Patrice Lumumba’s Congo:
Sovereignty Denied by American Interests

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Abstract:

After the Berlin Conference of 1884-5 recognized King Leopold of Belgium’s Congo Free State, he would go on to exploit the Congolese people with a violent and oppressive reign. However, the plight of the Congolese people began even earlier with the exploration of their lands by explorer Sir Henry Morton Stanley, who brought with him racist ideals he picked up during his time in Louisiana, United States. Belgium annexed King Leopold’s Congo Free State in 1908 and it subsequently became the Belgian Congo, though the Congolese people remained oppressed. Eventually the colonial structures would succumb to internal and external pressures. With growing discontent from indigenous populations and increasing pressure from the international community, European nations began the decolonization of Africa. The Congolese pro-American regime that eventually replaced Belgium’s rule still did not mark change for the suffering Congolese. This thesis will examine the Congolese independence movement and its place in the Cold War and US foreign policy.

While the first nations to break the chains of colonial rule did so in the early 1950s, nationalistic sentiment was growing in the Congo. In the mid-50s Joseph Kasavubu represented a radical ethnic nationalism that demanded independence numerous times. Meanwhile Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba was working his way up the Belgian Colonial system, adopting many pro-democratic values along the way. After becoming more active in the Pan-Africanism movement and becoming associated with revolutionary leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba radicalized and in turn garnered tremendous support – both inside and outside of the Congo. Today, both
Western and Communist countries revere Lumumba as a revolutionary leader who changed the World.

Unfortunately, Lumumba's rise to prominence came at the wrong time in American history. The democratic superpower had emerged out of WWII a moral policeman of the World and was facing a new foe: The Communist Soviet Union. The US led foreign interventions in "at risk" areas as the third world became a battleground for the Cold War. Patrice Lumumba is evidence though that not every place America intervened in was in dire need of "help." He provided the Congolese people with a path to sovereignty following Belgian rule. Sovereignty is the one thing the Congolese never experienced during the Cold War, even after their nation's "independence" in 1960. The United States government perceived decolonization as a power vacuum that created an imperative to protect Africa from Communism. Despite Lumumba's many pro-American sentiments, the West was able to cast him as a Communist and justify supporting his overthrow in favor of the staunchly anti-Communist general Mobutu. American economic interests also benefitted greatly from this "neo-colonial" relation that held up Mobutu's regime until after the fall of the Berlin wall.
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Introduction:

Today, the Democratic Republic of Congo has one of the fastest growing emerging markets in the world. The nation, whose current constitution came into place in 2006, has experienced an exceptional surge of growth since 2001 when Joseph Kabila took office and began the transition to democracy. The new environment has fostered increases in urbanization and foreign direct investments. With a vast supply of natural resources and a population of approximately 70 million people, the outlook for the economy and its people has never looked better. However, despite the promising future there are vestiges that remain from the country's past. The nation is still scarred from years of oppression, first by King Leopold and the Belgians, then by oppressive Congolese dictator Joseph Mobutu. In recent years the United States and United Nations have been helpful in establishing a democracy and stabilizing the region after years of kleptocracy and civil war, although the bulk of recovery attributed to the perseverance and ingenuity of the Congolese. Finally, for the first time since the before the Berlin Conference, and perhaps even earlier before the Portuguese slave trade in nearby Angola, the Congolese people are sovereign with a bright outlook. However, the approach taken by Western bodies today contrasts with the approach taken during the time of Congo's independence when the Congolese needed it most. During the decolonization of Africa, the United States supported an independent Congo, but they did not support a sovereign one. Meanwhile the UN, an international body in charge of global justice, was deeply intertwined with the capitalist superpower. While the media and much of the West

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depicted the oppressed black people of the Congo crisis (1960-1965) as “savages” and “cannibals” struggling to hold up a society, the United States approached the region almost entirely with economic interests and foreign defense strategy in mind.

Leading up to Congolese independence on June 30th, 1960, United States' officials and CIA members viewed the African people as inferior. The third world was of particular interest at this point in US history because it was at the forefront of the fight against Communism. The superiority complex of Americans allowed further justification of foreign involvement. With Communists already encroaching on the “third world” lands in the wake of independence,3 and Patrice Lumumba’s ideology containing many collectivist elements, it is no wonder that the United States prioritized their motives over Lumumba’s at such a critical time in global history. In the years prior to Congo’s independence came the Red Scare of the ‘50s in the United States, and the decolonization of Africa was reaching full steam. With both Cold War powers vying over control of Africa, the CIA had to ensure the Congo would sway towards the US – even if it meant indirectly killing Patrice Lumumba and supporting Mobutu’s regime. Lumumba’s influence was not hard for the US to deteriorate because of the nation’s divisions and lack of development. The nation was so desolate upon independence that newly elected Prime Minister Lumumba chose Thomas Kanza as ambassador to the UN, who was shockingly the country’s first graduate of a university.4 In order to justify squashing Lumumba’s independence movement in the eyes of the West the United States would have to paint him as a communist incapable of leading “savages.” Not only did the US support

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3Devlin, Larry. *Chief of Station, Congo: Fighting the Cold War in a Hot Zone.*
Mobutu’s regime, in which injustices took place on a mass scale, but President Kennedy even praised him for fighting Communism. The irony is that Patrice Lumumba was not the Communist the US made him out to be. In fact, many of his words express pro-democracy elements as well as clearly showing support for the United Nations.

If the United States and United Nations had chosen a different course of actions during the Congolese independence movement of the late 1950s/early 1960s, perhaps the nation’s fast track to success it’s on today would have started many years ago. The second section of this paper views the significance of Patrice Lumumba’s Congolese independence movement through the eyes of the US and CIA by examining Cold War and US Foreign policy works by Odd Arne Westad, Thomas Borstelmann, and David Gibbs. In the following section, events and the general environment in the Congo will be examined from the perspective of CIA member Larry Devlin. His opinion of the Congo is not unique as the racist views were shared by Americans across the Atlantic. Even a 1960 newspaper clipping from liberal haven Bryn Mawr College depicted the Congolese as “barbarians.” The final section will argue that Patrice Lumumba’s independence movement did not warrant such activity by the US and CIA in the Congo. By identifying pro-western values in his speeches and letters the case can be made that he was not only pro-democratic, but anti-Communist.

The United States would go on to support Mobutu for years following the first Congo Crisis despite humanitarian violations clearly taking place under his watch. It was not until the end of the Cold War and fall of the Berlin Wall that the US would finally condemn Mobutu’s regime, which would lead to internal chaos and its eventual collapse.

Not only did Belgium prevent Congolese progress for the first half of the century, but the United States would help put in place and support a dictator that hindered progress for the latter half of the century. It is not until recently that the outlook for the Congolese people has looked promising.⁶

The bright future ahead of Congolese people today could not have been imagined under the rule of Joseph-Desire Mobutu, whose reign officially ended on May 16, 1997.⁷ Despite leading a highly unpopular kleptocracy, he was able to maintain power for over 30 years with United States support. The Congo Civil War (1960-1965), when Mobutu ultimately seized control, is viewed as a microcosm of the Cold War. While both Mobutu and Lumumba initially shared the Congolese dream of unity and independence, international forces polarized them and butted them against one another rather than having them work in unison. The United Nations, whose mission is to maintain peace and protect oppressed people’s self-determination was of no help either. Biased political involvement in this manner was ironic for an institution of justice – Rather than keeping the peace and maintaining neutrality, the UN sided with the United States that supported Mobutu who would become one of Africa’s cruelest dictators. The promising future for Congolese people today has not been experienced since Patrice Lumumba’s energetic and revolutionary movement of the late 1950s.

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Section I:  
Pan-Africanism’s Fight Against Racist Structures:  
A Hazard to the United States’ Foreign Relations and its Domestic Sphere

With the exception of Ethiopia and Liberia, all of Africa had come under colonial rule by 1900. Not only Sub-Saharan Africa, but all regions of Africa consist of a myriad of languages and ethnic groups. The region of the Congo Basin has even been referred to as a “collection of Bantustans.”8 After decolonization, many of the cultural and bloodline nationalisms seen in Europe and other places of the world would be impossible without disassembling the boundaries drawn in the Berlin Conference. The atrocities committed against the Congolese by the Belgians have been covered in notable works such as Adam Hochschild’s King Leopold’s Ghost. According to him the Congo Basin experienced a mass genocide under King Leopold. Population decreased over 11.5 million between 1891 and 1911.9 Discourse both during the period of Belgian rule and after the period classifies all suffering, black groups as “Congolese.” The word “Congo” originally comes from the once powerful African Kongo Empire. Ironically, however, the empire was primarily located in modern day Angola and not even in the Belgian Congo. Nonetheless, there were countless other groups of peoples in the Congo Free State. Therefore the term “Congolese” is not an authentic term for many of the people in the region, but merely a label given to the people by the Belgians. The arbitrary naming and discourse on the period had created a “nationalist group” from the perception of the outside world. This case was not unique to the Congo as was the case with many other African nations too.

