Chapter - VI.

The United States and The Evolution of International Crisis in Shaba Province (1977-1978)

The Background To The Crisis

An attempt will be made in the present section to trace the origins of developments leading to the evolution of an International crisis over Shaba (formerly called Katanga) Province in Zaire described as Shaba I. It may be mentioned that as a result of the crisis, the domestic foundations of Mobutu regime had been shaken terribly and that without the massive and firm external support that had been extended to Mobutu, his regime would most certainly have crumbled in the face of a series of internal pressures that had been exerted against it during Shaba I or described by Mobutu as the "80-Day War". As for the US government, it had provided its strongest backing and support to the external efforts towards the bolstering of Mobutu regime in Zaire.

The origins of the Shaba crisis could be traced to the activities of the former Katangan gendarmes created by Moise Tshombe in 1960. It has been mentioned earlier that following the UN operations in January 1963 the Katangan secession had ended, a development which had forced
a number of these gendarmes to take refuge in Angola as well as in neighbouring African countries. In July 1964, after his assumption to power, Tshombe had incorporated approximately 17,000 of his former Katangan gendarmes as separate units under the national army called the Les Forces armées Zairoises (FAZ). But following the overthrow of Tshombe, these mercenaries, however, did not accompany the Katangan leader to his exile in Europe, but had stayed behind to assist the military government headed by Mobutu in his wars against the Mulelists and Lumumbaists. After utilizing their services against his domestic opponents, Mobutu on his part had not trusted the loyalty of these forces by suspecting them to be working for his overthrow. Further, he had antagonized these mercenaries by his failure to live up to the promises made to them earlier namely, their total integration into the national army, non-discriminatory treatment in salaries and promotions, and rewards for the dangerous missions that had been undertaken by them in the past. This had accounted for the rationale behind their uprisings in 1966 and 1967. As mentioned earlier, following the collapse of the 1967 mutiny, some of the surviving Katangans, (who had taken refuge in neighbouring Rwanda) had gone over Angola after being repatriated under amnesty pledges. The main body of the former Katanga gendarmes, of course, had been absorbed into the national army as well as in the provincial police force of Katanga. After the 1967 insurrection, however, a fiercely repressive campaign had been carried out by the provincial Governor, by purging many of them from the Katangan
police. This had resulted in a flight to Angola by several of these youths to save themselves from the reign of terror perpetrated by the Katangan Governor. The Portuguese colonial government in Angola, however, had welcomed these fugitives into their colony and had organized them into para-military units described as the "Black Arrows". In June 1968 the Black Arrows had assumed the political label of Front pour la Liberation Nationale du Congo (FLNC). According to the statutes establishing the FLNC in 1968, it was a "revolutionary and progressive movement" with "politicomilitary discipline" working closely with the masses to replace the Mobutu regime with a new social order. Many of the FLNC forces had belonged to Lunda-Chokwe stock, a factor which had worked to their advantage during their Shaba operation in 1977, because the tribal affinity had played an important part in their ability to infiltrate into the predominantly Lunda population of Shaba.

After their induction into a para-military force in Angola, the Portuguese had utilized their services in battling against the MPLA and the UNITA forces. With the announcement of the collapse of Portuguese rule in 1974, the FLNC, however, had found itself in the horns of a cruel dilemma for Mobutu's invitation for repatriation as well as the possible


reprisal both from MPLA and FNLA quarters in view of their complicity with the colonial authorities.\textsuperscript{561} As for the Mobutu offer, it may be stated that the Zairian leader had offered amnesty to FLNC in 1975 and 1976. But view of the lack of credibility of Mobutu's promises in the past as well as the cruel treatment of execution meted out to the mutineers (who had laid down their arms in response to Mobutu's promise of amnesty), the FLNC had rejected the offer summarily\textsuperscript{562}. As for a choice between the MPLA and the FNLA, the FLNC had chosen to support the latter on the calculation that an FNLA victory in Angola had posed a greater threat towards them because of its intimate links with the Mobutu\textsuperscript{563}. In the circumstances they had felt constrained to make an alliance with the MPLA and had helped it with significant support to the halt the FAZ-FNLA offensive on the MPLA forces during the crucial phase of struggle in eastern Angola. In the process the FLNC members had acquired new arms as well as equipment and training. Following the conclusion of the Angolan Civil War in January 1976, however, the FLNC had retired to their base area near the Shaba Province in Zaire\textsuperscript{564}.

\textsuperscript{561} See Turner and Young, n. 296, p. 255.
\textsuperscript{562} See Nzongola-Ntalaja, n. 559, p. 601.
\textsuperscript{563} See Turner and Young, n. 296, pp. 255-256.
\textsuperscript{564} Kenneth L. Adelman, "Old Foes and New Friends" \textit{Africa Report}, vol. 73, p. 5.
To revert to the sequences of developments it may be stated that on the aftermath of the retreat of Zairian troops to their country, Mobutu and Neto had met on 28 February 1976 to sign an accord to normalize their bilateral relations. Under the agreement Zaire had reportedly promised to stop assisting the FNLA and ELEC and that Angola had pledged not to interfere in Zairian internal affairs. It had been reported that under the agreement 6000 Katangese rebels working under the FLNC banners were to be repatriated to Zaire. But too much blood had flowed between Mobutu and Neto in the past during the course of the Angolan wars that it had brought about a breakdown to similar type of solemn pledges in August 1962, October 1966, December 1973 and July 1974 and that real prospects for normalization of relations between the two countries had receded to the background. Thus, in the months following the independence of Angola both Zaire and the MPLA had ignored their solemn pledges to go ahead with preparations to ward off against impending attacks by one another.

