaviour of Zairean political elites.

The authors of *The Criminalization* further discerned a division between a “legal edifice” functioning as a partner of “multilateral institutions and Western governments”, on the

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<sup>997</sup> For instance in Michel, *Mobutu: Roi du Zaïre*.

<sup>998</sup> Bayart, *The State in Africa*, 2017, 87.

<sup>999</sup> This observation is based on their working definition of the criminalisation of the state: Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou, “From Kleptocracy to the Felonious State?”, *The Criminalization of the State in Africa*, 1999, 16.

<sup>1000</sup> Ibid.

one hand, and the “real fabric of society”, on the other, as an indicator of criminalisation.<sup>1001</sup> As demonstrated in the third chapter of the present study, however, it was contended that the MPR institutions such as the *Bureau politique* were more than a mere legal edifice which appealed to external partners, but did both function as formal *and* informal state institutions.<sup>1002</sup>

Shared interests were also used in the 1980s, when the military and economic spheres were interlinked during discussions with the US. The granting of base rights for Kamina, for instance, resulted in the American facilitation of Zairean talks with the IMF, or dos Santos and Savimbi’s handshake in Gbadolite eased the way for a Paris Club debt treatment. The cases of Van den Boogaert and *Air Zaïre* greatly influenced Belgo-Zairean relations at the time, including the economic level. Nevertheless, the framing of outstanding economic issues was often led by Zairean actors, who broadened the scope of these issues. Despite the refusal of an MPR hardliner such as Kamanda to concretely describe what the *contentieux* was really about in the eyes of the Zaireans, it was clear that it surpassed the economic sphere.

The Cold War provided the Zairean leadership with tools to instrumentalise shared interests. The Zairean case was used by Chabal and Daloz to illustrate their point that playing off “potential patrons” against one another was a popular foreign policy strategy within a broader strategy of instrumentalising “dependence” as a means to “continue to feed the patrimonial systems on which [African elites’] power rested.”<sup>1003</sup> As perhaps the most profitable strategy, Chabal and Daloz identified the “exploitation of Cold War rivalries.”<sup>1004</sup> The Zairean case shows that these two strategies do not have to be juxtaposed to one another, but could be combined instead. Moreover, even towards the end of Mobutu’s Zaire, claims of juridical statehood were still powerful tools in international economic talks. Frederick Cooper concluded that “[e]ven failed states – those unable to provide order and services for their citizens – are still states and derive resources from outside for that reason.”<sup>1005</sup>

The authors of *Africa Works* further argued with quite some merit that structural adjustment was politically instrumentalised by domestic elites. On the one hand, it “provides [African elites] with the means by which to extract a level of foreign aid which otherwise would not be available to them” and, on the other hand, functions as a welcome scapegoat. Some of

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<sup>1001</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>1002</sup> See in this regard: Cheeseman, “Introduction: Understanding African Politics”, in Cheeseman (ed.), *Institutions and Democracy in Africa*, 2018, 1-38.

<sup>1003</sup> Chabal, and Daloz, *Africa Works*, 1999, 115.

<sup>1004</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1005</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 2002, 156.

the reforms ordered by the Bretton Woods institutions would have been necessary in any case, but SAPs delegated these unpopular measures to an external entity.<sup>1006</sup>

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<sup>1006</sup> Chabal, and Daloz, *Africa Works*, 1999, 123.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion

In all three topics, Congolese political elites exercised agency as realising goals through the structuring of their actions. Some actors' goals were similar in all three topics, sometimes using different strategies. The correspondence between goals of actors and actual outcomes of their engagement with the international system sometimes varied over the three topics, or were at times similar. The infrequent strategies mentioned in the previous chapters help to explain agency within certain topics. In order to obtain more generic knowledge about agency of Congolese political elites, these strategies were taken into consideration. A comparison between the different topics reveals some common strategies of Congolese political elites in their exercise of agency in their engagement with the international system. In this conclusion, they are transformed into hypotheses about African agency. First, however, a clarification on individual actors' agency is in order.

### 1. Consequences of the Individual Level of Analysis

The individual level of analysis greatly influenced the analysis. Whether to conduct an analysis at the individual, unit-, or system-level is, as J. David Singer explained, "ostensibly a mere matter of methodological or conceptual convenience."<sup>1007</sup> More concretely, they are, in the words of Buzan et al., "ontological referents for where things happen rather than sources of explanation in themselves."<sup>1008</sup> A choice for the study of individual politicians, in other words, is not a normative, but a practical choice. Obiang's PhD thesis about Frano-Gabonese relations used the individual level of analysis as well, in order to study the interconnections between domestic and French actors.<sup>1009</sup> This study's analysis is limited to the level of individuals. Accordingly, the outcomes of the actors' exercise of agency refers to these goals of individuals, as opposed to goals at the level of the Congolese state or (sub-)system-level. Clapham's discussion on political survival also raised the question "of *whose* survival: the state's, or the ruler's?"<sup>1010</sup> He answered that the defence of statehood was frequently used by rulers to ensure their personal survival, but this study's focus on individual level agency shows that, at times, the rejection of the constitutional order in the Congo/Zaire was a valid option for furthering the position of individual elites. Secessions, rival governments and their envoys, political activities in exile, were not organised to maintain constitutional order in the country, but to cater to

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<sup>1007</sup> Singer, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations", 1961, 77.

<sup>1008</sup> Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework*, 1998, 5.

<sup>1009</sup> Obiang, *France-Gabon*, 2007, 19.

<sup>1010</sup> Clapham, *Africa and the International System*, 1996, 4 [Emphasis in the original].

individual politicians and their factions. In Ndaywel è Nziem et al.'s words, relations between Zaire and Belgium were oftentimes shaped by the mood swings of the individual actors involved.<sup>1011</sup>

## 2. Building Hypotheses Out of Strategies

Summarising thirty-seven years' worth of political engagement with international partners inevitably leads to a loss of empirical density. On the other hand, producing recurring patterns and overarching conclusions makes it possible to distinguish major, critical aspects from redundant aspects of political engagement. Ambassador Michaël Sakombi, son of Information Minister Dominique Sakombi Inongo, summarised the Congo's foreign policy since 1960 as one of openness to the world without exclusivities. The "non-exclusivity of this openness to the world", he argued, "has always been part of the actions of Congolese leaders who oftentimes made their diplomatic decisions in full independence and oftentimes against the grain of a dominating context".<sup>1012</sup> His remarks fit together with the present study's emphasis on the search for different international partners, playing them off against one another, and independent foreign policy as opposed to explanations favouring relations of dependency.

Throughout the years under discussion, several strategies of Congolese political elites reappeared in all three topics at all times. These strategies function as the observable features of agency. The informed actions of individuals as independent variable manifest themselves in sources such as memoirs and interviews. Strategies show how elites shape their actions in order to obtain desirable outcomes. In the present case study, they only relate to the exercise of agency by Congolese political elites in their engagement with the international system. It offers several generalisable claims, since one case cannot reliably generate generalised claims about agency of individuals. These hypotheses for further research are based on the abductive research that led to the identification of three common strategies.

**Hypothesis 1:** African political elites pragmatically accept or reject domestic and international institutions in order to exercise their agency in their engagement with international players.

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<sup>1011</sup> Ndaywel è Nziem, "Coopération belgo-zaïroise", in de Villers (ed.), *Belgique/Zaire*, 1994, 307.

<sup>1012</sup> "La non-exclusivité de cette ouverture au monde a toujours été dans l'agir des dirigeants congolais qui ont souvent pris leurs décisions diplomatiques en toute indépendance et souvent en contre-pied d'un contexte dominant [...]". Sakombi, "Michaël Sakombi: Kinshasa, Pékin, Washington", *Politico.cd*, 21 September 2021. <[politico.cd/grand-angle/2021/09/21/michael-sakombi-kinshasa-pekine-washington-et-le-piege-de-thucydide-tribune.html/93331/](http://politico.cd/grand-angle/2021/09/21/michael-sakombi-kinshasa-pekine-washington-et-le-piege-de-thucydide-tribune.html/93331/)>, accessed on 9 March 2022.

From a rational choice point of view, Shepsle argued that actors choose institutions in order to further their agenda.<sup>1013</sup> In 2018, Cheeseman reformulated Shepsle's thinking in his argument in favour of reintegrating the study of formal political institutions in African politics. "[T]he significance of formal structures", Cheeseman wrote, "lies in their capacity to shape possible outcomes and so incentivise individuals to adopt different courses of action."<sup>1014</sup> In short, he recognised that formal institutions shape more informal norms and vice versa, as opposed to mere neo-patrimonial explanations of African politics.<sup>1015</sup>

Chabal and Daloz's *Africa Works* posited that African politics, understood as disorder, offers opportunities for those who know how to play that system. Despite the vehement backlash it generated, their book could be an appealing framework on first sight. Despite the rather cynical nature of the book, it showed the agency of the kind of individuals that are at the centre of the present study. Politics during the First Republic and under Mobutu was, however, too orderly – or ordered – to really speak about the politics of disorder. Cooper's gatekeeper state also assigned relatively low importance to institutions, cautioning against an overly institutional analysis, to look for a state trying to rule over civil society.<sup>1016</sup> Nevertheless, the empirical evidence of the present study underlines the importance of institutions.

The emphasis on institutionalisation, however, does not always mean an infallible respect for those institutions. Bayart's views on the state in Africa fit together well with this assessment. Cameroonian in origin, the concept of 'politics of the belly' described "the social struggles which make up the quest for hegemony and the production of the State [which] bear the hallmarks of the rush for spoils in which all actors – rich and poor – participate in the world of networks."<sup>1017</sup> He illustrated the concept by largely relying on Pierre Yambuya's testimony of his time at FAZA.<sup>1018</sup> Some critics, however, maintain that Bayart's views on the African state is anti-institutionalist in nature. Cheeseman criticised Bayart's focus on the 'rhizome state', a metaphor about networked politics where underground branches "join together the scattered points of society".<sup>1019</sup> This focus, he argued, moved his analysis far away from formal political institutions.<sup>1020</sup> He echoed Tom Young's statement that Bayart's *The State in Africa*

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<sup>1013</sup> Shepsle, "Studying Institutions: Some Lessons", 1989, 131-47.

<sup>1014</sup> Cheeseman, "Conclusion: Political Institutions and Democracy in Africa: A Research Agenda", in Cheeseman (ed.), *Institutions and Democracy in Africa*, 2018, 352.

<sup>1015</sup> *Ibid.*, 371-2.

<sup>1016</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 2002, 157.

<sup>1017</sup> Bayart, *The State in Africa*, 2017, 235.

<sup>1018</sup> Cf. Yambuya, *Zaire: L'abattoir*, 1991.

<sup>1019</sup> Bayart, *The State in Africa*, 2017, 220.

<sup>1020</sup> Cheeseman, "Introduction: Understanding African Politics", in Cheeseman (ed.), *Institutions and Democracy in Africa*, 2018, 15.

“tells us almost nothing about the state.”<sup>1021</sup> To view Bayart’s scholarship as anti-institutionalist, however, is a misinterpretation. He himself warned against an overemphasis on the ‘belly’-part of the concept. “We do not intend to succumb”, he specified,

“to the temptation of reducing African social actors to no more than glutinous enzymes, motivated by the sole desire of stuffing themselves as quickly as possible with the fruits of western modernism. The expression ‘politics of the belly’ must be understood in the totality of its meaning. It refers not just to the ‘belly’ but also to ‘politics’.”<sup>1022</sup>

Bayart did not contend that ‘institutions do not matter’, but rather that actors are standing *in relation to* institutions.