8 "History of Pan-Africanist Intellectuals." Encyclopedia Britannica.  
Because of the nature of national boundaries and with it the forceful association of different ethnic groups, collectivist ideologies were the only way to hold together many of the newly formed nations apart from strict order. The Pan-African movement’s leaders including Patrice Lumumba used it as a unifying source for nations that were previously only held together under colonial rule. The threat to the United States was that these nationalist movements saw no boundaries. A utopian Africa for many of these leaders was a united one. The ideological alignment of nations in many ways resembled Communism. While Communism was a threat to the West in its fight to “protect” third world, populations all over the world, it threatened the United States internally as well. Pan-Africanism was no different. Because history led to the dispersal of the African diaspora across the Atlantic, the Pan-African movement resonated with blacks everywhere and not just African nationalist movements. It especially resonated with many civil rights leaders in the US. There was a historic link between US foreign policy and domestic racial views, a factor that played an integral role in the Congo Crisis. Racial views were not the only domestic factor influencing foreign policy as the United States economy played a massive role as well.10

While some African revolutionists turned to the West for ideological/political guidance as well as aid, some African leaders turned to Communist regimes. Meanwhile there was an often over-looked third movement called the Pan-African movement, which gained tremendous momentum throughout the first half of the 20th Century. Although Pan-Africanists such as Kwame Nkrumah and Patrice Lumumba prided the movement’s origins on being authentically African, many Pan-Africanist leaders had overlapping

views with those of Communists. Although views varied greatly within Pan-Africanism, a strong association between the Pan-Africanists and Communists developed through the eyes of the West. Congo leader and intellectual contributor to the Pan-African movement Patrice Lumumba was no exception to the stereotype as he was cast a communist by the West. The movement garnered US attention because it had influenced domestic grassroots movements as well. Marcus Garvey, a prominent Pan-African intellectual influenced the Black Power and Black rights movements in the United States as well. In the late 1950s leading up to Congolese independence, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. were leading highly publicized civil rights movement that profoundly impacted how African leaders regarded the United States government. Although Patrice Lumumba was originally a supporter of the US, which at the time was still imposing Jim Crow laws in some states, he clearly expressed sympathy for African-Americans. Because Africans had been exploited for so long, their diaspora dispersed across the Atlantic Ocean. Many blacks in the Americas are unable to trace their African roots - leaving the Pan-African message of a shared past resonating in the minds of blacks all over the world. By the 1960s some of the more radical Black Nationalist groups such as the Black Panthers even posed a threat to American civil order in many cities. While it can be debated that police reactions to riots forced black groups to radicalize, the tensions that ensued are undeniable.

The Pan Africanist movement resonated differently to the Congolese because of their uniquely African history. Because of the Congo’s inland location it took longer for Europe to claim the lands than it did to claim coastal Africa. By the time of Belgian
colonization, slavery was already illegal in the United States and most of Europe. Although that does not mean the Congolese would not be subject to atrocities to a similar degree.

When explorer/novelist Joseph Conrad wrote of an expedition down the mighty Congo River, he literally named the novel *Heart of Darkness*. King Leopold immediately took an interest in the region and sought to bring it under his control. To put the absurdity of this land grab in perspective, the Congo was approximately 80 times the size of Belgium at the time.\(^\text{12}\) King Leopold’s infamous legacy on the land included forcing labor for the capitalization of Rubber and precious minerals including copper and uranium. In 1908 King Leopold, under international pressure, turned the country over to Belgium. The Belgian Congo was then established colonial networks and infrastructures developed across the region. One of the unique features of the Belgian Congo that differed from other African colonies was its European population. Congo had far less “Afrikaners” than its neighboring nations due to Belgium utilizing the colony as a workspace; Europeans generally arrived in the Congo for business and then departed after completion.\(^\text{13}\) This population dynamic played a crucial role in the Congo’s independence movement. In neighboring South Africa, which had a high number of “Afrikaners,” politics were dominated by the Dutch-German Europeans who had settled in Africa long before the Belgian Congo existed. “Indigenous” Europeans in Africa were often the most racist whites in all of Africa so the fact that there were a smaller proportion of them in Belgium in theory would make post-colonial politics more authentically Congolese.

Without the presence of large “native” white populations to influence politics, black

\(^{12}\) Nzongola-Ntalaja, Georges. *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History*

\(^{13}\) Devlin, Larry. *Chief of Station, Congo: Fighting the Cold War in a Hot Zone*
sovereignty was at the forefront of the independence movement. For the first time since Stanley sailed down the Congo River the sovereignty of the Congolese people looked promising.

The first wave of independence involved northern African states with Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, and Morocco - all gaining independence between the years 1951 and 1956. The neighboring states were heavily influenced by nationalistic sentiments fostered by the early stages of decolonization. Early stages of nationalism were brewing to the South of the newly liberated states. Meanwhile the Pan-African movement was gaining momentum in the United States as well as the Congo. Finally in 1959 the Congolese demanded independence. By the late '50s there were already multiple political parties in the Belgian Congo, most notably the Parti Solidaire Africain, ABAKO, and le Mouvement National Congolaise (MNC). The United States supported the Congolese independence movement, as Americans were strong supporters of self-determination throughout the world. Decolonization provided American companies the ability to penetrate markets once monopolized by European nations. Among the popular and influential voices of Congolese nationalism was that of Patrice Lumumba, who was also a prominent member of Le Mouvement National Congolaise.

When the newly independent Republic of Congo held its first elections, Patrice Lumumba was elected Prime Minister. Lumumba’s dream of unity and independence was finally achieved. Although his dream of sovereignty had not yet been secured. While the dream of independence was universal across the nation, visions of a free Congo differed

across ethnic groups and parties. Almost immediately after Lumumba’s election, relations amongst political parties began to deteriorate. Foreign nations were supporting different factions and political powers in the region. In July 1960, not long after Lumumba’s election, Katanga and Kasai would succeed from his Republic of Congo propelling the nation into civil unrest. Even though the Congo was already falling apart, Patrice Lumumba was one of the only people seen as capable of holding it together – only holding the Congo together under the collectivist ideologies of Lumumba was not desirable to the US. The other option of holding it together was strict rule - something that was not part of the United States mission in the region, but became a necessity with growing unrest and the increasing threat of the USSR. Only 12 weeks after being elected, Patrice Lumumba was removed from power in a coup supported by the CIA and was subsequently placed on house arrest. Ironically the soldiers that kept him captive in his own home were UN soldiers. He managed to escape, but within a matter of weeks was recaptured and later on executed. Events of the death remain blurry and differ slightly from source to source, but the general consensus is that the US and CIA “let” rebels kill Lumumba.

Despite the United States supporting self-determination, they did not come to the aid of the first democratically elected president in Congolese history. In an article from British Newspaper The Guardian, that honored the 50th anniversary of Lumumba’s death, Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja alludes to the Cold War as the reason for the United States’ actions. The natural resources found in the Congo are key for nuclear warfare – a defining feature of the Cold War. Also the author of another book on Congolese history, Ntalaja’s Guardian article is titled Patrice Lumumba: the most important assassination of
The death marked a major defeat for the Pan-African movement, while it represented a win for the west in a battle that it did not need to fight.

The United Nations, which was heavily influenced by the West—especially the United States, was enlisted in the battle against Lumumba’s Congo and in favor of the United States’ and Mobutu’s Congo. There were members of the international justice organization whose writings provide key insight into its role in the Congo Crisis. While one primary source, by UN secretary general U Thant, details an agenda that is laid out for the nation and not a support system for self-determination. Outcries over the course of action taken by the UN have been vocalized. In particular, African studies pioneer John Henrik Clarke was very vocal about his opinion. In the wake of Lumumba’s death, he released a statement titled: *the Life of Patrice Lumumba*.

“The life of Patrice Lumumba proved that he was a product of the best and worst of Belgian colonial rule. In more favorable circumstances, he might have become one of the most astute national leaders of the twentieth century. He was cut down long before he had time to develop into the more stable leader that he was obviously capable of being. When the Congo emerged clearly in the light of modern history he was its bright star” - John Henrik Clarke

Later in Clarke’s statement, he claims that Patrice Lumumba was as anti-Western as he was anti-Communist, which supports the portrayal of the Congo Crisis as a microcosm of the Cold War to be an unnecessary approach to the conflict. However by

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15 Nzongola-Ntalaja, Georges. *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People’s History*  
portraying the situation as a Communist one, the West was able to justify supporting Mobutu in the eyes of many Americans. Although a harsh dictator, he was also staunchly anti-communist. Lumumba proclaimed all he wanted was a united and sovereign Congolese people, but that his aspiration was not part of the “Western agenda.” Furthermore, Lumumba pointed out before his death that the UN should have been helping his vision along with groups regardless of ethnicity or ideology. The UN, he claimed, had its high officials compromised by the likes of Western nations.\textsuperscript{19} While Lumumba was executed on Jan 17, 1961, his grim concerns of the independence movement would hold true and ultimately affect the nation for years beyond independence. The outside forces that he rightfully feared established and supported a dictatorship that would cripple his nation for the following forty years. International forces fostered an environment that would make the next forty years as unjust for the Congolese as the previous eighty starting with King Léopold’s Congo Free State (1885-1908).

After disposing of his predecessor, Joseph Mobutu picked up the fight against unrest where Lumumba left off – only this time with a more oppressive hand. The unrest only picked up with the removal of Patrice Lumumba from office. At the time of Lumumba’s death, the nation had been divided into four main factions, each with a different foreign nation supporting them. By 1961 the nation the nation had fractured into rival groups all with conflicting ideologies. The USSR, Belgium, and the United States all had connections to factions seeking to capitalize on the induced power vacuum in the

economic and strategically important region. Some literature provides an insight to the conditions at this point in Congolese history. Pieces written shortly after such as *Mobutu and the Congolese*, provide a view on the situation soon after Mobutu “stabilized” the nation in 1965. The book is published by the Royal institute of International Affairs in 1968, only three years after Mobutu seized total power. Although it is important to note as soon as Lumumba’s coup, and even before starting when Lumumba appointed him head of the Armee National Congolaise, Mobutu held significant power in the country. The book depicts his coup as an American backed action. The literary piece even asserts that the kleptocracy forming in the late 1960s Congo was essentially a Pro-American Dictatorship. In addition the book details the general public’s relation to the whole situation\(^{20}\) - i.e. How education and the economy changed during the conflict. The timing of the writing is of particular interest because the Congo Crisis had only recently ended, but the atrocities that would ensue under Mobutu were only in their early stages. However, to the United States, Mobutu’s Congo provided an alternative to the collectivist Congo Lumumba proposed. US involvement only became more entrenched over time with the development of Cold War tensions. The USSR and America were vying for influence over the strategic and resource rich Africa. Decolonization provided a power vacuum that both international powers entered with a bang. This vacuum is not natural as the Congo had favorite leader to unite and progress the country – it is a colonial “cliché” used during the Cold War to justify actions.

Section II: The Congo’s Significance in the Cold War: A United States’ Foreign Policy Imperative

As soon as Belgian King Badouin I started planning for Congolese independence in January 1960, archived CIA activity is available detailing prolific involvement in the Congo. A collection of documents found in the National Security Archives serve as a memo to encourage further US involvement. The CIA document is 10 pages of intelligence on Soviet-Congolese relations in the Congo basin. A CIA opinion can be formed out of it and an argument for US involvement is created. The memo is addressed to the director of Central Intelligence. It details Soviet actions in the Congo in addition to claiming the Communist superpower was providing economic support. Furthermore, it claims the Soviet Union had already carried out, "6 operations in the Congo," though the extent of those operations is vague in the documents. The letter is explicitly urging CIA action in the Congo. Interestingly it is dated September 9th, 1960 - less than a week before Lumumba’s overthrow. The note also accused the Czechs of supplying Lumumba with weapons. Meanwhile East Germany had been supplying vehicles and medical teams to rebel groups. The Congo was clearly a Cold War battleground by the time of independence. Sadly though, it appears Congolese sovereignty was not the primary concern for the CIA and that the Soviets were instead.

The Global Cold War, by Odd Arne Westad, explores the United States approach to intervention during the Cold War. In particular he examines the Cold War in the wake of the colonialism experienced by certain parts of the world. While the Congo was

decolonized in 1960, the book focuses primarily on the 1970s and 1980s.\textsuperscript{22} Nonetheless it makes countless references to the decades prior. After decolonization, the “new” African nations were impoverished and lacked the stability to develop independently. The United States felt it had the responsibility of helping the rest of the world develop (democratically). This stance resulted from the emergence of the US as a moral superpower following WWII and increasing Cold War tensions. Meanwhile the Soviet Union was the other dominant force and provided an alternative source of support if an African nation opted not to welcome US support. Another dynamic of diplomatic relations that Westad makes clear are not always in agreement is that of the United States and Europe. European nations wanted to hold onto their prized colonies while Americans sought to bust the monopolies and exploit the markets. Portraying colonization as inhumane allowed the US to enter the power vacuum after decolonization and install its own neo-colonial system. Westad claims the United States supported decolonization not necessarily for philanthropic reasons, but to gain access to new markets and resources.

The Congo is mentioned few times yet there are important pages dedicated to the nation in the subchapter of African Decolonization in the chapter of \textit{Creating the Third World: the United States Confronts Revolution}. Westad details the importance of the Congo as a resource rich region where only one person had the ability to unite the country in the wake of independence – Patrice Lumumba. Furthermore, Westad claims that after Lumumba visited Ghana to give a speech, he was from then on influenced by Kwame Nkrumah. Naturally, associations with Communism would lean US officials in favor of the Anti-collectivist Mobutu. Not only because Mobutu supported the United

States, but also because it meant maintaining economic relations with the Southeastern provinces of Congo: Kasai and Katanga. In the few references to the Congo Lumumba is the “Collectivist” and Mobutu is the “anti-communist.” This division of the two leaders based on ideologies was manufactured by the international sphere. While both may be true, it affirms the Congo was portrayed as a battleground for Cold War and its figures were rarely depicted in a different light.

Although there are no sections entirely dedicated to the Congo, Westad’s view of American interventionism can be applied to many different cases including the Congo. Perhaps the most recurring themes are anti-collectivism and defense strategy. In both regards, the Congo is of great concern. According to Westad, both Lyndon B. Johnson and John F. Kennedy “firmly believed that international development was an integral part of an American national security strategy.”23 Westad then goes on to highlight foreign investments and the Peace Corps as forms of “intervention” to establish enlightened governments centered on democracy rather than militaristic power. Most of Westad’s argument picks up around the mid 60s and later. By the latter half of the decade, Patrice Lumumba had been overthrown, executed, and Mobutu had seized total power. One reference to the Congo appears on page 36 when the author is examining the Kennedy-Johnson-Kissinger approach to foreign intervention.24 Fortunately when it came to the Congo, the US already had an advantage over other world powers; America’s status as a modern military superpower appealed to many commanders including Mobutu – “After Kennedy told general Joseph Desire Mobutu, the de facto ruler of the Congo, that…”


was nobody in the world that had done more than the general to maintain freedom against the communists,’ Mobutu’s reward at his own request was six weeks of parachute training at Fort Bennett.” The quote supports how successful the United States was at portraying Lumumba and his nationalist movement as a communist one. The section of Westad’s book this quote is from also shines light on the administration’s attitude towards third world intervention. On the other hand, Mobutu’s reward helps to explain how Lumumba’s cabinet deteriorated so fast. Mobutu, a former colonel and member of Lumumba’s cabinet, was clearly enamored by the United States Army. Meanwhile Lumumba disliked most things that were not African. In other words: the American political agenda coupled with Mobutu’s deep fascination for American military modernization was no match for Lumumba’s socialist Pan-Africanism.

Regarding the Congo within the context of US defense, Westad has sections of his book dedicated to the regions surrounding the Congo. There is South Africa, dominated by a racist regime after 1948, which was forced to turn to the Soviet Union by the mid 1970s to advance their economic and social goals. Westad claims that South Africa was at the center of Cold War politics for much of the 1970s and 1980s. Furthermore, there were additional communist pop ups to the East and West of the Congo. In a letter From President Kennedy to Nikita Khrushchev regarding Fidel Castro, the US foreign policy’s focus as a defensive measure against communism was clear at the time. The letter, written in April 1961, does not explicitly mention the Congo, but nonetheless reaffirms Westad’s opinion on US foreign policy during the Cold War. The Congo basin held

25 Westad. The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our times
strategic value not just for its resources, but because communism was threatening the surrounding areas. This also explains why the United States continued to support Mobutu despite his harsh reign – Africa was a battleground of the Cold War and the Congo was at the center of it. In order to increase presence in the region, the US military sent an aircraft carrier to the Congo in September 1961. The decision stands out because the vast majority of the Congo is inland. Furthermore the Kasai and Katanga provinces, the main areas of unrest, were in the Southeast part of the country – far away from any ocean or Congo River. The significance of sending an aircraft carrier is for establishing a larger presence in the region more so than logistical purposes. The whole Southern half of Africa would become a Cold War battle zone by the late 1960s and this is perhaps an early measure taken by the US that would lead to escalations later on. The approach and military opinion on the region would only continue as other memos from the National Security Archive detail requests of military assistance to fight the Katanga rebels. By late 1961, the UN was under great pressure to intervene in the situation.