Accordingly, the social struggle at the summit of the Congolese/Zairean state always took place *in relation to* institutions. In their interaction with international actors, Congolese/Zairean political elites tried to instrumentalise domestic and international institutions as a strategy to exercise agency. Examples are legion. From a public law perspective, the dismissal of Lumumba by Kasa-Vubu, and of Kasa-Vubu by Lumumba, was a constitutional headache. Neither of them enjoyed the authority to discard Congolese public law altogether and impose their political thought on the Congolese state. Different interpretations of the *Loi fondamentale* led to the dismissal of the Lumumba government and subsequent accreditation crisis at the UN. The political survival of the State of Katanga’s politicians was contingent on the establishment and solidification of the secessionist state’s institutions, including its pseudo-diplomatic representations and international lobby networks. The failure of the Simba rebels to get the upper hand partly stemmed from a dearth of institutionalised cooperation with international partners. In Mobutu’s Zaire, constitutional reform including the creation of a one-party state made secessionism unfeasible and gave the international community the impression that Mobutu’s western-friendly leadership could not be contested. On the level of international institutions, fora such as the UN General Assembly and the OAU were preeminent spaces to showcase Zairean and Mobutist political thought. Claims of juridical statehood proved to be instrumental to Mobutu’s longevity, even until the end of his time in office. Dunn and Englebert used this example to discuss the broader privatisation of Africa’s IR:

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<sup>1021</sup> Young, “Review Article: The State and Politics in Africa”, 1999, 151. Without specifying, Young referred to earlier reviewers who shared this opinion.

<sup>1022</sup> Bayart, *The State in Africa*, 2002, 242.

“many African states have become increasingly detached, to varying degrees, from their domestic societies, while at the same time relying more upon external sources of support and legitimacy for their survival. In the closing years of Mobutu Sese Seko’s Zaire, for instance, the political authority of the central government barely extended beyond the capital, Kinshasa, while Mobutu and his cadre maintained their claim to rule through the international norm of juridical sovereignty, foreign assistance, and lucrative contracts with global economic actors.”<sup>1023</sup>

On the other hand, abandoning the Zairean state institutions was a strategy for political elites, thereby using informal international institutions such as the Russell Tribunal to advance their political thought.

Congolese military conflicts were partly decided on actors’ relation to national and international institutions. The breakdown of domestic institutions during the Congo Crisis was used as an argument by the central government to ask the UN to intervene. During the Congo Crisis, several intra-Congolese roundtables and military agreements, often under the auspices of the UN forces in the country, complemented the UN involvement. On the Katangese side, the establishment of formal representations abroad was used to recruit mercenaries and ship military materiel. At the time of the Shaba Wars, it became clear that Mobutu’s strategy to intentionally weaken the Zairean armed forces secured his own political longevity, at least as long as international support remained. Thus, the lack of a strong institution (FAZ) helped out the President in the 1970s, but the long-term erosion of the Zairean state institutions coupled with a loss of international support in the 1990s eventually meant his downfall. The lack of strong domestic institutions coupled with international support explained the success of the AFDL. They met little resistance and reached Kinshasa without any major battles. International institutions were not even necessary, at most to function as a lightning rod for the rebels’ advance.

Institutionalised bilateral talks between the Congo and Belgium were instrumental in the settlement of pending economic and financial issues between the two countries. These discussions revolved around technical questions of domestic and international public law, for instance about the succession of states. The institutions that prepared the transfer of power, such as the Economic Roundtable Conference, were devised on the terms of the colonising power, at a time when important Congolese representatives were engaged in the upcoming elections.

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<sup>1023</sup> Dunn, and Englebert, *Inside African Politics*, 2013, 400.

Initially, negotiations were conducted in a conventional bilateral way between Adoula and Spaak. Later, the Zairean leaders found a different strategy, namely to reject the carefully crafted communiqués and agreements by Adoula/Spaak and Tshombe/Spaak in favour of unilateral decisions.

Several years later, Zairianisation once again showed Mobutu's preference of ad hoc measures over long-term and well-conceived economic policy. The absence of institutions that could implement the Zairianisation measures partly explained the failure of the policy. In the 1980s, the negotiations with the Bretton Woods institutions underlined the importance of conducting policy in relation to institutions once more. At times, Zairean decision-makers such as Kengo wa Dondo were fully compliant with the demands made by the World Bank and the IMF. Zaire was considered a 'model pupil' of the IMF. Other times, IMF critic Mabi Mulumba was appointed as a First State Commissioner, or IMF expert Blumenthal was chased away of the country.

Hypothesis 1 recognises the importance of institutions while taking into account actors' capacity to reject or accept these institutions. International institutions matter to political elites and can be integrated in their strategy to exercise agency through their claims of representing their internationally recognised state. Conversely, they could decide to secede, build up their own power base, and gain international support by explicitly distancing themselves from claims of juridical statehood. Outside of the Congo/Zaire, several examples illustrate these dynamics. During the Nigerian Civil War, for instance, the secessionist Republic of Biafra could count on several international partners, including France, partly because a weakened Nigeria could provide opportunities for French policy in Africa. France officially supported Biafra without diplomatically recognising the secessionist republic and covertly supplied arms and military personnel to General Chukwuemeka Ojukwu.<sup>1024</sup> Furthermore, unlike the State of Katanga, Biafra was diplomatically recognised by several countries, namely Tanzania, Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, Zambia, and Haiti.<sup>1025</sup> Similarly, government officials could abandon their position as state representatives, go into exile, and use their distinct position to amplify their voices in transnational advocacy networks. Mohamed Saliou Camara discussed writings from Guinean exiles under the presidency of Ahmed Sékou Touré in his PhD thesis about mass communication and politics in Guinea. Similar to the Zairean case, Guinean political exiles, or

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<sup>1024</sup> Ijalaye, "Was 'Biafra' at Any Time a State", 1971, 554; Griffin, "France and the Nigerian Civil War", in Moses, and Heerten (eds.), *Postcolonial Conflict and the Question of Genocide*, 2017, 156-76. Griffin called Katanga a "Rehearsal for Biafra" for France.

<sup>1025</sup> Ijalaye, "Was 'Biafra' at Any Time a State", 1971, 553-4.

sometimes self-exiles in Camara's words, fled persecution, which was not always the sole reason for their departure. Some committed felonies in Guinea, or had other improper reasons to choose the path of exile.<sup>1026</sup> These former government ministers and political opponents of Touré such as Alpha-Abdoulaye Diallo published books that heavily criticised Touré's presidency and, specifically, the violent regime at Camp Boiro, the camp at the centre of Conakry where many opponents were imprisoned, tortured, and killed.<sup>1027</sup>

**Hypothesis 2:** African political elites make use of the performativity of speech in order to exercise their agency in their engagement with international players.

The observation that speech matters in politics has become almost commonplace and universal. It is neither a unique feature of African politics, nor the only tool at hand for African decision-makers. Outside the African context, the performativity of speech features prominently in politics as well. In van Eemeren's words, "manipulation in discourse boils down to intentionally deceiving one's addressees by persuading them of something that is foremost in one's own interest through the covert use of communicative devices that are not in agreement with generally acknowledged critical standards of reasonableness."<sup>1028</sup> Although van Eemeren focused on manipulation and deception, the argument still holds water more broadly regarding the active shaping of reality through speech. As a political move with low financial costs, speaking on the rostrum of the UNGA and other international fora provides opportunities for political elites to explicate their political thought, supply alternative readings of their country's and world politics, or securitise issues, enabled by the unfixity of identity (cf. *infra*). Exercising agency over international partners fails when they do not affirm the truthfulness of the reality created by a speech act. Some actors therefore are more adept than others at adjusting their language to the audience they are addressing. From domestic populations over international adversaries or allies, political elites are successful at exercising agency over them when their message resonates with those audiences.

Regardless of the realities on the ground, the apt framing of political thought, conflict, and economic issues could help activate external support by a mere speech act. In international relations, speech can be considered through different epistemological lenses, ranging from interpretivist to more positivist approaches, from postmodernist/poststructuralist, to

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<sup>1026</sup> See specifically Camara, "Category Two: The Accusatory Literature", *His Master's Voice*, 1997, 5-16.

<sup>1027</sup> Diallo, *Dix ans dans les g  tles de S  kou Tour  *, 2004.

<sup>1028</sup> van Eemeren, "Foreword: Preview by Review", in de Saussure, and Schulz (eds.), *Manipulation and Ideologies*, 2005, xii.

quantitative content analysis. In contrast to poststructuralist lenses, which traces back international relations to textual origins,<sup>1029</sup> this study examined the performativity of speech, or the use of speech as a vehicle by political elites to attain certain outcomes. Charlotte Epstein offered a compelling framework to study the discursive formation of issues, in her case the birth of an anti-whaling discourse.<sup>1030</sup> Her argument about the “*unfixity* of identity”<sup>1031</sup> not only resonates with Dunn’s *Imagining the Congo: the International Relations of Identity*, but also with the performativity of speech in Congolese/Zairean political elites’ exercise of agency in general. By making statements about how they consider the political reality, they create a certain view of events that might or might not be accepted by national or international audiences.<sup>1032</sup>

In the Congo/Zaire, elites were particularly successful in exercising agency when they packaged their thought in a way that resonated with their international partners. As a conscientious politician who preferred to remain true to his own values and beliefs, Lumumba expressed himself to international audiences in ways that were not well received by his international partners. His independence speech led to a fallout with Belgium and its allies. Later, his fierce disagreements with Hammarskjöld, embodied by the correspondence of 15 August 1960, deteriorated the Congo’s relationship with the UN and African allies who relied on Hammarskjöld. Tshombe, on the other hand, initially received support from Belgium, France, CAF, and others, as long as international audiences accepted his anti-communist rhetoric. Lumumba’s assassination greatly hampered his credibility, resulting in Belgium’s relative retreat from Katanga. With Adoula’s arrival as a Prime Minister, the working relationship with the US ended. Gizenga claimed to be Lumumba’s legitimate successor, which gained more credibility after Lumumba’s assassination. Finally, predominantly due to experiences with ill-fated international support for Gizenga and schisms and personal quarrels among the Simba rebel leaders, they never developed an ideologically coherent project which could have been articulated towards the outside world. Mobutu structured the Zairean state around a nationalist project that was created and reproduced by speech. From his 1973 speech at the UNGA over *recours à l’authenticité* to Mobutism, the Zairean President aptly framed Zaire’s domestic and foreign policy in ways that at times appealed to African and other non-aligned countries, and

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<sup>1029</sup> See for example Der Derian, “The Boundaries of Knowledge and Power”, in Der Derian, and Shapiro (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations*, 1989, 4.

<sup>1030</sup> Epstein, *The Power of Words in International Relations*, 2008).

<sup>1031</sup> *Ibid.*, 200 [Emphasis in the original].

<sup>1032</sup> With regard to securitisation theory, Thierry Balzacq emphasised the importance of the audience in cases of successful securitisation. Balzacq, “The Three Faces of Securitization”, 2005, 184.

western countries. On the other hand, former Zairean diplomats and politicians were embedded in transnational advocacy networks and created an alternative for Mobutu through speeches and testimonies at international fora.