Another important opinion of Westad pertinent to the Congo Crisis is a hint as to why he thinks Lumumba’s nationalists AKA communists did not prevail. On page 142 he proclaims “the communist rebels” ultimately lost because the Soviet Union was not as successful in taking advantage of and supplying a movement as it was elsewhere in the world. Meanwhile through the NSA it is known that not only did Soviets undertake “6 operations” by September 9th, 1960, but further claims would be made of Soviet

intervention in the Congo. Ultimately the US would play a role in defeating the rebels in Katanga. According to Westad the brutality of the CIA and United States backed mercenaries that fought the rebels was exceptional. Even the Europeans who established the harsh colonial rule in Africa thought the American actions were harsh.

According to Westad, the Anglo-White view of Africans was an influencing factor on foreign policy as well. In talking about the spread of American missionaries during the ‘50s and ‘60s Westad does not explicitly name any countries besides China and Japan, though he refers to the regions of Africa, Latin America, and South East Asia. It is my assumption that he has grouped the Congolese under the region of Africa. He then goes on to exclaim that many Americans felt that the “heathens” of these regions were ungrateful for the work of US missionaries. Ever since the “discovery” of the Kongo people in the 16th century in what was KongoAngola, Western views on the Congo’s Christianity have been unfounded. In fact the Kongo Empire, one of the predecessors to modern day Congo, adopted Christianity before the United States existed.30 The superiority complex whites had over blacks in the early colonial years stayed true deep into the post-slavery, colonial 20th century. While the social complex dominated the treatment of indigenous populations by Europeans for centuries, it also dominated American domestic politics at the time of decolonization. The government’s slow response to domestic movements in the United States led by Malcolm X and MLK made Pan-African leaders think less of the US government. International attention brought to these movements shined light on a part of the United States apart from it being a philanthropic supporter of independence world-wide. The racial tensions in the United

States led many Pan-Africanists to aspire to a uniquely African utopia rather than seeking to achieve utopia under the American democratic system. Leaders influential on the American civil rights movements such as Marcus Garvey even dreamed of an authentic African country for blacks.31

Section III:
American Perspectives During the Congo Crisis and the Cold War

Already, this thesis has covered two major influences on the Congolese independence movement: African nationalist movements and US foreign interests. While both contributed to the Congo’s “independence” each had different views of a post-independence Congo and US foreign policy won the battle. However it is important to note that the United States was not acting alone as the sentiments expressed by leaders such as Kennedy and Johnson were not unique to American officials. At all levels, from literary pieces, to local newspapers, to international magazines, the American portrayal of the Congo Crisis (1960-1965) reflects an ignorant and racist Western society. Thomas Borstelmann, author of renowned book The Cold War and the Color Line, writes about the role racist attitudes play in both the Cold War and American foreign policy.32 Not only is the Congo of particular interest because of the Cold War, but American racist ties to both foreign policy and specifically the Congo date back long before independence.

Borstelmann starts off his book by drawing on a recurring theme in United States history: the relationship between domestic racial tensions and foreign policy. Referring to a 1500s American settlement that formed relations with escaped Spanish slaves

(Cimarones), he makes the point that the three-way relationship between Americans, Europeans, and blacks started long before the Cold War. From then on, there is essentially a history of United States foreign policy in regards to how natives in each land were approached. Often times, the approach was a reflection of domestic attitudes. In addition, he highlights how this theme was not uniquely American and that it essentially dominated the world. However unlike the rest of the World the United States was founded on certain civil rights and freedoms for “all men.” The clash of domestic issues and foreign policy is a recurrent one in US history, though it is not until World War II that the clash reached the international spotlight. The Civil Rights’ movements going on in the United States lost American legitimacy in the eyes of many African revolutionary leaders in the 1950s. How could a nation who didn’t support its own blacks fight for the sovereignty of another group of blacks? After winning World War II, the United States emerged as a world superpower and global attention was focused on it. American media also portrayed Africa in a particular way during this time – one of white supremacy as displayed by stories such a Tarzan. Furthermore, Borstelmann highlights the fact that Americans took it upon themselves to be the moral leaders of the world. In fact, he claims that one of the reasons America maintained control of the Philippines for as long as it did despite it not being economically viable was simply because it was a “moral burden.” The founding of the United Nations further complicated American foreign policy as well as global diplomacy. Up until this point, the United States had been indirectly attempting to spread its Jim Crow Laws, however with the defeat of the Nazis dashed the hopes of a supreme white race. Borstelmann asserts “patriotism no longer required
segregationism." Though it took over a decade after the United Nations was formed for the American Civil Rights Act to pass, the movement towards the bill was expedited by the collapse of the Nazi/white supremacy regime. Despite the philanthropic motives of the US and the UN to the international community, domestic racial tensions played a critical role during the Cold War. However it must be noted that the issue of race in the Cold War is not just an American problem, but a global one.

According to Borstelmann, the first major conflict of East versus West that foreshadowed the color conflicts of the Cold War occurred when Japan defeated Russia in 1904. Not only did this victory mark the first time a non-white nation had entered the ranks of elite industrial nations, but it began a new direction in the discourse of white supremacy. Distinctions began to be made between Anglos, Celts, Slavs, Taurids etc… Domestic racism not only played a role in foreign policy in the United States, but in Europe too. Hitler is quoted comparing Germany to the United States by claiming, “Poles and Russians are our Africans.” The same attitudes that justified European nations colonizing Africa allowed Americans to neo-colonize the Congo as a Cold War ploy. The racism whites portrayed made it easy for African leaders to look towards Soviet ones as those who emerged victorious in the face of racism - a similar plight. Additionally, consequences of early colonialism within Europe had created a social structure for “lesser” white races to support Africans. The Irish actually were large supporters of Africans in British territories because Ireland itself had been colonized. Borstelman also notes that many additional “white minorities” sympathized with blacks. To put in

perspective how society has changed over the last half century, Borstelmann claims Jews were the second most hated group in America after Blacks during the 1950s.34

While the United States had no direct colonial representation in Africa, American racism played a vital role in influencing Central and Southern Africa. During World War II, Germans in Namibia attempted to exterminate indigenous blacks as Hitler modeled his imperial approach to blacks after the “American one to Indians.” Meanwhile after 1948 a racist regime took hold of South Africa. The Belgian Congo was just one of multiple racist regimes in the region. Some interesting points pertinent to the development of the Belgian Congo are those made on reputable explorer Sir Henry Morton Stanley by Borstelmann. Kisangani, the city that acted as a stronghold for Lumumba support during the first Congo civil wars, was originally named Stanleyville. While Stanley’s racist ideals clearly played an integral role in the establishment and development of the Belgian Congo, his American past is less known. Borstelmann highlights Stanley’s life in Louisiana prior to his African explorations. According to him, it was the racist ideals of White southerners that would cement Stanley’s attitude towards blacks. While the Congo was a distant land, America made sure the hierarchal relationship towards blacks was no new concept to Stanley.

Another theme that arose during the 1940s and 1950s was black soldiers returning from WWII. They were immersed in French and British cultures that treated blacks differently than the culture back home. Continuing through World War II, the book Cold War and the Color Line highlights the “problem” of sending black troops abroad that

America encountered. American officials were worried the more tolerant, overseas 
sentiment towards blacks would change racist attitudes in America for the “worse.” The 
effect Europeans had on Americans during the World Wars coupled with the increase in 
attention to the American Civil Rights movement definitely contributed to Americans 
progressing. During the time of Lumumba’s independence movement there was an 
ideological battle going on in America – Jim Crow law supporters aimed at strengthening 
the movement’s position versus the Civil Right leaders and other progressive groups. The 
Belgian Congo was essentially the embodiment of the most racist attitudes America had 
fostered. The racist ideals that Stanley had brought to the Congo from America would 
also cause separation between the United States and Europe later on. American internal 
racial tensions played a role in foreign policy ever since the 1500s and even later on with 
the approach towards Native Americans.

The 1950s and 1960s is not just the most important time in American Civil Rights 
movements, but also the most important time in global foreign diplomacy. A whole 
generation of Americans grew up fearing nuclear attack. The American historical context 
helps to explain why the Congo civil war was not fought between Patrice Lumumba and 
his adversaries, but rather between the Cold War superpowers. Furthermore, the conflict 
is a result of the United States internal social developments in many regards. As evidence 
to domestic racial views playing a role in foreign policy, key literary pieces on the Congo 
are riddled by racist American undertones.

Primary sources from the United States media often portray the Congolese as 
inferior people. The racist views were practically the norm in the United States at the 
time of Congolese independence as even Bryn Mawr College newspaper had written on
the situation using controversial vocabulary. With US involvement in the Congo came the establishment of an American presence. Larry Devlin’s memoir *Chief of Station, Congo: Fighting the Cold War in a Hot Zone* is a recounting of his time in the Congo undercover with the CIA. He arrived 10 days after independence at a critical time in Congolese history. Although events were hard to keep track of in the ever-changing country, Devlin and his associates were tasked with reaching consensus on what was going on and how it affected US policies. Meanwhile in the United States, Martin Luther King was leading a civil rights campaign. Racism can be found littered across Devlin’s memoir. His controversial views were not seen as radical at the time considering Jim Crow laws were still enacted in parts of the United States. Even TIME magazine had referred to the Congolese as cannibals. Larry Devlin was tasked with carrying out CIA operations in the embassy, which after independence became a full-fledged embassy as well as a cover. In addition to being told to kill Patrice Lumumba, Devlin also undertook the responsibility of safeguarding other Americans and Europeans with the potential of unrest looming large.

Immediately upon arrival he is thrust into the birdcage that is the Congo. In order to maintain his cover and conceal US direct involvement, Devlin used the cover of a consulate to the US embassy. While there is an internal conflict being fought by Congolese nationalists, Belgium and the United States are meddling with the newly formed African state as well. In addition, it becomes apparent to Devlin not long after his

35 "Lighting up the Dark Continent." *The College News* [Bryn Mawr College] Apr. 1960:
36 Devlin, Larry. *Chief of Station, Congo: Fighting the Cold War in a Hot Zone*. Page 34.  
arrival that communists from abroad are beginning to flood the country. Suspected of coming from the Soviet Union, its satellite countries, and China, these “rebels” were of the highest priority for US foreign policy. Furthermore Devlin noted that while the West had once been able to keep the Soviets out of Africa, with “the independence of Ghana in 1957 and Guinea in 1958, the Cold War struggle got rolling in earnest” (33). Not only does Devlin’s memoir use an American lens to portray life and intense situations in the Congo, but it also maintains the American global perspective of foreign relations because of his CIA background.

By providing an “on-the-ground” account of the early stages of the Congo Crisis, Larry Devlin offers a unique perspective on the Cold War microcosm. While he details US involvement and CIA activity, he describes the environment of the Congo at intimate personal levels. His first experiences with black soldiers left him shaking in his pants. The soldier detaining Devlin, jokingly to his peers, pointed a gun at Devlin’s head and asked to play Russian roulette.39 In the end Devlin realized that there was no bullet in the gun, but nonetheless provides insight to the black military culture in Congo. This group is of particular interest because they would eventually play a critical role in the establishment of Mobutu’s regime. In addition, the fascination of the American military complex of Mobutu that Odd Arne Westad detailed in his book was shared by many of the soldiers Devlin encountered. In some regards there is almost a sense of lawlessness despite military presence and “freedom” on the horizon. Gunshots were a common addition to the background noise and became part of the country’s environment. He truly

39 Devlin, Larry. Chief of Station, Congo: Fighting the Cold War in a Hot Zone. Page X.
gives you the sense of what it felt like to be in the Congo at that time from interactions with locals, to the fauna, to the background sound of gunshots.

Through recounting personal experiences, readers also get a good image of the west’s perception of communism. For example, Larry Devlin recounts a 1960 report in July and August that stated “several hundred Soviet personnel entered the country.” Although he fails to address the absurdity in the source, he provides the details, “the count was based on a newly recruited and untried Congolese agent... Any white person disembarking from a Russian plane was considered to be a citizen of the Soviet Union.”

Devlin was convinced that the Soviets were involved with Congolese rebellion movements as early as July 1960 and believes most of those Soviets mentioned were communist, intelligence officers. Though he shortly thereafter states that such a claim is “impossible” to confirm. Nonetheless he accepts the source because in his mind it was the most logical explanation to “communists” entering the “Cold War battleground.”

Devlin’s view on communism in many ways embodies that of the United States foreign policy. While he recognized the chaos the coup created he had the greater good of the world in mind. Considering he is in the CIA this is a good match, however the role of US foreign policy in Lumumba’s death and the Congo remain controversial.

In the introduction Larry Devlin sets the scene he arrived to in Leopoldville. One of the most important aspects of his impression is how he views the relationship of the Belgians to the Congolese independence movement. Not long after arriving he was able to infer, “what seemed clear was that Brussels planned to allow the Congolese their political freedom while keeping the military, economic, and commercial levers of power

in their own hands.” 41 This would turn out to be a critical relationship that would hinder Lumumba’s ability to maintain power. One of the Patrice Lumumba’s initial moves as Prime Minister, which is recounted by Devlin, was raising the wage of all government workers except for those in the military. General Emile Janssens, a vestige himself of the Belgian colonial structure, infamously proclaimed that nothing would change in the Congo army post-independence. 42 The blacks in the military were upset at their general for his anti-progressive ideals, while they were displeased with the “heroic” revolutionary Patrice Lumumba. Perhaps this culminated in the scenario that made Mobutu the most ideal candidate to lead the Congo in the eyes of the US. Not only was he of black military background, but was also staunchly anti-communist and in awe of the American military complex. In an article about an interview with Devlin, he exclaimed that even today with hindsight ability he would support Mobutu again. Political motives aside, Devlin still regularly portrayed the Congolese in a racist light. However it is important to note that he was not just a racist who ended up in the Congo, but rather a reflection of American culture at the time. In addition to the civil rights movements taking place across the United States in the ‘50s and 60’s, “open-minded” whites were still racist compared to the norms set forth by society in the 21st century.

Bryn Mawr College, an institution that praises itself on its liberal views and openness even had racist views in comparison to 2015 Haverford. In an edition of the College News from June 1960, a Bryn Mawr newsletter, there is a whole section dedicated to the decolonization of Africa. Titled Lighting up the Dark Continent, it has

very brief columns breaking down the essential features of each nation. The writer even chose the same adjective (dark) for the continent as Sir Henry Morton Stanley did. At the time of print, the Congo was still under Belgian control, however independence had already been announced and the leaders of the new country had emerged. In the column for the Congo, it lists is basic features such as population, geography, and King Leopold’s legacy. When talking about Patrice Lumumba the writer introduces him as a former “postal clerk” and “ex-convict.” While both of those may be true, Patrice Lumumba was much more than that. In fact the only reason he broke the law and became a convict was to keep up the appearance of an “evolue” which in itself was a racist concept. It was not only college newspapers as even internationally acclaimed papers portrayed the situation in the Congo with similar preconceived notions.

In 1960, only months after independence, an article was released in TIME Magazine that is testament to how wrongly perceived the Congolese independence movement was. Patrice Lumumba was an intellect whose ideas were widely influential and respected by many, yet TIME discounted his achievements by labeling him a radical. Furthermore, the widely respected magazine depicted the Congolese as generally “half-naked” and “illiterate.” Meanwhile there is a logical explanation for the illiteracy rate: the Belgians did not place an emphasis on educating blacks. However the manner in which the author phrases the illiteracy of the blacks place the blame on their inherent nature rather than Belgians. After independence was announced even the media’s attention

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44 Zeilig. Lumumba.
shifted their portrayal of the Congo from being sympathetic to the people, to needing order for the people. After it was clear to the international community that elections were going to be held in the Congo, focus shifted away from stopping oppression and towards influencing the future of the “independent” Congolese people. The international community placed the Congo under a microscope lens. In a short matter of months, the Congo transitioned in the eyes of Americans from an oppressed peoples needing help to a hot spot of the Cold War. Ironically the over-looked words of Patrice Lumumba tell a story unknown to many Americans.

Section IV: The Values and Aspirations of Patrice Lumumba: A More Democratic Dream than People Realized

Western nations perceived the sentiments that Patrice Lumumba reiterated in his speeches as not only being anti-Western, but also in alignment with Communist views. In addition, his relation with other Pan-Africanists heightened the attention of US foreign policy makers specifically after his speech at a Pan-Africa conference in Ghana.46 Ironically, leading up to independence (1960) when Lumumba delivered a series of speeches, the United States continued to support an “independent” Congo despite the US and Lumumba’s Congo apparently having conflicting views. Perhaps it is because the US and the CIA were confident in their ability to direct the flow of Congolese politics post-independence? Shortly after independence and only ten weeks after being elected, Patrice Lumumba was ousted in a coup led by his former cabinet member Joseph Mobutu. Lumumba must have been very knowledgeable and aware of the situation at the time as

he directly accused the United States and other Western bodies for the injustice in a letter to his wife. His fears had come true, the Congolese people had been granted an independent Congo, but not a sovereign one. This section will explore the words of Patrice Lumumba through a series of speeches and a letter, which led to his portrayal as a communist by the West. The Soviet Union even praises him as a communist hero today – Patrice Lumumba University of Moscow is named after him. In truth, however, Patrice Lumumba was as anti-Soviet as he was anti-Western. In his words he wanted a “Congo history written by the Congolese.” 47 Even so he displayed numerous pro-western ideals through his words. He was not the fervent anti-American that many Westerners made him out to be.