During the Congo Crisis, domestic elites have successfully securitised Prime Minister Lumumba as a security threat. Kasa-Vubu blamed the ill-fated campaign in South Kasai on Lumumba when he dismissed the Lumumba government. One of the reasons why the State of Katanga could sustain itself was the framing of the secessionist state as a dam against communism where war is absent. As Masangu later concluded, the assassination of Lumumba did deprive the Katangese government the much-needed alleged communist danger to sustain itself.<sup>1033</sup> Conversely, after Lumumba's assassination, Gizenga could more credibly claim that Belgian and US imperialism existentially threatened the progressive forces in the country, which resulted in heightened international support and diplomatic recognition. During the second part of the Congo Crisis, Tshombe's government had enough clout to instigate international support against the ideologically divided, but generally left-wing rebellions. Conversely, the failure of notably the leaders of the Simba rebellion to boast a coherent popular Marxist or related ideology and securitise Tshombe's "travelling museum of imperialism"<sup>1034</sup> deterred potential international allies to intervene at critical moments of the rebellion. Later, during the Shaba Wars, Mobutu securitised the FLNC invasion from Angola as an aggression by mercenaries "on the payroll of the Russo-Cuban coalition"<sup>1035</sup> by his appeal to the OAU in 1977 and the next years' invasion as being led by a motorised company of Cubans.<sup>1036</sup> Finally, at the time of the First Congo War, the changing international context diminished the performative power of Mobutu's hollow phrases. At Mobutu's return to Kinshasa after undergoing major surgery in December 1996, he unsuccessfully tried to persuade his allies that he remained the custodian of Zairean sovereignty: "behold, the enemies of our people have chosen the moment when I am struck down by sickness to stab me in the back", he spoke with a trembling voice, "because they know what the integrity of the territory represents to my eyes."<sup>1037</sup> These words were a statement about how the ailing President perceived his country and his country's security issues rather than an attempt to turn around the situation.

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<sup>1033</sup> Masangu-a-Mwanza, *Mémoires d'un Baobab*, 2021, 15.

<sup>1034</sup> In Algerian President Ben Bella's words, cited in Mazrui, "Moise Tshombe and the Arabs", 1969, 291.

<sup>1035</sup> "Document 3: Lettre du Président Mobutu", in Yakemtchouk, "Les deux guerres du Shaba", 1988, 670.

<sup>1036</sup> Cf. Mobutu in J.-P. L., "Dans une conférence de presse à Paris", *Le Monde*, 27 May 1978.

<sup>1037</sup> "[V]oilà que les ennemis de notre peuple choisissent le moment où je suis terrassé par la maladie pour me poignarder dans le dos. Car ils savent ce que l'intégrité du territoire représente à mes yeux." Michel, *Mobutu: Roi du Zaïre*.

Despite the numerous technical financial and economic dossiers such as the *contentieux*, Zairianisation, and debt restructuring, negotiations were clearly marked by a discursive factor. At the time of the *contentieux*, Tshombe tried to portray himself as a moderate African leader, which shows the intersection between economic and strategic ideological motives. Furthermore, his insistence on being portrayed with a briefcase, symbolically containing the portfolio, points to the importance of expression and formal self-promotion. Subsequently, Mobutu integrated economic negotiations with Belgium into a narrative of anti-Tshombism and economic nationalism. He continued his call for economic nationalism by the Zairianisation measures. A speech component was ubiquitous in his call for Zairianising the economy and, under radicalisation, the ‘radical self-critique’ regarding the ‘ten scourges’. Unfortunately for the plans of the Zairean political leadership, the Zairianisation measures did not amount to much more than plain rhetoric. Ill-conceived and inadequately implemented, all speech with no substance, the unprecedented economic misadventure damaged the Zairean economy both in the short- and long-term. Finally, towards the end of the 1980s when Mobutu’s leadership was already incontrovertibly damaged, debt restructuring talks and the Belgo-Zairean confrontation showed once more the performative power of speech. He tried to influence public opinion before the ill-fated visit of Martens in 1988 by an interview in *Jeune Afrique*<sup>1038</sup> and framed the achievements of the Dakar Summit as the ‘spirit of Dakar’. Besides Mobutu, other leaders broadened the scope of debt restructuring talks to issues of neo-colonialism and global inequality during a successful television appearance by Maître Kamanda. The members of the Central Committee overplayed their hand, however, by frontally attacking the Belgian royal family.

The importance of speech to individual leaders varies widely in other countries. Senegalese Poet-President Senghor, or Ghana’s founding father Kwame Nkrumah were major social and political thinkers, both in the context of their presidential tasks and more in general. In academic writing, Tanzania’s Julius Nyerere is remembered both for his political philosophy as well as political actions.<sup>1039</sup> Marie-Aude Fouéré identified his political actions as anti-colonial struggle and 1967 Arusha Declaration, two aspects that entailed a deeply discursive component.<sup>1040</sup> The Arusha Declaration, for instance, advocated co-operation within Africa for the “liberation of all Africa” and bringing about African unity. At the economic level, as well,

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<sup>1038</sup> Diallo, “Nous ne céderons pas aux diktats du FMI”, *Jeune Afrique*, 28 September 1988.

<sup>1039</sup> Fouéré, “Julius Nyerere”: the Man, the Word”, in Fouéré (ed.), *Remembering Julius Nyerere in Tanzania*, 2015, 7.

<sup>1040</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

the Arusha Declaration, by its mere enunciation, established how the Tanzanian leadership under Nyerere regarded their own economic policy, characterised by not relying on external money which would endanger the country's independence, deemphasising industries, and so forth. Nyerere's politics resonated well within western intellectual circles. According to Ali Mazrui, this occurred partly because he was socialised in a western fashion, without being pro-western.<sup>1041</sup>

**Hypothesis 3:** African political elites instrumentalise the real or perceived shared interests between themselves and international players in order to exercise their agency in their engagement with international players.

The occurrence of common interests does not ipso facto imply a certain strategy by Congolese political elites. Just like in the case of speech, political elites could package their interests in a way that resonated with international audiences. Unidirectional explanations of Congolese political actors' strategies trace back its origins to the international level. In 2013, Herbst and Mills advised facing the facts on the ground and admitting that the Congo does not exist in order to "move away from the 50-year fixation on aiding a failed state."<sup>1042</sup> Congolese actors are in that regard at the mercy of external actors. Tshombe could be regarded as a pawn of western business and, specifically, mining interests, whereas Mobutu could be considered the stooge of western powers, a glove puppet manipulated by the US and its foreign intelligence service in order to secure their interests at the centre of the African continent. This side of the equation merits a significant amount of attention, since the cabinets of Katangese ministers were populated by Belgian and other foreign nationals, and Mobutu effectively received funding from the CIA.<sup>1043</sup> On the Congolese side, however, politicians were aware that attracting external support could further their own agenda and outsmart domestic competitors. Foreign policies of African countries, Clapham maintained, "became a means through which leaders attempted to gain access to the resources required to maintain the domestic political structure."<sup>1044</sup> John F. Clark summarised that foreign policymaking in Central Africa could best be explained as a "direct outgrowth of domestic political needs."<sup>1045</sup>

External actors would not have been able to assert themselves in the country if they

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<sup>1041</sup> Mazrui, "Tanzaphilia", 1997, 164.

<sup>1042</sup> Herbst, and Mills, "The Invisible State", 2013, 80.

<sup>1043</sup> Cf. Kelly, *America's Tyrant*, 1993, 50 and *passim*.

<sup>1044</sup> Clapham, *Africa and the International System*, 1985, 60.

<sup>1045</sup> Clark, "Foreign Policy Making in Central Africa", in Khadiagala, and Lyons (eds.), *African Foreign Policies*, 2001, 67.

could not find a domestic partner who shared a common interest. The Congo's decision-makers were sometimes well aware of their partners' critical concerns. Mobutu, for instance, engaged in a careful balancing act by catering to proponents of Pan-Africanism, anti-communism, and capitalism.<sup>1046</sup>

Within the sphere of epistemic contestation, domestic political actors made grateful use of international Cold War concerns. The offices of Masangu, Diur, and Struelens conveyed a message of anti-communism, anti-Lumumbism, and willingness to cooperate with western partners. Their shared interest became even more apparent when it drastically changed after Lumumba's assassination. With the assassination of the 'enemy in common'<sup>1047</sup> and removal of important *raison d'être* of the State of Katanga, Struelens lost his working relationship with the State Department and Belgium gradually retreated its support. Moreover, early on in his career, Mobutu collaborated and was aided by important partners such as Pierre Davister and CIA officer Larry Devlin. Gizenga's politics, on the other hand, was more intensely supported by Bandung countries and communist countries, who started recognising his government in the days following the announcement of Lumumba's death. As a President, Mobutu played off his international partners against one another by looking at potential shared interests and handpicking his quarrels and friendship ties. Hugues Leclercq, key actor and astute observer of Mobutu's foreign policy, used the analogy of Mobutu as a card player with four aces in his hand. The ace of hearts, Leclercq described, was Belgium, since the country stood at the centre of his diplomacy, especially Mobutu's relationship with the King of the Belgians. The ace of clubs was the US, for its power in international politics, the Cold War, and links with all US Presidents, the Department of State, and the CIA. France functioned as the ace of diamonds. Finally, Leclercq identified the ace of spades as sometimes Israel, Arab countries, or eastern countries such as Romania and Yugoslavia.<sup>1048</sup> When the shared interest in maintaining Mobutu in power declined towards the end of the Cold War, he became more of a liability than important partner in the eyes of Belgian and US decision-makers. Exiled politicians and diplomats amplified their influence by catering to certain anti-Mobutist and Third-Worldist circles. Kamitatu, Nguza, and others were important nodes in the anti-Mobutist transnational advocacy network. By the 1970s, Terretta explained in the case of Kamitatu in France, the intersection of

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<sup>1046</sup> See, for instance, the different steps of the Congo's foreign politics according to Mwayila Tshiyembe: Tshiyembe, "Les étapes de la politique étrangère", *La politique étrangère* 2009, 75-101.

<sup>1047</sup> Cf. telex FMT, Box 7, Folder 1348 TELEX TELEGRAMMES Folder Ensemble de telex divers moins importants ou déjà traités, Telex delperkat to presikat 20 February 1961.

<sup>1048</sup> Testimony of Hugues Leclercq in Michel, *Mobutu: Roi du Zaïre*.

Third Worldism in France with African opposition politics formed a “Franco-African nexus of political activism.”<sup>1049</sup>

With regard to security issues, the Cold War, as well, served as a blessing in disguise for Congolese decision-makers. During the Congo Crisis, Katanga received external military support partly because of the anti-communist stance of its leaders. Lumumba’s assassination considerably changed shared interests between Katanga and external players and between the central government and external players. ONUC’s interest in militarily ending the Katangese secession increased after the worldwide indignation, thereby gaining momentum to expand ONUC’s mandate. Anti-communism as a shared interest surfaced once more during the Shaba Wars, when Mobutu framed the conflicts as a joint invasion by MPLA rebels and Cuban elements. This motivated external players to intervene. Finally, shared interests waned towards the end of the Republic of Zaire. The leadership could not get away as easily with violations of human rights as before and the erosion of Zairean state structure became more of an embarrassment to Belgium and the US.

Economic bones of contention were often solved or mitigated by looking out for shared interests. At the time of the *contentieux*, the interests of the Congolese and Belgian political leaders were highly divergent, but they did manage to sign joint agreements. Despite divergent legal positions between the two negotiating sides, they were both able to retain their legal position. Congolese negotiators often strengthened their position by putting pressure on the talks by taking unilateral decisions, such as the decree-law of 29 November 1964, by giving a lukewarm welcome to Harmel in Kinshasa in 1966, or outright nationalisation of UMHK. Although the economically disastrous Zairianisation measures were clearly against the interests of foreign business-owners, Zairean leaders were successful in dissuading Belgian politicians in adopting a firm stance. Mobutu created discord in the Belgian government and was aware of the difficult relationship between Van Elslande and Leburton. Furthermore, he promised major contracts to a Belgian company which softened the economic blow and made use of his highly personalised relations with Prime Minister Leburton. Finally, regarding the debt restructuring of the 1980s, Mobutu maximised his clout in the economic sphere by playing off his partners against one another.<sup>1050</sup> By pursuing shared interests with the US or Belgium, these countries pressured the international financial institutions, for instance when Reagan promised to ease

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<sup>1049</sup> Terretta, “The French Trials of Cléophas Kamitatu”, in Carpenter, and Lawrance (eds.), *Africans in Exile*, 2018, 207.

<sup>1050</sup> Parfitt, “Zaire: Debt in an Absolutist Kleptocracy”, in Parfitt, and Riley, *The African Debt Crisis*, 1989, 152.

the way in IMF negotiations when his Zairean homologue promised base rights for the US at Kamina air base.

Throughout the empirical discussion, several instances of agency suggested the importance to look beyond a unidirectional vector from domestic politics, or from international to domestic politics. Contrary to perspectives on African international politics and economics stressing the expansion of western markets to the global periphery to the benefit of the capitalist class in the core, a more fine-grained analysis needs to take into account the intertwining of domestic and international elite interests. Frederick Cooper's concept of the gatekeeper state demonstrates the importance to African political elites of the external recognition of sovereignty and shared interests between domestic and external elites. The survival of African states, he wrote, "depended precisely on the fact that formal sovereignty was recognized *from outside*, and that resources, such as foreign aid and military assistance, came to governments for that reason."<sup>1051</sup>

At the time of the First Republic, Belgians, French, and other nationals were employed as advisers to the major Congolese and Katangese politicians. They were not fully neutral employees at ministerial cabinets. After all, Guy Weber, Benoît Verhaegen, Jef Van Bilsen, and others were in contact with the Belgian political world. Nevertheless, several advisers such as Van Bilsen made clear that their loyalty lied with Congolese decision-makers,<sup>1052</sup> and some such as Georges Thyssens even acted against Belgian interests. Another example of the entanglement between the international and the domestic concerns the accreditation crisis at the UN. The domestic situation, both from a legal and security-related point of view, was decisive for the accreditation of either Kanza or Bomboko at the UN. Bomboko's delegation represented the Congolese President, which formed the most convincing legal argument to favour them over Kanza's delegation, sent out by Prime Minister Lumumba, who was not universally accepted at the domestic level as the country's Prime Minister.

Under Mobutu's Zaire, numerous foreign advisers retained their position. Additionally, Zaire's domestic policy often served a double purpose of strengthening the political leadership's hold on the state and solidifying their position abroad. Tshombe's kidnapping, for instance, was both a domestic settlement and signalling towards foreign audiences that the new leadership controlled the country's politics. *Recours à l'authenticité* can be considered in a similar vein, since it was adopted by African audiences, next to its function as a nation-building exercise. Finally, the transnational anti-Mobutist advocacy network underlines once more the entangled

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<sup>1051</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 2002, 156 [Emphasis in the original].

<sup>1052</sup> Van Bilsen, *Kongo 1945-1965*, 1993, 156.

nature of shared interests.

Next to civil advisers, foreign military personnel and advisers were present in the Congo during the crisis. At the time of the Simba rebellion, foreign military personnel such as Vandewalle fought at the side of the central government, a joint US-Belgian operation intervened and Cuban advisers supported the rebel forces. Later, during the Shaba Wars, Mobutu took the risk to keep the FAZ weak so as not to threaten his rule. As a trade-off, he hoped to receive external military aid from his partners, which turned out to be the case. Finally, the interests of the AFDL rebellion during the First Congo War were fundamentally intertwined with other interests from Uganda and Rwanda.

At the economic and financial level, many discussions were entangled with other concerns, both domestically and internationally. In Pilipili's words, to reduce the *contentieux* to a simple financial settlement was "risible".<sup>1053</sup> The purely financial *contentieux* under Tshombe was entangled with the ongoing armed conflict. Even when the Prime Minister was in a weak bargaining position, he could politically capitalise on the negotiations by portraying himself as a moderate African leader. Under Zairianisation, some economic interests of Zairean political leaders could not be separated from those interests of foreign political leaders. Public contracts for Belgian companies and personal and financial ties between Mobutu and Belgian political leaders prevented the momentous event of Zairianisation to cause a considerable stir in the Belgian Parliament. The unilateral economic measures did not alter the diplomacy of affection between Zaire and Belgium.<sup>1054</sup> The entanglement of financial issues with other issues came to the foreground once more at the time of the debt restructuring talks. The aforementioned example of base rights at Kamina air base can be complemented by others, such as the emphasis at the Zairean side of Belgium as a country with a moral debt towards Zaire.

In a post-colonial order which is sometimes regarded as a unidirectional patron-client relationship, African political actors still have much leeway to steer bilateral and multilateral relations. Literature on Franco-African relations, famously designated as *Françafrique*, pointed to deeply engrained dynamics of neo-colonialism between France and its former colonies. Hypothesis 3 does not turn this relationship upside down and neither does it refute its main conclusions. Instead, it puts the spotlight on the strategies of African political elites to profit from international partners' desire to maintain relations with these countries through shared interests. Cameroon's foreign policy, for instance, is marked by dualism as it tries to strike a

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<sup>1053</sup> Pilipili, *Etablir la paix*, 1990, 45.

<sup>1054</sup> de Villers, *De Mobutu à Mobutu*, 1995, 54.

balance between distinguishing itself in relation to officially francophone African countries, and privileged ties with France.<sup>1055</sup> In another example, Gabon under Omar Bongo is considered one of the prime examples of *Françafrique*. Nevertheless, Jean-François Obiang observed that

“in general, [...] the French actors, for the sake of stability, made an effort by different means to encourage political monolithism in Gabon. By establishing that, they helped President Bongo to consolidate a strong power, durable and centralised, whereas, at the same time, their own power in France becomes more and more fragile.”<sup>1056</sup>

Obiang refuted the concept of neo-colonialism as inoperative and having little relevance.<sup>1057</sup> His portrayal of Franco-Gabonese relations under Omar Bongo can be compared to the Belgo-Zairean case under Mobutu in several respects. Zaire evolved from a fragile state marred by rebellions and foreign interventionism right after independence to increasing political monolithism under Mobutu. Strong, durable, and centralised, the Zairean leadership had an in-depth understanding of Belgian politics including the many clashes of personalities within and between political parties. They capitalised on this acquired knowledge to align with different interests from different Belgian actors and play them off against one another.

### 3. Nature of the Research

The current study endeavoured to uncover the agency of Congolese political elites in their engagement with the international system through a densely empirical analysis. Consequently, the definition of agency functioned as a heuristic device to bring to light instances of agency in a structured way. The abductive research strategy, used to conduct the structured, focused comparison of the case study, helped in striking a balance between the contingencies of human behaviour, including path dependent and context-specific aspects of the political world, on the one hand, and development of generalisable knowledge about political agency, on the other hand. The case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo lent itself to study the state as an institution that can be instrumentalised by individual actors, rather than being a unitary actor itself. Path dependency matters, since historical contingencies form part of the backdrop of individuals' informed actions. They could entail constraining or enabling factors for the actors under discussion.

Individual actors populate the current thesis, but it is a methodological choice to

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<sup>1055</sup> Oyono, *Avec ou sans la France?*, 1990, 193; cf. Pondi, “La coopération franco-africaine vue d’Afrique”, 2002, 134.

<sup>1056</sup> Obiang, *France-Gabon*, 2007, 207.

<sup>1057</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

structure how to look at agency rather than a normative assertion that would prescribe that it is the only level of analysis where agency happens. Other takes on agency, other epistemological lenses for other levels of analysis could render different results. The MPR, for instance, can be considered a monolithic state party, anthropomorphised into an aggregate version of agency, or its posts could be occupied by individuals with individuals desires and strategies.

The tripartite distinction between epistemic contestation, security, and economy dovetails with Bertrand Russell's and E.H. Carr's notions of power. They were topics of particular importance for the actors of this thesis. By looking at the common strategies of actors across the three topics, this thesis covered the most substantial part of their engagement with the international system between 1960 and 1997. When a strategy occurs across all three topics, this thesis makes the case that it is an instrumental strategy in individuals' exercise of agency in general. Within these three topics, several key episodes were singled out in order to cover the discussed time period almost entirely.

#### **4. Avenues for Further Research**

Complex research problems could be tackled by either specialising in one discipline, paradigm or method, or looking beyond the reified disciplinary boundaries of academic disciplines. This thesis of interdisciplinary international studies defied the inter- and intra-disciplinary epistemological disagreements in order to discuss a research problem through an integrated approach. In order to understand complex experiences, African studies research will have to use more and more “[h]eterodox research methodologies”, as George Bob-Milliar argued.<sup>1058</sup> Congolese political elites can be studied from many different levels of analysis, be it from a global, nation-state based, or domestic level, but an additional exciting avenue is to recognise the arbitrary boundaries between these levels and to look at what Rita Abrahamsen calls the “multi-scalar connections, abandoning strict dichotomies between the global and the local, the international, and the domestic”.<sup>1059</sup> She advocated for an “assemblage approach” in African studies, with an “open and agnostic attitude” towards the social world and a rejection of concepts and theories used as straitjackets.<sup>1060</sup> Although different from the interpretivist assemblage approach, the current study built up a concept of agency without predetermined “*a priori* categories or predefined units and norms of analysis.”<sup>1061</sup>

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<sup>1058</sup> Bob-Milliar, “Introduction: Methodologies for Researching Africa”, 2020, 11 [online only].

<sup>1059</sup> Abrahamsen, “Research Note: Africa and International Relations”, 2016, 133.

<sup>1060</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1061</sup> Ibid., 133.

Paraphrasing Mahmood Mamdani, both policy-driven research and basic research could coexist together.<sup>1062</sup> The latter identifies and questions “assumptions that drive the very process of knowledge production”,<sup>1063</sup> as opposed to research driven by a consultancy culture, bringing scholars to read less and less.<sup>1064</sup> Particularly in the study of African politics and societies, a belief in modernisation sometimes forms the backdrop of diagnosing pathologies in politics and societies, and providing readymade solutions or policy recommendations in order to mould those politics and societies to a form more acceptable to western observers.

In short, this research could stimulate further discussions on how to approach African politics and its international links from an agency-centred perspective without neglecting the evidently salient role of international actors. The comprehensive approach to a research problem outlined above could strike a balance between an overly institutionalist take on African politics, neglecting many informal modes of politics, versus a quasi-anthropological take where only personal networks meaningfully exist without any institutions. By doing basic interdisciplinary research, looking at the relevant sources and approaching African politics without preconceived ideas and theoretical straitjackets, African politics can be studied in a way that withstands readymade solutions based on western terms.

Related to the tension between institutions and informal aspects of politics, agency of individual Congolese political leaders manifested itself mostly in unconventional ways. From transnational advocacy networks to pseudo-diplomatic representatives of an unrecognised secessionist state, these leaders made use of their own relation to domestic and international institutions, the performativity of speech, and real or invented shared interests in nonstandard ways. Echoing Coleman et al., who posited that “borderlands of orders, whether geographic or functional or both, are spaces in which agency flourishes”<sup>1065</sup>, the present study encouraged scholars to look beyond traditional spaces where traditional forms of agency occur. Instead, the abovementioned unconventional spaces and actors such as transnational advocacy networks and pseudo-diplomatic representatives, as well as exile-diplomats and unofficial decision-makers should be scrutinised in order to analyse the multifaceted ways in which Congolese political elites exercise agency.