While Patrice Lumumba used Belgium’s rule as a rallying call for people across the country, other Congolese politicians such as Joseph Kasa-Vubu perceived this dark shared past as a disruption to an old state, not a unifying source to a new one. Leading up to independence ethnic politicians emerged who would try to “reclaim” the Congo for a certain group. Joseph Kasa-Vubu, who was elected president of Congo while Lumumba was Prime Minister, is a prime example. He believed that upon gaining independence, the state-owned resources and companies should be placed in the hands of the Bakongo people as they were “rightful heirs” to the Congo. 48 Kasa-Vubu and Lumumba were at polar ends of the nationalism spectrum; while Kasa-Vubu was ethnic and culturally focused on the Bakongo people, Lumumba civically sought to unite all. In the beginning

of Lumumba’s political career, more people were drawn to Kasa-Vubu’s radicalism, as it was a more feasible path to independence. Lumumba’s inexperience and youth coupled with his docile approach to independence left him in the shadow of leaders who shared traits with the African revolutionists. The Congolese were less concerned with the politics of post-independence Congo and mainly focused with achieving independence. This is a common theme of the dynamics in the region at both a local and international level as alignments were often made with different motivations in mind. However the time did come when Patrice Lumumba’s voice began to turn more radical. So it was natural that Lumumba would steal much of Kasa-Vubu’s support in his ascent to a “radical revolutionist.”

Although the Belgian Congo was an economic powerhouse for the European Empire, the Congolese people were exploited and left destitute by the Colonial administration. Following 1908, when King Leopold’s Free Congo State, was succeeded to Belgian rule, administrative changes took place that affected South East Congo. King Leopold set up regional rules within each region tailored to the ethnicities and attributes of the area. When the Belgians sought to entrench Colonial administrations throughout the region and industrialize the urban centers, the changes were felt throughout the whole country. While rural life represented traditional ways, urban life promised prosperity and modernism – an internal conflict many rural Congolese would face during Belgian rule. Patrice Lumumba was no exception, although he loved his family deeply, he was eager to learn and test the Congolese metro-poles (Leopoldville, Stanleyville). Not a single Congolese was educated to be a lawyer, doctor, or journalist, but Lumumba did not waiver. Born on July 2, 1925, he was first educated at a Catholic mission and later on at a
Methodist one – yet neither fulfilled his thirst for knowledge. Classes were rarely taught in French and the teachers were often inadequately suited to teach. Patrice Lumumba was known by his teachers and peers to be a smart, bright kid – even testing teachers and borrowing the notes of older students to advance his knowledge. Yet he always craved more and knew his future education was very limited in his current situation. There was a European concept of the evolue, or a “civilized black person.” Though still second-class citizens, people in the Congo would learn to read, dress, and act Western. At the end of his childhood, Lumumba embarked to Stanleyville on his mission to improve his literacy and education. One thing worth noting is that up until 1958 when Patrice Lumumba travelled to both Brussels and Brazzaville, he had little to no exposure to any non-Belgian ideals.

Although Patrice Lumumba ruthlessly pursued life as an evolue and embraced Belgian culture in many ways, he still remained loyal to his Congolese roots. He lived a double life; the city-life of an evolue and the polygamous traditional life of a Congolese countryman. Balancing the two lives was a great stress for Patrice Lumumba as people from both sides did not approve of the other. Nonetheless he continued his pursuit as an evolue as he saw it as his path to success. Even if he did value his Congo values more than his Belgian ones, he would be forced to pursue his Belgian dreams due to the dynamics of a colonized African state.

Under aspirations of becoming an evolue, Lumumba continued to educate himself in French and Belgian customs, even obtaining a job at a postal service. In his time in Stanleyville, he was still for the most part dreaming of working his way up the colonial

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49 Zeilig. Lumumba.
50 Zeilig. Lumumba.
system, not of an independent Congo. On the 50th anniversary of explorer Henry Morten Stanley’s death, Lumumba gave a speech defending the civilization mission and colonialism.\(^{51}\) He embraced the life of an *evolue*, but he was naïve in thinking how easy it would be to keep up the appearance of a prominent *evolue*. As a black he was underpaid, yet had immense pressure on him to keep up an appearance. In order finance his appearance, he reworked the books at his postal office and embezzled money. Eventually he was caught and imprisoned. Even in prison, his status of an *evolue* had given him more privileges than other black inmates. In prison he continued to follow his passions: to read and write. He viewed the problems in prison as a microcosm of society and began to question the colonial system. He would regularly write to officials and prominent leaders throughout the world, becoming more adamant in his demands each week.

According to Lumumba biographer Leo Zeilig, the young leader’s most prominent turning point ideological wise was his final days in Stanleyville\(^{52}\). While he had utilized the colonial system to advance his life to a prominent *evolue*, prison would force Lumumba to re-examine the colonial system and seek a more active role in politics. In the words of Leo Zeilig, “experience would give Lumumba a new radicalism and he would become the unswerving nationalist that he had always shunned.”

The city of Stanleyville originally stood as a symbol of hope and promise for Lumumba in his early years as it was the place of urbanization, commerce, and ideas. Now that Lumumba was literate and educated Leopoldville stood as the center of intellect and the independence movement for the Congolese people. Not only did he use his education to expose him to new ideas, but it provided a way for Lumumba to articulate

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\(^{51}\) Zeilig, Lumumba.  
\(^{52}\) Zeilig, Lumumba.
his own ideas. By the late 1950s revolutionary groups were gaining momentum. The Alliance des Bakongo (ABAKO) movement, led by Joseph Kasa-Vubu was already participating publically and its ethnic-based nationalist leader had already demanded independence on numerous occasions. In 1959 General Janssens infamously put an end to a riot that violently disbanded the organizers, which garnered national intention.

While Stanleyville provided a future for Lumumba, Leopoldville was the capital of the Belgian administration. The Belgian Congo’s economy was flourishing, copper prices were rising, and the largest Belgian companies operating in the Congo experienced profit rates of 15-21%. Lumumba was able to utilize the recent surge in the economy and left Stanleyville for a job in Leopoldville at Bracongo Brewery. It was his time at this position, where Patrice Lumumba rose from a prominent evolue to a revolutionary leader in Leopoldville. As he had throughout his life, Lumumba continued to educate himself in Leopoldville and was always thirsting for new ideas. The job also allowed him to go from pub to pub, bar to bar, engaging in the capital’s social scene. He used this to his advantage as he shared his image and quickly met other prominent figures. A key “friend” Lumumba made in his early days in Leopoldville is Joseph Mobutu, who would later play an integral part in Lumumba’s overthrow. While working at the brewery, Lumumba was also involving himself in Le Mouvement National Congolaise, and used his position treading the nightlife scene to preach his message. He honed his personable and oratorical skills during this time. An additional testament to how good Lumumba was

53 Zeilig, Lumumba.
56 Zeilig, Lumumba.
with words is that he learned a local dialect of Lingala to both help spread his message and to help with his job. The short amount of time in which he learned astonished his peers, as if they weren’t already impressed with his French skills.\textsuperscript{57}

Early on in his life, Patrice Lumumba was fond of the benefits the West brought to Africa and more specifically the Congo. While his road to radicalization had only started with the end of his stay in Stanleyville, he still possessed many pro-Western undertones in his speeches and writings. However Patrice Lumumba’s association and apparent appreciation for the West and its achievements began long before his political career. He was from the Onaloa region of Kasai, one of the last touched parts of the Congo by colonialism. Kasai is also one of the two states that would secede from the Republic of Congo soon after its inception. Not only is it ironic that Lumumba’s homeland would help tear apart his republic, but the reputation he developed in a region supported by the West during the Congo Crisis is ironic as well. As a child he earned the name Osungu, which was a local term denoted to the white man.\textsuperscript{58} While the nickname was a source of humility for Patrice Lumumba, it would also be a source of pride for him. Despite being exploited and treated as second-class citizens, Congolese people in this region associated whiteness with wealth, social status, and success. Although Patrice Lumumba desired an independent Congo, in his early life the Congolese independence movement was not strong. Rather than dreaming of an independent country, blacks dreamed of climbing up within the ranks of the colonial system. While it is unclear which of the two previous visions Patrice Lumumba had in his early life, he nonetheless showed support and recognized all the benefits that colonization had brought to the Congo.