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<sup>1062</sup> Mamdani, “The Importance of Research in a University”, in Musaazi (ed.), *Innovating University Education*, 2017), 94.

<sup>1063</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1064</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>1065</sup> Coleman, Kornprobst, and Seegers, “Introduction: Orders, Borderlands and Diplomacy”, in Coleman, Kornprobst, and Seegers (eds.), *Diplomacy and Borderlands*, 2020, 1.

As mentioned in chapter two, the biases of publications by Congolese political elites, journalists, academics, and other authors writing about Congolese politics is an opportunity rather than an obstacle to obtain oftentimes first-hand knowledge about the goals, preconceptions, and strategies of the actors under scrutiny. Roosevelt used a maximalist approach when she stated that the scholarly record on the Congo Crisis was deeply tainted by “a rampant disinformation program coordinated by the western governments in aid of concealing the facts about their projects in Congo.”<sup>1066</sup> Although exaggerated, it is true that the abundance of literature dealing with the Congo Crisis from 1960 to 1965, arguably the most documented and debated period in Congolese history after independence, could be grouped together in several strands dealing with the political elites grouped together into separate factions with their own national and international power bases as well as authors favourable to their respective factions. Recently, however, the amount of reliable data about arms shipments, mercenary recruitment, foreign advisers, and more generally the international linkages of predominantly the State of Katanga has increased thanks to several publications and to the UN investigation into the plane crash that killed UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld on the night of 17 to 18 September 1961 *en route* to peace talks with Tshombe.<sup>1067</sup> Although the head of the UN investigation, Judge Mohamed Chande Othman met some resistance from several countries, the Hammarskjöld investigation obtained documents about recruitment and arms deliveries that are normally unavailable to private individuals. Similarly, US and Belgian parliamentary inquiries into the assassination of Lumumba enabled the disclosure of many archival funds that would have been unavailable for other researchers.<sup>1068</sup>

Biased research continued after the end of the First Republic. Critical writing about Mobutu’s politics was done outside the country. The publication of Jules Chomé’s *L’ascension de Mobutu* in Belgium and the refusal of French authorities to publish it in France, sparked a diplomatic row between Zaire and Belgium. Indeed, the continued predominance of Belgians in literature about Zairean politics is notable. The *Comité Zaire* was based in Belgium, many Zairean political dissidents moved to Belgium. Even an active US journalist on Zairean affairs, *Newsweek*’s Arnaud de Borchgrave d’Altena, was of Belgian descent. The latter was one of

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<sup>1066</sup> Roosevelt, “Culpability for Violence in the Congo”, 2020, 158.

<sup>1067</sup> See for instance Williams, *Who Killed Hammarskjöld?*, 2014; Picard, *Ils ont tué Monsieur H*, 2019. The UN investigation has produced several reports, including A/73/973, and A/76/892. The author of the present dissertation has shared documents with the investigating team, as reflected in A/76/892.

<sup>1068</sup> Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, *Parlementair onderzoek met het oog op het vaststellen van de precieze omstandigheden*, 2001-2; United States Senate, *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, 1975, 16-70.

several conservative journalists who had access to Mobutu.<sup>1069</sup> *Jeune Afrique*, as well, provided a forum for the Zairean president.<sup>1070</sup> The weekly magazine founded in 1961 by Béchir Ben Yahmed started out as a pan-African and anti-colonial outlet. Soon, however, *Jeune Afrique* began to walk a tightrope between its progressive outlook and empathic understanding of major African political and economic players.<sup>1071</sup> Several journalists at the magazine had close access to the Zairean President, like Zairean Buana Kabué or the Guinean Editor-in-Chief Siradiou Diallo.<sup>1072</sup>

However, no one went as far in their closeness to Mobutu as the enigmatic Belgian journalist Pierre Davister. Described as “the incarnation of treachery” by his colleague Walter Zinzen,<sup>1073</sup> he received twelve million Belgian Francs from Tshombe to start his weekly *Spécial* magazine right before Mobutu’s second coup, but changed the editorial direction of *Spécial* immediately thereafter, becoming virtually “Mobutu’s mouthpiece in Belgium”.<sup>1074</sup> Thanks to the high esteem he enjoyed at the ranks of the Zairean presidency, Davister and *Spécial*’s co-editor Francis Monheim had privileged access to Mobutu.

All these publications should, of course, not be taken at face value. They obtain meaning through the confrontation with other literature. The present thesis contributed to the heterogeneous literature body on Congolese politics by synthesising tendentious publications, confronting them with one another as well as with less partisan secondary literature.

The thesis’ contributions to African studies, Congolese political studies, IR and political science show the need of an integrated approach towards African agency in international politics. The historical dimension of this thesis takes into account the contingencies of the social world,

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<sup>1069</sup> Considering de Borchgrave as a ‘conservative’ journalist, see “This side of WFB”, *The National Review*, 2015, 14.

<sup>1070</sup> de Villers wrote that *Jeune Afrique* was “a periodical in which the Zairean leaders seem to gladly confide a role of messenger to.” de Villers, *Belgique-Zaïre: Le grand affrontement*, 1990, 4.

<sup>1071</sup> Cf. Deltombe, “*Jeune Afrique démasqué*”, in Borrel, Yabara, Collombat, and Deltombe (eds.), *L’empire qui ne veut pas mourir*, 2021, 363-5.

<sup>1072</sup> According to Buana Kabué, Mobutu “loved ‘*Jeune Afrique*’ and my articles”. Buana Kabué, *Citoyen président*, 1978, 18. After the court case of Nguza Karl-I-Bond, he fell out of favour with Mobutu, and became a political adviser to Burkina Faso’s President Thomas Sankara. Cf. Martens, and Meesters, *Sankara, Compaoré et la révolution burkinabé*, 1989, 247; Peterson, *Thomas Sankara*, 2021, 225.

<sup>1073</sup> The author, *Interview Walter Zinzen*. (See appendix)

<sup>1074</sup> Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 2012, 228. A document signed by a certain Muller corroborated the rumour that Davister recruited the kidnapper of Tshombe. Letter of Muller to Joseph Durand, 20 May 1972, Folder 5.16 “Bodenan, Tsjombe”, *Archief Walter De Bock* [WDB], KU Leuven University Archive. A commissar of the crown prosecutor identified “Muller” as Siegfried Müller, German mercenary known as ‘Kongo-Müller’. A copy of the letter, however, identified the source as Cécile Müller, founder of the Miss Belgium beauty pageant and protégé of Davister. Davister helped to launch Müller’s career. Document reprinted in Augustijnen, “Cher Pourquoi Pas? ”, 2007.

without abandoning more structural claims. Furthermore, authors mainly point out the western-centredness of IR in theoretical and normative publications about IR beyond the west. This thesis contributed to the debate by putting theory into practice by doing empirical legwork on a challenging non-western case. Despite literature downplaying agential aspects of north-south relations, especially in the discussed period, the present thesis demonstrated the agency of Global South elites in international politics.

The agency debate shows that political elites are influenced by their surroundings and, in turn, that those elites shape the state and society. In the conclusion of his monograph on politics and elites in the DRC, Guy Aundu Matsanza transposed the structure-agency discussion to the topic of his book:

“In their diversity, the elites in the Democratic Republic of the Congo make, out of the state, a property that reflects their moods. Conversely, its functioning, governed by principles derived from social and sociological realities, affects their behaviour as well. Those mutual influences make the Congolese state a reflection of its elites and those elites, the image inherited from colonisation, a continuity of the same model of domination. In this case, change is only attainable through a simultaneous rupture of the ways institutions function and the behaviour of the elites.”<sup>1075</sup>

If one conclusion from studying Congolese politics could be drawn, however, it is that having legitimised power within the Congolese state system is always temporary and that a change in the country's politics could happen without warning. Tshombe's confidant Maître Mario Spandre reflected on his boss's ending in a defeatist way: “Life goes on. The people who are crushed by history are thrown in a ditch and life goes on.”<sup>1076</sup> Tryphon Kin-Kiey Mulumba, politician famous for announcing Mobutu's flight from Kinshasa, described the final moments of the President in Kinshasa as follows: “Mobutu has been abandoned. If he doesn't go, his corpse will be dragged through the city. They will cut off his ears. Those who made him King abandoned him. They do not want to have anything more to do with him.”<sup>1077</sup> At any rate, the two testimonies show the paramount importance of international politics to domestic Congolese politics. In a broader perspective, further empirical research could ascertain ways in which Global South elites can successfully exercise agency over their international partners.

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<sup>1075</sup> Aundu Matsanza, *Politique et élites en RDC*, 2015, 285.

<sup>1076</sup> Testimony of Maître Mario Spandre in “Tshombe: Het eindspel”, *Histoires*, 2005.

<sup>1077</sup> Testimony of Tryphon Kin-Kiey Mulumba in Michel, *Mobutu: Roi du Zaïre*, 1999.

**Appendix: Interview transcription of the author with Walter Zinzen, retired journalist of Belgian (BRT, until 1991) and Flemish (VRT, since 1991) public radio and television broadcaster, Sterrebeek, Belgium, 4 January 2019.<sup>1078</sup>**

C (the author): Peut-être, d'abord parlons de votre trajet personnel. Pourquoi vous vous étiez intéressé au Congo? En général, au début, par exemple.

Walter Zinzen: Oui, c'était un signe de temps aussi, j'étais jeune quand l'Afrique a été décolonisée. J'étais étudiant en université lors de l'indépendance du Congo et tous les troubles qui ont précédé et qui ont suivi cet indépendance, et j'étais fasciné parce que je trouvais que les Africains avaient tous les droits de se libérer de leur colonisateur, donc j'étais déjà en train de débattre sur la décolonisation à cette époque-là, et quand j'avais terminé mes études, j'ai eu l'occasion d'aller travailler au Congo parce qu'après l'indépendance, la Belgique avait introduit la coopération qui s'appelait à cette époque-là l'assistance technique et on cherchait des professeurs pour des écoles et je suis arrivé à Lubumbashi en soixante-trois, septembre, à le début de l'année scolaire, et soixante-trois était l'année de la fin de la sécession de Katanga. Donc je suis arrivé dans une ville, la capitale de l'État indépendant du Katanga où il y a encore plein de Belges. Il y avait encore douze mille Belges, ce qui est beaucoup plus que le nombre actuel pour le Congo tout entier et donc c'était un milieu à la fois néocoloniale et à la fois, j'avais dans l'école des élèves qui étaient des enfants de la première classe politique mais aussi des hommes d'affaires et cetera, les premiers qui profitaient de l'indépendance pour ainsi dire, malgré tous les problèmes qu'avait connu le Katanga. Et donc, pour ainsi dire, l'Afrique m'a toujours fasciné depuis ma plus tendre enfance comme on dit et cela ne m'a jamais quitté. J'ai quitté le Congo après le coup d'État de Mobutu<sup>1079</sup> parce que là je trouvais que, nous avions notre premier enfant et nous n'étions pas tout à fait à l'aise parce qu'avec l'arrivée de Mobutu tout changeait et on a eu raison parce que Mobutu a nommé un Gouverneur à Lubumbashi qui était connu pour ses cruautés, ses assassinats.<sup>1080</sup> Après son départ on a retrouvé dans son jardin du palais de gouverneur des dizaines de cadavres de ces victimes, donc j'étais content de ne plus avoir assisté à ça mais quand je, j'ai commencé à VRT<sup>1081</sup> en soixante-huit, je pouvais quand même profiter de mon expérience entre guillemets du Congo, et je suis revenu en tant

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<sup>1078</sup> This interview was conducted in the framework of the seminar *Methodische Grundlagen in den Afrikawissenschaften*, winter semester 2018-2019, at the Department of African Studies at the University of Vienna. Since both interviewer and interviewee are not francophones, language mistakes are not indicated by 'sic' and repeated words are left out, to facilitate readability.

<sup>1079</sup> In 1965.

<sup>1080</sup> Jean Foster Manzikala.

<sup>1081</sup> *Vlaamse Radio en Televisie*: Flemish Radio and Television, the Flemish public broadcaster.

que journaliste, j'étais même reçu avec la délégation officielle belge qui était au sein du Prince Albert si je, mes mémoires sont bons, parce que le prince Albert préparait le voyage de son frère le Roi Baudouin l'année après. J'ai vu son bureau<sup>1082</sup>, j'étais frappé par le... goût. C'était magnifique, et c'était tout à fait Congolais. C'était africain. MAIS RICHE! Énormément, déjà à cette époque-là. Et j'étais, il faut le dire en toute sincérité, j'étais impressionné. Et aussi, l'attitude des Congolais que j'ai rencontrés se voit c'était un attitude qui n'était plus complexé. Ils se considéraient comme les Américains de l'Afrique. Sans rire, hein, ils étaient sérieux. Parce qu'avec leur nouveau chef qui, on allait mettre des pas de géant avant. Et je comprenais cette attitude, parce que il décida, il travaillait vingt heures sur vingt-quatre, il n'était pas paresseux du tout à cette époque-là, il prenait des décisions, il donnait des ordres, sans discussion, c'était comme ça. Mais tout le monde était content après les émeutes, les guerres qu'on avait connus, enfin un chef, un chef qui donnait au pays de l'ordre, de la discipline, de l'ambiance, l'ambiance était formidable. Et c'est pas, il avait introduit du travail du samedi obligatoire et volontaire, mais il y avait une chanson qui existait déjà avant lui, qui s'appelait Salongo, partout où on venait, on entendait cette chanson. Salongo, si je pouvais chanter je le répétais. Donc, c'était vraiment impressionnant. Et tout le monde était impressionné.

C: Oui.

W: Même le monde politique en Belgique. Voilà.

C: Merci. Donc, Mobutu, peut-être pas à cette époque-là, mais il était au cours de l'année un Président controversé, n'est-ce pas, mais peut-être vous avez eu l'opportunité de travailler au Zaïre sous Mobutu, vous avez toujours obtenu de, vous n'avez pas toujours obtenu de visa comme on peut lire dans vos ouvrages. Comment avez-vous vécu cette tension, cette temps tendu?

W: Eh bien, c'est commencé avec les deux guerres de Shaba. En septante-six et septante-sept si mes mémoires sont bonnes.<sup>1083</sup> Jusque-là, j'ai pas eu de problèmes pour aller au Congo, bien que l'attitude optimiste que je viens de décrire était en train de changer par deux raisons importantes: la crise du pétrole qui coûtait beaucoup, avant c'était gratuit maintenant il fallait payer, et au même moment qu'il avait introduit la fameuse zaïrianisation, donc les revenus d'État était en baisse et les prix en hausse. Donc c'était la première crise formidable, il a détruit tout le commerce à l'intérieur donc les gens commençaient à se plaindre de la dictature, de leur

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<sup>1082</sup> Of Mobutu.

<sup>1083</sup> 1977 and 1978 instead of 1976 and 1977.

misère, de leur pauvreté, et en septante-six il y avait la révolte d'anciens gendarmes katangais qui revenaient de l'Angola pour, comme on disait, chasser Mobutu et j'étais envoyé par la VRT, d'aller à Kolwezi pendant la guerre de quatre-vingts jours et notre ambition était d'aller plus loin et aller à l'encontre des rebelles pour les filmer, les interviewer, tout ça, enfin, comme les journalistes font, mais on nous a interdit de quitter Kolwezi, nous étions bloqués dans notre hôtel, mais finalement on a quand même avec une équipe américaine d'ailleurs, on a retrouvé un militaire qui voulait bien nous accompagner. On a rien vu, on a rentré le soir sans rien voir. Mais j'avais interviewé quelques habitants de Kolwezi et ils étaient tous en faveur des rebelles, bien sûr, c'étaient leurs frères et leurs sœurs ainsi, et quand je rentrais en Belgique, j'ai mis ces interviews sur antenne et c'était la bagarre. L'Ambassadeur de Mobutu était fâché, il me m'accusait de profiter de mon séjour au Katanga quand j'étais professeur d'y avoir eu des contacts séparatistes et ainsi de suite, et c'était fini, et le, la, quand la guerre était fini, l'année suivante les rebelles étaient de nouveau là mais cette fois-ci directement à Kolwezi, ils étaient là, il y avait un massacre contre des blancs, des Belges, dont on disait que c'était les rebelles qu'ils l'avaient tués, mais c'est pas vrai du tout, c'était les troupes de Mobutu qui avaient tués ses blancs et ses Belges pour avoir une raison pour demander de l'aide militaire à Belgique. Bon, et on m'envoyait de nouveau malgré les mauvais résultats, on, pas seulement moi, on, nous étions seize journalistes belges qui partaient avec un avion Sabena vers Kinshasa pour aller au Katanga et le Ministre de la Défense qui était Vanden Boeynants<sup>1084</sup> à cette époque-là, nous avait dit ne vous en faites pas, vous n'avez pas besoin de visa ni rien du tout, il y aura un avion militaire belge à côté de l'avion Sabena, vous montez dans cet avion-là et il vous emportera vers Katanga. Mais quelqu'un a trahi, et Mobutu était au courant de notre arrivée et donc l'avion atterri à N'Djili<sup>1085</sup> et le, la première chose qu'on nous disait c'était vous ne pouvez pas quitter l'avion. On a quand-même pu parler avec les militaires qui étaient au bord de l'autre avion, ils ont appelé par radio Bruxelles et la réponse était claire et bien compréhensible: il y a pas question que ces journalistes peuvent entrer au Congo. Mobutu avait menacé de toute sorte de chose. Donc il avait des types au ministère des affaires étrangères qui lui tenait au courant de ce qui se passait à Bruxelles.

C: Oui.

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<sup>1084</sup> Paul Vanden Boeynants.

<sup>1085</sup> The airport in Kinshasa.

W: C'est, et je crois connaître le type que mais je n'ai pas de preuve, mais il y a en tout cas il y avait de trahison là si je peux

C: Oui, d'accord.

W: Utiliser ce mot un peu grave, mais en rentrant, nous avions, il y avait beaucoup de Belges qui étaient évacués du Katanga et nous avons interviewés ces passagers-là de Kinshasa jusqu'à Bruxelles, on a mis ces interviews sur antenne et après ce reportage j'ai dit mais maintenant, tout s'occupe, à juste titre, de ces vingt ou trente blancs qui ont été tués à Kolwezi mais personne ne parle de deux mille Congolais qui ont été tués à Idiofa par les troupes de Mobutu, ce qui était vrai hein.

C: Oui, oui.

W: Le monde était trop petit.<sup>1086</sup> Pas seulement les Congolais mais aussi les Belges, les politiciens, Tindemans<sup>1087</sup> qui était ministre des affaires étrangères ils étaient FÂCHÉS et là, le grand chef de la VRT qui était monsieur Vandebussche<sup>1088</sup> a décidé que je ne pouvais plus, jamais entrer au Congo. Et ce qui a été le cas pendant quinze ans.

C: Ce qui était une décision aussi avec une dimension politique?

W: Bien, bien sûr, oui.

C: D'accord.

W: C'était Tindemans qui était du même parti que notre chef<sup>1089</sup>, et Mobutu qui avait une liste noire

C: Oui.

W: Il y avait une vingtaine de journalistes belges là-dessus. J'étais pas le seule, pas du tout. Colette Braeckman aussi était figurée sur cette liste.

C: D'accord, oui. Oui, peut-être nous pouvons nous pouvons parler de votre rapport avec vos collègues. Il y avait pas mal de journalistes à cette époque-là, journalistes belges qui s'occupaient avec le Zaïre, comme Colette Braeckman qui était, qui avait un style plutôt critique, comment était votre rapport avec les journalistes qui ont critiqués Mobutu?

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<sup>1086</sup> Probably an expression coming from Dutch, "*het kot was te klein*", meaning a lively discussion.

<sup>1087</sup> Leo Tindemans.

<sup>1088</sup> Paul Vandebussche.

<sup>1089</sup> CVP or *Christelijke Volkspartij*, Flemish Christian democratic party.

W: Oui, il y avait deux sortes de journalistes hein, au *Soir*, où Colette travaillait, c'était déjà le cas. Il y a monsieur Ugeux<sup>1090</sup>

C: Oui.

W: Qui était le frère d'un autre Ugeux,<sup>1091</sup> qui a travaillé à *Inforcongo* et qui était, Ugeux était un copain pour ainsi dire, de Mobutu hein. Classique et ce qu'il était dans un avion que Mobutu pilotait lui-même et il m'appelait dans son cockpit, c'était à la rédaction du *Soir*, c'était donc on peut lire parfois sur une seule page du *Soir* un article de Ugeux très favorable pour Mobutu et un autre qui était très critique. Bon, moi j'étais dans le camp des journalistes critiques avec Colette, mes rapports avec Colette était extrêmement bons, ce qu'ils ne sont plus aujourd'hui mais enfin, c'est une autre histoire, et mais donc il y avait du côté flamand aussi des journalistes qui ne demandaient mieux d'aller au Congo d'être fêté par le régime, hôtel gratuit, repas gratuit et ils étaient vendu, quoi.

C: Oui.

W: Et il y avait d'autres sur dite liste noire tel que Paul Goossens qui était rédacteur en chef du journal à cette époque-là encore de gauche *De Morgen*, chez les autres journaux je n'ai pas, plus de, mais enfin il y avait deux camps du côté francophone aussi il y avait des journalistes qui étaient des admirateurs de Mobutu.

C: Les, les noms connus sont, sont Pierre Davister et

W: Pierre Davister c'était un

C: Ce qui est dans le rapport Blumenthal, qui est mentionné dans le rapport Blumenthal

W: Oui, oui, mais Pierre Davister c'est un, c'est, c'était l'incarnation de trahison, hein. Il est commencé comme conseiller de Tshombe et il a soutenu la sécession katangaise, puis avec l'argent qu'il avait reçu de Tshombe pour faire son hebdomadaire à lui, *Spécial* s'appelait-il du quoi, il travaillait d'abord pour *Pourquoi pas?* et puis il a fondé *Spécial* et avec l'argent de Tshombe il a changé de camp, il est devenu *l'adviser*<sup>1092</sup> de Mobutu et il écrivait des articles positifs sur Mobutu et après un certain il a de nouveau changé de camp et est devenu le plus

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<sup>1090</sup> Étienne Ugeux.

<sup>1091</sup> William Ugeux.

<sup>1092</sup> 'Adviser' in Dutch.

grand critique de Mobutu parce que il y avait une querelle FINANCIÈRE. Voilà c'était une exception. Comme Davister, je connais pas beaucoup.

C: Il y a encore deux autres journalistes flamands qui s'étaient intéressés au Congo

W: Manu Ruys

C: C'est Manu Ruys et Walter Geerts.