\textsuperscript{57} Zeilig. Lumumba.  
\textsuperscript{58} Zeilig. Lumumba.
A movement other than the Congolese independence movement that Patrice Lumumba was an intellectual of was the Pan-African Movement. In addition to sending ripples through the Congo’s black community, Lumumba sent ripples through the rest of African and Sub-Saharan communities. His vision of a united Pan-Africa was not only his own, but was now shared by other African leaders who had newly risen to power. Because the Congo itself consisted of a myriad of ethnic groups and tribes they were able to unite under one cause, it was natural for Lumumba to seek a similar destiny for the rest of Sub-Saharan Africans. All African colonies, like the Congo peoples, shared a common hardship under European rule. Languages and borders were forced over large swaths of land, which helped unite black groups in the wake of colonialism more easily. The potential for Lumumba’s strong nationalism movement cementing into the region and joining forces with the already existing Pan-African movement placed fear in the officials of Western nations. The reason the United States, United Nations, and Belgium went through such measures to act on their fear is because of Patrice Lumumba’s words. They were easily perceived as communist and associated with other communist movements – especially though the lens of a nation leading a global battle against a countering ideology. Even though Lumumba was not communist, Western bodies feared that if the Congo had fallen to communism, it would not be long before its neighbors did as well. This fear has been labeled as the “Bloc Feast,” and was a legitimate fear of the West.59 The Bloc Feast was a term used by the CIA to represent the Pro-Soviet Africa the intelligence agency feared. The US feared that multiple countries would not only align

with their Cold War enemy, but that the newly formed Congo would provide the communist movement with valuable resources and labor.

In 1957, Ghana gained independence from Britain under charismatic leader Kwame Nkrumah. He hosted strong views about the future of Africa both during, and in the wake of decolonization. In April 1958 Ghana held the first African Conference of Independent African States in Accra. While Pan-Africanists hailed the conference a success, the list of independent countries in Africa was still short. Later that year, Nkrumah decided to host an event called the sixth Pan-African Conference, only this time leaders from colonial states would be invited to speak as well. 60 Patrice Lumumba sat at the top of the list, however he struggled to obtain a passport in Belgian Congo. Eventually he could only manage to receive permission to attend the conference as an “observer.” Despite Belgian efforts to subdue his influence, Lumumba delivered the speech, which marked a monumental point in his political career.

In Patrice Lumumba’s speech in Ghana, he cries for his people: “We wish to see a modern democratic state established in our country, which will grant its citizens freedom, justice, social peace, tolerance, well-being, and equality, with no discrimination whatsoever.” 61 Although civil rights activists are quick to point out American civil rights movements that were taking place concurrently, the United States had a similar fundamental vision as Patrice Lumumba. The African leader even used the word “democracy;” the ideology that the United States stood at the forefront for in a global fight against communism. Although not one single non-African nation was named in the

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60 Zeilig. Lumumba.
speech with the exception of Belgium, Lumumba's words are much more in-line with the United States than the Soviet Union.

The United States chose to look past his democratic words and focus on his anti-Western and "communist" ones. Based on the actions that the United States would take over the next five years, the message it focused in on of Lumumba's words were not those of democracy, but communism and Pan-Africanism. It is unfortunate that any ideology had to side with either Cold War side and could not be fostered and developed free from outside influence. In Patrice Lumumba's speech at Accra, despite explicitly using the word democracy for the Congo's future, the end of his speech feeds into the United States' "bloc feast." He is only trying to draw on the same nationalism he used to inspire his people to inspire Ghana's people by drawing on the shared hardships under colonialism. Meanwhile Nkrumah sought to improve the Congo with his Pan-Africanist vision described in his book, Challenge of the Congo. While he does not associate with the West or communism, his association with the communist Ghana and other communist movements in Africa could dominate the opinion of Americans during the Red Scare.

This historical conference, which puts us in contact with experienced political figures from all the African countries and from all over the world, reveals one thing to us: despite the boundaries that separate us, despite our ethnic differences, we have the same awareness, the same soul plunged day and night in anguish, the same anxious desire to make this African continent a free and happy

continent that has rid itself of unrest and of fear and of any sort of colonialist domination."

When Patrice Lumumba returned from the conference, he was instantly perceived as more radical. Specifically, he was more radical than fellow Congolese politician Joseph Kasa-Vubu. Much of the reason the ABAKO party and Kasa-Vubu were able to gain support from non-Kongolese descendants is because they were the most prominent party that demanded independence. Previously Patrice Lumumba had wanted a slow movement towards independence — being slowly weaned off Belgium, supported throughout the process. Yet soon after returning he demanded independence. Though the international community and even Belgium was moving towards decolonization, there were barriers in the way. A Belgian critic asked Lumumba how the nation would operate without a single doctor, lawyer, geologist, or respected journalist. His response showed the development of his mindset from utilizing international help to not trusting it. "I am fully aware of the situation, but I have a question to ask you: You have been in the Congo for 80 years and you have not trained a single doctor or geologist. If we asked you to train ten doctors how many more years in our country will that take you?" The journalist was left speechless.

Meanwhile Nkrumah had been taking more radical tones as well and started leaning towards the Soviet Union. So when he claimed Patrice Lumumba as his "adopted son," the perceived link between the two as well as the link between Pan-Africanism and

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64 Zeilig. Lumumba
65 Zeilig. Lumumba.
Communism would be strengthened. The Pan-African movement and Lumumba would continue to be cast as communist, although Lumumba maintained his democracy-friendly word choice. In the year following the speech at Accra, Patrice Lumumba delivers another Pan-Africanist speech at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria on March 22.\textsuperscript{66} In sharing his vision of an independent Congo, he describes his governmental structure as "genuine democracy." If that doesn't sound pro-democracy enough, he even goes on to stress the importance of having multiple parties and political opposition for a fair democracy. Patrice Lumumba was a smart man though and knew the United States possibly perceived his movement as an attack against the West so he clarified his stance in that same speech. "Europeans must recognize and come to accept the idea that the liberation movement that we are engaged in throughout Africa is not directed against them... If they agree to put an immediate end to this regime instituted by their predecessors we will live in friendship and brotherhood with them." Despite being against outside influence, Lumumba was more than willing to engage the US and European nations in order to foster an environment best for the people of Congo. Though most of Lumumba's political preaching was in bars and throughout the Congo, under the colonial system reforms were made at round tables and meetings, not by blacks. The Round Table Conference of 1960 was a meeting made famous because it is when Congolese and Belgian officials officially decided on independence. Afterwards, Patrice Lumumba clearly expresses his opinion of the independence declaration in a statement directed towards Belgian Prime Minister Gaston Eyskens. "We beg you, Mr. Prime Minister, to be kind enough to convey to his Majesty King Baudouin our heartfelt

\textsuperscript{66} Van Lierde. Lumumba Speaks: The Speeches and Writings of Patrice Lumumba.
expressions of liking and friendship. It is only now that we know Patrice Lumumba expressed too much trust in the Belgians as being willing to follow up on their decision. It seems Patrice Lumumba holds people accountable for written missions and the words, rather than the actions. The Belgians gave the Congo independence, but not sovereignty. Another entity supposedly helping his cause was the United Nations, who like Belgium had a "philanthropic motive" that never materialized under Lumumba's vision. In both instances, Lumumba relied on missions and declarations rather than looking at broader tendencies. Although his view may be perceived as naïve, it also may be perceived as American as his attachment to written documents resembled constitutionism.

A recurring theme over the first two speeches mentioned is Patrice Lumumba's inherent trust in the United Nations. Though the United Nations would ultimately be one of the forces behind Lumumba's overthrow and death, he displayed great trust in the UN at first. In the Accra speech of 1958 he cried "We base our action on the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man — rights guaranteed to each and every citizen of humanity by the United Nations Charter — and we are of the opinion that the Congo, as a human society, has the right to join the ranks of free peoples." Perhaps it is only in hindsight that we know the United Nations was corrupted in the Congo, but it is hard to deny it was aligned with the United States; after all, the UN was created by and largely led by American Allies following World War II. Lumumba continued to show trust in the UN despite his anti-Western views in his speech at University of Ibadan. His perception of the UN became based not from their actions, but rather their mission statement and

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67 The Belgo-Congolese Round Table Conference, Bruxelles, Impr. C. Van Cortenbergh, 1960, pp. 43-44
declaration. He once again references the UN charter while at the same time reaffirming that he is not necessarily anti-American, but anti-outside-influence.

"Let it today give proof of the principle of equality and friendship between races that its sons have always taught us as we sat at our desks in school, a principle written in capital letters in the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man. Africans must be just as free as other citizens of the human family to enjoy the fundamental liberties set forth in this declaration and the rights proclaimed in the United Nations Charter." 68

While the international community supported Lumumba’s movement for independence, the two forces had two contrasting images of independence. To the West, the Congo’s independence was a culmination of the human rights effort to “decolonize” Africa and help black Africans. The West’s perspective can best be observed in King Baudouin’s speech sharing the decision to “give” the Congolese people independence. After the Round Table Conference, in which the decision to decolonize the Congo was made, he announced the “philanthropic” agenda in Brussels. Patrice Lumumba made an impromptu speech following King Baudouin’s speech to assert his differences. 69 His speech was aimed at reminding everybody that independence is not a gift to the Congolese and something they had to struggle and fight for. Furthermore he emphasized that independence was not enough for the Congo’s people and that they must aspire for sovereignty – a land free of Western control. Over time his growing concerns of Western influence would materialize both in terms of the United States’ actions and in his words.