W: Ja.<sup>1093</sup> Manu Ruys, je peux dire que c'était deux journalistes qui appartenait à la droite flamande. Manu Ruys était au fond un journaliste qui s'occupait des affaires intérieures de Belgique. Mais comme à l'époque coloniale le Congo était un territoire belge, il était devenu spécialiste du Congo. Et comme journaliste il n'a pas fait un mauvais travail, il faut le reconnaître, il était assez, assez honnête et sincère et je ne crois pas que, qu'il était à la solde de Mobutu, pas du tout. Mais il défendait la ligne traditionnelle catholique belge, le CVP de l'époque, et parfois, il comparait l'époque Mobutu avec l'époque coloniale et il était très positif sur l'époque coloniale, il croyait que le colonialisme belge était un colonialisme exemplaire, mais en même temps, il n'était pas aveugle pour, certainement pas au début, les bons résultats que Mobutu avait au début et l'a changé après, mais il était aussi un peu victime de la guerre froide. Tout le monde était anticommuniste, Mobutu était anticommuniste et parfois il y avait des Congolais, des jeunes Congolais qui n'étaient pas du tout d'accord avec Mobutu, qui ont eu une bourse de l'Union Soviétique pour aller étudier à Moscou à l'Université Lumumba. Et quand ils revenaient, ils revenaient même ministre sous Mobutu. Ruys était inquiet parce que l'œil de Moscou était à Kinshasa. C'était comme ça, maintenant on rigole, mais c'était au fond dramatique parce qu'on a défendu le régime de Mobutu au nom de, dans le cadre, dans le contexte de la guerre froide jusqu'ici c'est trop tard, et Manu Ruys n'était pas le seul. Walter Geerts, par contre, était un ancien colonial qui a travaillé pour radio Léopoldville à l'époque coloniale, mais qui avait quand même un regard, comment dirais-je, positif sur les aspirations des Africains. C'était un drôle personnage. Il était pro-Apartheid quand il s'agissait de l'Afrique du Sud et il a même fait des erreurs journalistiques énormes en Afrique du Sud. Mais, quand il s'agissait du Congo, il comprenait, ou il disait de comprendre, Mobutu avec ses aspirations de l'authenticité, de la valeur des ancêtres et tout ça, ça il pouvait, comme beaucoup d'anciens coloniaux eux, ils comprenaient des Bantus, c'est un peu ça aussi, ils comprenaient les Bantus. Non les gauchistes nous ne comprenions pas les Bantus. Donc, mais il a fait, Geerts a fait des interviews avec Mobutu, des longues interviews sur cette authenticité. Il faut dire que,

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<sup>1093</sup> 'Yes' in Dutch.

quand on compare Mobutu avec l'actuel crise dans le Congo, lui au moins, au début toujours, il avait une vision. Il avait un programme, il savait où aller avec le Congo. Ce que les dirigeants actuels, leur seul intérêt, c'est leur portefeuille. Même Mobutu a eu cette faute aussi.

C: Oui.

W: Après, quand le temps évoluait.

C: On a déjà mentionné Idiofa, par exemple, vous l'avez su je pense, vous étiez informé par le fameux *Comité Zaïre*?

W: C'était non, j'étais pas membre du *Comité Zaïre*.

C: Non.

W: Pas du tout.

C: Mais vous avez eu des contacts avec

W: Absolument, absolument, ils nous donnaient des informations qui nous ne parvenaient pas par les médias classiques, ils avaient leurs, leurs gens au Congo même. Donc, par exemple le, l'assassinat d'Idiofa, je le savais grâce au *Comité Zaïre*. Oui, oui.

C: Ok, d'accord. C'était un comité petit ou plutôt

W: C'était assez petit je croyais qu'il y avait une dizaine de gens

C: D'accord.

W: Dont un seule, Guy De Bock, est toujours très actif parce que il donne chaque jour un revue de la presse congolaise qu'il envoie qui que y est intéressé donc il est toujours intéressé. Il y avait des autres évidemment, le plus connu était Ronald Van den Bogaert, qui donnait une très bonne impression à cette époque-là, qui avait été au Congo juste comme moi mais dans une autre période mais avec le même système, donc il avait des contacts, il faisait des analyses correctes, nous croyons, mais après un certain temps il a commencé se dégrader, il se laissait influencer par les types qui n'étaient pas de bonne foi, qui étaient même des agents de Mobutu, il ne voyait pas. C'est comme ça qu'il a entamé un voyage au Congo, où on l'a arrêté pour y préparer un coup d'État.

C: Oui, oui, oui.

W: C'était vrai hein.

C: Oui, oui, donc il n'y avait pas seulement des coupures de presse de droit et de gauche mais c'était vraiment avec l'intention de

W: Oui, oui.

C: Possiblement, oui, ok.

W: Il était l'agent d'un de ses soi-disant opposants, c'était un agent de Mobutu qu'il a, et après, mais, c'est nous, Guy Poppe qui travaillait pour la radio et moi, qui avait donc de très bons contacts avec lui et avec le *Comité Zaïre* mais quand il a commencé à faire des détours, c'est nous qui ont dû payer à l'intérieur de la VRT parce que c'est NOUS qui avons interviewés Van den Bogaert autant de fois à la radio comme à la télé et nous étions AUSSI des agents de gauche.

C: D'accord, oui, oui. Donc, à côté de, des opposants comme le *Comité Zaïre* et les autres Belges critiques, il y avait aussi des exilés en Belgique ou des gens de nationalité Congolaise qui se trouvaient en Belgique pour leur exprimer comme le fameux cas de Karl-I-Bond.<sup>1094</sup> Vous l'avez connu?

W: Si, si, si, si, si. Je crois que j'ai connu tous les opposants qui ont passés par ici. Nguza Karl-I-Bond, mais maintenant je comprends pas parfaitement, il a été premier ministre sous Mobutu, il est venu à Bruxelles, venir défendre l'abacos, le, à bas le costume, le, l'habit que Mobutu avait imposé aux hommes, ce qui était un discours vraiment, allez, sans niveau, mais il l'a fait. C'était un homme très sympathique hein, qui était absolument bon. Et puis, il était ici comme opposant, puis il est revenu, puis quand il était de nouveau Premier Ministre après la soi-disante démocratisation du Congo quand ce n'était plus le parti unique, il a donné l'ordre de tirer sur une manifestation de chrétiens, la marche des chrétiens pour soutenir le procès démocratique, il les a tués. Ce même Nguza Karl-I-Bond qui était un homme tellement sympathique et dont on disait que sa femme que je crois est toujours en vie, Wivine<sup>1095</sup> était son prénom, la rumeur circulait que Mobutu avait demandé à Wivine d'empoisonner son mari, de le tuer. Est-ce vrai, est-ce pas vrai, je ne sais pas, radio trottoir<sup>1096</sup> était très actif à cette époque-là comme toujours maintenant, mais, il y avait toujours des rumeurs qui donnait raison de se douter de sa, de son honnêteté, de son sincérité. Pendant sa période d'opposition, il habitait à Rhode-Saint-Genèse dans une villa qui appartenait à Mobutu. Un opposant qui habite dans une maison de Mobutu.

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<sup>1094</sup> Jean Nguza Karl-I-Bond.

<sup>1095</sup> Wivine n'Landu.

<sup>1096</sup> System of popular rumours 'on the streets'.

C: Oui, oui, c'est étrange. Et revenons aux années septante, quand il y avait une délégation zaïroise avec à la tête Karl-I-Bond qui était invité par les socialistes à l'époque de Simonet,<sup>1097</sup> de Leburton,<sup>1098</sup> de Jos Van Eynde, et cetera. C'est, cette époque-là, les socialistes étaient très en faveur de Mobutu, ou pas?

W: Si, si. Oui, oui, oui. Enfin, la direction hein. Leburton a été un an Premier Ministre.<sup>1099</sup> On disait, je, on disait que Mobutu lui avait donné une plantation quelque part au Zaïre. Le, c'est ce genre d'histoires se racontait aussi sur Simonet. En tout cas, le parti socialiste, qui était encore unitaire, c'était le parti socialiste belge, le PSB, qui avait tenu ce congrès avec une délégation comme vous dites, dirigé par Nguz Karl-I-Bond au parti, et on présentait cela comme un acte de décolonisation, le mot n'était pas utilisé, mais c'était quand-même l'esprit de hein, c'était le régime du Congo, qu'il fallait respecter et collaborer avec lui. Mais la vérité était déjà là, donc il faut pas se douter que certains dirigeants du PSB étaient corrompus, ça, Leburton certainement. Mais il y avait les jeunes socialistes qui a tenu, et ça c'est toujours un anecdote que je veux quand-même raconter, il y avait un discours prononcé contre la présence de cette délégation congolaise ou zaïroise, prononcé par un certain Luc Van den Bossche, que vous connaissez peut-être, qui est maintenant le plus grand capitaliste de la Belgique, mais qui, à l'époque-là, a fait la COLÈRE de Van Eynde, qui a insulté, comme seul lui, seulement lui pouvait le faire. Mais donc il y avait déjà, aussi au sein du parti socialiste quand-même une tendance qui n'était pas d'accord avec cette attitude. Mais c'est toujours difficile, même encore maintenant, parce que critiquer le régime Mobutu était interprété par le régime comme une attitude néocolonialiste, l'ancien colonisateur n'avait pas à se mêler dans les affaires d'un pays souverain qui était le Congo. Le régime actuel dit encore la même chose. C'est difficile parce que, d'une part, on peut dire ils ont raison, la Belgique ne gouverne plus le Congo, mais est-ce que ça veut dire qu'on doit supporter tous les violations des droits de l'homme, les fraudes, les vols, les meurtres et tout ça? Le problème se posait déjà à l'époque de Mobutu.

C: C'était peut-être aussi dans, au sein du parti socialiste une tendance flamande, parce qu'on peut aussi y citer monsieur Vanvelthoven<sup>1100</sup>

W: Et Van Miert<sup>1101</sup> aussi.

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<sup>1097</sup> Henri Simonet.

<sup>1098</sup> Edmond Leburton.

<sup>1099</sup> 1973-1974.

<sup>1100</sup> Louis Vanvelthoven

<sup>1101</sup> Karel Van Miert

C: Van Miert aussi.

W: Oui.

C: Il y avait peut-être des intérêts économiques avec les armes ou la vente des armes?

W: Oui, pour la Wallonie, oui. C'est vrai, après la scission du parti socialiste, les socialistes flamands étaient beaucoup plus critique à l'égard de Mobutu, c'est vrai. Van Miert qui était le Président, le premier Président des socialistes flamands, Vanvelthoven, en effet, qui était un spécialiste à la coopération en tant que parlementaire, c'était un très bon parlementaire, et le SP<sup>1102</sup> comment, comme il s'appelait à l'époque, organisait même des colloques dont j'en ai assisté quelques-uns, sur les questions africaines et avec comme homme sage Van Bilsen, qui venait quand-même du parti, allez, du côté chrétien, mais qui, en tant qu'ancien ami du Président, du premier Président congolais Kasa-Vubu, était respecté pour sa connaissance. C'était l'esprit, c'était très positif, on a fait des beaux documents, malheureusement ça n'a pas fait marcher les choses dans la bonne direction, mais ça c'est absolument vrai. Les socialistes flamands n'étaient pas du tout pro-Mobutu, tandis que la classe politique belge, qui était gouvernement tel que Eyskens,<sup>1103</sup> Tindemans certainement, Martens<sup>1104</sup> quand il était premier ministre, ils étaient wow. J'ai dit comment moi-même j'étais emballé par Mobutu quand j'étais jeune et quand Mobutu était jeune aussi, mais eux, à leur âge, faisaient la même chose. L'hospitalité des Congolais est grande, et quand on a, on avait encore des moyens financiers pour fêter tous les invités, de les donner un séjour absolument attrayant.

C: On avait aussi ce fameux ambassadeur Alfred Cahen?

W: Oui.

C: Qui

W: C'était un socialiste du côté pro-Mobutu

C: D'accord, oui, oui, ok.

W: Et il a été ambassadeur à Kin<sup>1105</sup> effectivement, et il a toujours joué la carte pro-Mobutu, absolument, oui.

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<sup>1102</sup> *Socialistische Partij*, Flemish socialist party.

<sup>1103</sup> Mark Eyskens.

<sup>1104</sup> Wilfried Martens.

<sup>1105</sup> Kinshasa.

C: Au même temps, il représentait la Belgique en tant qu'Ambassadeur.

W: Comment?

C: Il a représenté la Belgique.

W: Mais OUI, il représentait la Belgique toute entière

C: Oui, oui.

W: Mais, ça ne l'a pas dérangé, croyait que c'était son devoir de d'avoir des bonnes, des bons rapports avec le régime de Mobutu. Oui, oui.

C: D'accord. Peut-être encore une petite note, vous avez dans un de vos ouvrages, vous avez dit sur Simonet que, et je cite, "*Cadeau's onderhouden de vriendschap, dat weet iedereen*"<sup>1106</sup>, oui. Vous pouvez élaborer sur cette petite mention?

W: Ben, non, c'était comme je venais de dire, une impression qui régnait que, à un certain moment, Mobutu a réussi à corrompre, pour ainsi dire, Simonet aussi, parce que Simonet est commencé ses critiques sévères de Mobutu, et tout d'un coup avec les événements de Shaba un et deux il a commencé à tourner sa veste pour quelle raison? Pour quelle raison?

C: Peut-être le chef de cabinet à cette époque-là était monsieur Cahen, si je ne me trompe pas?

W: Oui, oui. Effectivement. C'était, Simonet et Cahen étaient, oui. Evidemment, c'était une phrase un peu suggestive parce que j'avais pas l'épreuve, mais tout le monde était convaincu que il, son changement d'attitude envers le régime était trop spectaculaire pour ne pas avoir et comment, on savait comment Mobutu agissait, cela.

C: Oui, d'accord, d'accord, oui.

W: Mais j'ai pas des données concrets est-ce qu'il a eu une plantation, est-ce qu'il a reçu de l'argent, je ne sais pas, ou je l'ai oublié, c'est possible aussi.

C: Ok, donc si vous voulez ajouter quelque chose encore sur ce sujet, relations belgo-zaïroises sous Mobutu, votre position dans l'opinion publique ou les relations avec vos collègues ou les opposants.

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<sup>1106</sup> "Gifts foster friendship, everybody knows that". Cited in Zinzen, *Mobutu: Van mirakel tot malaise*, 1995, 199.

W: Oui, peut-être une phrase sur le fond des rapports belgo-congolaises. On a soutenu Mobutu malgré les querelles qui étaient multiples, sur les mines, l'ancien Union Minière<sup>1107</sup> surtout, l'africanisation de l'Union Minière vers Gécamines. On dit nationalisation, non, non, non, non: Gécamines n'a jamais été, si, mais au début pas. C'était une africanisation sous Mobutu, pour donner l'occasion à Mobutu de mettre de ses gens dans la direction pour s'enrichir, c'était la raison de l'africanisation. Mais donc, il y avait des intérêts belges économiques assez grandes sous Mobutu, mais dans les années quatre-vingt, les Gécamines, of<sup>1108</sup> la Gécamines, fonctionnait bien, les revenus étaient grands, et la société générale des minerais qui existait encore je crois, avait toujours le monopole pour le transport et pas pour l'extraction, mais pour le transport, avec de les navires de la CMB, la compagnie maritime belge, vers Anvers, et puis aux usines belges de la Société Générale à Anvers comme à, allez à la, en Campine là, Hoboken comment ça, OLEN

C: Olen, ok.

W: À Olen. Donc, il y avait des intérêts belges économiques. Il y avait encore d'autres, il y avait Damseaux par exemple, qui avait eu une entreprise gigantesque de transport, de plantations, et cetera, et qui si je ne me trompe pas, était un cousin ou même un frère du politicien Damseaux<sup>1109</sup>. Donc, il y avait encore toute sorte de chose. Le gouvernement voulait maintenir ses intérêts parce que c'est bon pour la Belgique et donc ne pas trop brusquer Mobutu. Et on l'a brusqué en nonante-trois, il y avait eu la querelle entre Mobutu et le Roi Baudouin, le Roi qu'il l'avait toujours soutenu comme son frère pour ainsi dire, et on disait oui, mais c'est parce que, c'était à cause de la fin de la guerre froide. La chute du mur de Berlin, on n'avait plus besoin de *bastard* comme on disaient les Américains, mais *our bastard*. On n'avait plus besoin de Mobutu. Partiellement c'est peut-être vrai mais la vraie raison à ce moment même il y avait plus de grands intérêts économiques belges. C'était plus nécessaire de le soigner. Et comme lui-même il était affaibli parce que son régime ne fonctionnait plus bien, la population était pauvre, il y avait la terreur et la répression, mais il se n'était plus le chef qui avait le Congo en MAIN en nonante-trois. Il y avait une opposition grande naissante sous la direction de son ancien compagnon Tshisekedi<sup>1110</sup>, parce qu'il faut pas oublier que l'État-parti était fondé par

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<sup>1107</sup> Nowadays Umicore.

<sup>1108</sup> 'Or' in Dutch.

<sup>1109</sup> André Damseaux.

<sup>1110</sup> Étienne Tshisekedi.

Mobutu et Tshisekedi, ça, on oublie, mais enfin. Donc, ça, c'était je crois, la raison pour laquelle on faisait tout un, un cinéma comme on dit à Bruxelles, de, du massacre de Lubumbashi.

C: Oui.

W: Si massacre il y a eu, on est toujours pas certain qu'il y a eu un massacre. Il y a eu un mort, ça c'est sûr, mais pas des dizaines. Mais c'était, Mobutu avait tué des dizaines d'étudiants à l'université de Lubumbashi, donc il fallait le punir. Et la politique belge envers le Congo jusqu'à ce jour était, on prônait l'aide humanitaire, c'était pour, pas pour soutenir le régime mais pour la population et cetera, De Croo<sup>1111</sup> le dit encore à ce jour-là. Mais était-ce vrai? C'est difficile à dire, parce que il y a eu une coopération, oui, jusqu'il y a quelques années assez grande, mais toujours même, De Croo l'a diminué encore plus, c'est difficile à dire. Même maintenant, j'ai l'impression que la diplomatie belge est divisée, était divisée en tout cas, Cahen était comme chez les journalistes, c'était le côté pro-Mobutiste, mais il y avait un autre côté aussi, des diplomates surtout, qui suivaient de près ce qui se passait au Congo et qui ne voulaient plus être coupable de méfaits prôné par, donc, mais, c'est toujours ce craint. Je ne sais, aujourd'hui, je ne sais pas ce que veut notre actuel ministre des affaires étrangères. Qu'est-ce qu'il veut VRAIMENT au Congo? Est-ce qu'il veut que les intérêts belges reviennent, est-ce que c'est ça son but? Est-ce que Kabila est un obstacle? Je ne sais pas. Quel a été l'attitude de Louis Michel dans l'après-Mobutisme envers Kabila père et Kabila fils ensuite? Il le défend toujours. Quel est son influence dans le parti de Reynders<sup>1112</sup>? Ce ne sont pas des amis en tout cas. Mais ça, c'est belge hein. Il faut toujours tenir compte des rivalités, des rapports personnels derrière les coulisses dont l'opinion publique n'est pas au courant. Et c'était certainement le cas dans le temps de Mobutu.

C: D'accord. Pour paraphraser Gauthier de Villers: vous pensez que le Congo, le Zaïre, était une question des Belges, ou un question de Belges individuels? Il y a les dirigeants économiques et politiques, donc ça veut dire une question de Belges spécifiques ou une question des Belges: est-ce que les Belges ont certainement raison de s'intéresser pour l'Afrique centrale et pour, et que la Belgique doit avoir des liens étroits avec le Congo, malgré les grands échecs et les méfaits de, éventuels, des régimes?

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<sup>1111</sup> Alexander De Croo.

<sup>1112</sup> Didier Reynders.

W: C'est certainement une question de Belges, mais pas une seule sorte de Belges, ça je veux [nuancer]. Il a absolument raison, quant à la politique Belge envers le Congo, c'est certainement le cas.

C: Oui.

W: Parce que, pour la plus grande partie de la classe politique, déjà à cette époque-là, le Congo, c'était quoi? Les socialistes disaient à un certain moment, ils étaient au gouvernement avec monsieur Derycke<sup>1113</sup> au Ministère de Coopération, le Congo, c'est un pays étranger comme tous les autres. Ils voulaient, ils allaient jusque-là avec le Congo. Mais il y avait des autres aussi, qui disaient non. Mais il y a, malgré tout, il y a une partie de la population, de la population en Belgique qui est fort intéressé au Congo, aussi, parce que beaucoup de familles belges ont eu, ont eu quelqu'un au Congo. Mes parents, diraient, s'ils étaient toujours vivants, notre fils était au Congo. Donc on est intéressé au Congo. Les missionnaires, mais aussi les anciens coloniaux. Je donne assez, relativement beaucoup de conférences sur le Congo, toujours je rencontre des gens oui, moi j'étais au Congo, ou mes parents étaient au Congo, ou mon oncle, il y a beaucoup de Belges qui s'intéressent au Congo, pas pour intérêt à eux-mêmes, mais parce qu'ils ont appris à aimer le Congo et les Congolais, ils ne sont, mêmes les enfants les anciens coloniaux n'ont plus une attitude, ceux qui ont encore une attitude coloniale c'est encore une autre histoire, ils existent aussi, mais il y a encore des autres qui ont vraiment un peu après la colonisation, on a découvert les vrais Congolais. Ceux qu'ils n'ont pas connu quand ils étaient là mais qu'ils connaissent maintenant et qui ont appris à aimer aussi, c'est peut-être un mot assez exagéré, mais, mais non, ils sont, ceux aussi existent mais ils n'ont aucune influence sur la politique. C'est dispersé, il y a le fameux quatrième, comment ça s'appelle, quatrième, Sabine de Béthune a inventé ce terme-là, pour définir les petits projets qui sont soutenus par les petites organisations ou par des individus mêmes, par des familles qui ont, qui soutiennent. Et beaucoup de Congolais qui sont ici sont mêlés dans ce petit projet. On parle maintenant toujours de la diaspora quand il s'agit du musée de Tervuren, mais il y a tant d'autres Congolais que je n'entends pas mais qui passent par cette rue ici, qui sonnent et qui disent moi, moi, moi, je soutiens tel ou tel projet est-ce que vous pouvez pas nous aider et il y a beaucoup de Belges qui les aident effectivement. Donc, ça aussi, ça existe, mais on en parle pas, et c'est dommage. Aussi bien pour les Congolais pour que pour les Belges.

C: Ok. Voilà, encore une fois merci.

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<sup>1113</sup> Erik Derycke.

W: Ok, avec plaisir.

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