His early 1960 independence speech stresses the need to aspire for sovereignty. When Larry Devlin exclaimed that the West intended on continuing its colonial economic ways in the Congo, Patrice Lumumba was well aware. Now that independence had been achieved, the process of ridding foreign influence had to proceed. According to Patrice Lumumba: independence was not the prize of his independence movement, but instead sovereignty and self-determination.

The first half of the decade (1950s) consisted of extremely frequent revolutions along with an overall effort to combat imperialism. The second half of the decade saw many of these revolutions come to fruition and seed sentiment for future revolutions. A path many revolutionary leaders took was to eliminate opposition parties to help expedite the advancement of their own parties’ agenda. Patrice Lumumba from the get-go had no such intentions. Not only did he praise democracy and the importance of having opposition parties through his speeches, but he followed through on his vision. In mid January 1960, Joseph Kasa-Vubu’s ABAKO party was forced to dissolve after a series of riots calling for immediate independence. Patrice Lumumba’s MNC party actually called for military help to stop the riots. Even though Patrice Lumumba had recently become more radical than his counterpart Kasa-Vubu in the eyes of the Congolese, the ABAKO party was still seen as more radical. Many of the independence-seekers in ABAKO switched their allegiance to the MNC party. Despite the prospects of the nation having basically a one-party system with a charismatic, influential leader in the months prior to independence, Patrice Lumumba almost immediately sought to diminish his and the MNC’s power following the riots. He made plans to set up a legislative council and kept
Kasa-Vubu around rather than oppress him. Unfortunately his conciliatory efforts were to no avail as the power of the United States and the CIA made his departure from office inevitable.

After Lumumba was overthrown, his successors took a much less democratic role in dealing with opposition. Later that year, he was imprisoned for inciting riots. While Patrice Lumumba saw the importance of having an opposition to maintain a healthy democracy, his opposition saw the importance in eliminating him from the political scene. Even though he progressed to directly blaming Western nations by the end of his life, his words still voiced the same vision he had for an independent, sovereign Congo.

"They have corrupted some of our countrymen; they have bought others; they have done their part to distort the truth and defile our independence. What else can I say? That whether dead or alive, free or in prison by order of the colonialists, it is not my person that is important. What is important is the Congo, our poor people whose independence has been turned into a cage, with people looking at us from outside the bars, sometimes with charitable compassion, sometimes with glee and delight. But my faith will remain unshakable. I know and feel in my very heart of hearts that sooner or later my people will rid themselves of all their enemies, foreign and domestic, that they will rise up as one to say no to the shame and degradation of colonialism and regain their dignity in the pure light of day."^71

Patrice Lumumba had progressed from being indifferent in his attitude towards foreign nations, to not only being anti-Western, but having the United Nations betray

him. The principals the international organization was founded on were at the heart of Lumumba's cries for independence, but the UN failed to protect the sovereignty of the Congolese people. The international community failed to recognize his movement for what it truly was and instead cast him as a Communist in light of the greater Cold War that dominated politics.

Conclusion:

By the late 1950s, much of North Africa had been decolonized, the first West African Nations had been decolonized, and nationalist independence movements were brewing strong in the Belgian Congo. In the wake of World War II and the creation of the United Nations, oppression and crimes against humanity around the world were gaining international attention. Due to diplomatic and humanitarian pressure, Belgium recognized that the Congo's independence was inevitable at this point, but they did not think independence was feasible until at least the mid to late 1960s. When European Powers started pulling out of Africa, the borders that the black independence movements fought for were arbitrary in regards to local demographics. The borders that the Congolese independence movement fought for were no exception; Belgian King Leopold drew the borders along with leaders from other European nations at the Berlin Conference (1884-5) to best serve their agendas. In the 1960’s Congo, according to CIA estimates, the Congo hosted approximately 14 million people, divided into 14 ethnicities that were each associated with one of four large tribes. 72 Structuring a nation to fairly govern the populace was going to be difficult because of how divided the populace was, however

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they did all have one thing in common: grief, misery, and exploitation under Belgian Colonial rule. Patrice Lumumba garnered support for himself and for an independent Congo by pitting all black groups as one against the West. He emphasized all the shared hardships that Blacks underwent regardless of tribe or region, which echoed to the rest of the Pan-African movement. A poignant rallying call of his all blacks had in common was to no longer be addressed as “tu” and instead with the more formal “vous.” Naturally the cultural and bloodline nationalisms seen in Europe and other places of the world would be impossible without disassembling the country. Western nations perceived the sentiments that Patrice Lumumba reiterated in his speeches as not only being anti-Western, but also in alignment with Communist views. Ironically, leading up to independence (1960) when Lumumba delivered a series of speeches, the United States continued to support an “independent” Congo. Shortly after independence, and only ten weeks after being elected, Patrice Lumumba was ousted in a coup by his former cabinet member Colonel Joseph Mobutu. He then accused the United States and other Western bodies for backing the injustice in a letter to his wife. His fear had come true, the people had been granted an independent Congo, but not sovereign one. In his words he wanted a “Congo history written by the Congolese,”74 but unfortunately his words made it easy for the Untied States to pit him as an enemy.

In conclusion it is evident that a sovereign Congo was stripped of its aspirations with the assassination of Lumumba and Mobutu’s eventual solidification of power in 1965. The United States, along with the CIA successfully infiltrated the political vacuum

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created by the decolonization of the Belgian Congo and promoted a pro-Western regime with staunch views against Communism. Ironically, the United States and even Mobutu covered their motivations as those of philanthropic purposes – to free the “underdeveloped” Congolese people of Belgian colonial rule and to protect them from Communism. However as we now know, philanthropy and “moral policing” was a cover to protect both the economic and strategic foreign interests of America. Critical components in the United States success were its ability to manipulate and hold sway over the United Nations and its in-house intelligence body: the CIA. The international peace organization was another crucial player in the Congo Crisis whose actions on the ground did not correlate with the international perception of its mission.

Joseph Desere Mobutu recognized that Lumumba was seen as a martyr to a revolutionary cause and carried out some policies that Lumumba most likely would have done had his leadership lasted. A prime example is Mobutu’s *Zairefication* of the Congo. In addition to renaming the country Zaire and the capitol Kinshasa, the policy had implications at social levels as well. However like the international forces that helped Mobutu ascend to power, *Zairefication* is perhaps a final cover for pushing Western agendas that is further evidence that the United States was successful in squashing Patrice Lumumba’s nationalist movement. While the whole world thought the Congo was becoming “authentic,” on the ground details can prove otherwise.

Patrice Lumumba’s dream, quoted on page (30) of the paper, was the desire for a Congolese history taught by the Congolese and made by the Congolese – one free of Western influence. The Haverford College special collections library provides insight as to how this dream fell short. A saved correspondence reflecting US role in the Congo
Crisis is ironic because it proves Mobutu’s *Zairefication* did not mean addressing historical, economical, educational, or political customs. The library maintains over 10 boxes of Elizabeth Jensen’s correspondences. The particular document of interest is a letter she writes to friend Elizabeth Taylor. In the letter from early 1970, Jensen shares to Taylor that her husband is away in Kinshasa teaching at the university (in French). A Western teacher using the colonial language shows little change in education from prior to independence. Only literate and educated Congolese knew French, which provided little mobility in the increasingly industrious society. Furthermore, Jensen noted that her husband shared with her that “85% of the books in the library are in English.” 75 The university in Leopoldville was the beacon of education for the people all over the country. Therefore *Zairefication*, which was one of Mobutu’s only continuations of Lumumba’s legacy, would have a tremendous impact had it targeted education like Lumumba detailed in his words. It is a shame to knock a Quaker travelling to teach in a third world country, but David Jensen’s presence as an intellectual in Kinshasa, along with the information he shared with his stateside wife about the books would make Lumumba roll over in his grave. It is just one of many indicators that not only was Lumumba’s nationalism defeated, but the young nation was headed in the direction he feared most.

Even with the promise and hope in the Congo today, there are still reminders of the country’s brutal past. The nation’s problem with poverty and inequality of wealth is still staggering in 2015. This post-colonial fate is not just true to the Congo, but to other African nations as well. The phenomenon, which has been labeled “neo-colonialism,” is

the concept that colonial structures continued in Africa after the apparent decolonization. Another concept in line with neo-colonialism is Eurafrica: the belief that African and European histories always have and always will be inextricably linked. African political scientist Guy Martin proposed Eurafrica ideas behind Western motives in his book *Africa in World Politics*. He infers that the same attitudes that allowed the West to colonize Africa in the first place allowed them to maintain a strong presence in the region. In hindsight it seems that the idea of neo-colonialism and Eurafrica were unavoidable, but did they have to be? If the United States left Lumumba and his movement alone then perhaps we would know a different Africa today. But by the time his movement gained traction in 1959, Africa and the West's fates had already been linked through the Cold War.

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