As for the United States, in view of the growing Soviet influence and military capacity in Africa (following the Soviet-Cuban successes in Angola), had planned for a new strategy in consultation of its NATO allies. On behalf of the

566. See Adelman, Old Foes, n. 564, p. 6.
US government the Secretary of Defence, Donald H. Rumsfeld and a team of experts had undertaken such consultations after which they had moved over to Brussels, Nairobi and Kinshasa for further discussion on the matter. It may be mentioned that at the behest of the US government Secretary of State Kissinger had undertaken a trip to Africa to review the situation following the Angolan episode. These visits were intended to demonstrate the US interests in counterbalancing the Russians in Africa and their determination and willingness to support such African countries such as Kenya and Zaire who had felt threatened by pro-Soviet neighbours. During his stay in Kinshasa, Rumsfeld had stressed that the US had considered military aid to Zaire as crucial in view of growing Soviet influence in several African countries as well as the presence of Soviet-equipped Cuban troops in neighbouring Angola. As for Zaire it had become greatly worried over about 12,000 to 13,000 Cuban troops as well as large number of Soviet tanks and armoured personnel carriers in Angola. As for Zaire had sought for an arms agreement with the United States involving anti-tank weapons, helicopters, communications equipment and personnel carriers as well as a sizable increase in training programme for the troubled 50,000 Zairian army.

These, along with a request for other sophisticated weapons by Mobutu had been intended to meet the "psychological uncertainty" and "psychological threat" of border instability along the Angolan frontier. The US government had thus declared its firm intention to come to the rescue of Zaire in case of attack from the Angolan quarters. As for Mobutu, on the wake of Shaba I in March 1977, he had withdrawn the impotent FNLA troops from the Zaire-Angolan borders and had supported the more spirited UNITA and FLEC troops in order to undermine Neto. All these developments, also, had prompted Neto on the eve of Shaba I to accuse Zaire with US complicity of launching an attack on Angola as well as for plotting a major invasion on the MPLA forces.

Also economically, Zaire had been in doledrums since 1974 on account of the fact of a severe slump in the world prices of copper. Since copper had represented half of the country's exports, its economic effect had been devastating enough for Zaire. Further, while the national revenue had stagnated, the wage bill of government employees had registered an increase by 32 percent. In the process by 1975, Kinshasa had incurred a record $537 million balance of payments deficit and an external debt amounting to $2.7 billion, of which more than half had been incurred from commercial banks at high interest. By the end of 1976, the economic picture in Zaire, however, had represented as one of low prices for copper, world currencies.

570. Ibid.
inflation, high oil prices, transport difficulties as well as the problems of huge burden of servicing the external debts. Also according to Ogunabadejo, Zaire with its vast size, strategic location, its substantial population, a large standing army as well as an impressive array of mineral resources "ought to have gained a privileged position of influence and respectability in Africa", but it had failed to achieve this distinction due to its internal crisis and difficulties, weak physical infrastructures and linkages, the volatile nature of the world prices for copper, and the spend-thrift policies of its government on non-productive prestige projects as well as due to rampant corruption and nepotism in the Administration.

Further, Mobutu's handling of his domestic opponents through draconian measures had aroused a great amount of resentment both inside the country as well as outside. His offering of amnesty in 1970 to all the Congoese rebels since independence had been merely a smokescreen as some of the key figures who had responded to Mobutu's gestures had been treated harshly. For instance, the prominent rebels like Christophe Gbenye, Nicholas Olenga and Pierre Mulele had been arrested following their return and sentenced to various terms of rigorous imprisonments (in case of Gbenye and Olenga) as well as to death (in case of Mulele). The effect of these actions had

been to increase the growing pool of political opponents to the Mobutu regime as well as to encourage them to stay away from Zaire and to work against the regime from their bases in foreign countries. The prominent political opponents who had been included in this category were Antoine Gizenga, Daniel Monguyu Mbooge, Lourent Kabila, Paul Roger Mokende, Ali Kalonga and General Nathaniel Mbumba, who had led opposition groupings such as the Democratic Front for the Liberation of the Congo, Action Movement for the Resurrection of the Congo, the People's Revolutionary Party, the National Congolese Movement, the African Popular Party, the Convention of Social Democrats and the National Front for the Liberation of the Congo (FLNC) respectively. In fact the FLNC had launched the attack on the Shaba Province in March 1977 from its bases in Angola and Southern Zaire and that General Mbumba, a former Police Commissioner in Shaba, had led the operation by providing it with troops and supplies. The avowed aim of the FLNC had been the overthrow of the Mobutu's regime and the hope of their returning "to live in peace in a homeland freed from the Zairian dictator's arbitrary rule and terror." It is also reported that the representatives of domestic opposition groups to Mobutu numbering thirty-two, had assembled in the Soviet embassy at Paris to coordinate their support behind the FLNC

573. Ibid, p. 223.
575. See Nzongola-Ntalaja, n. 559, p. 602.
offensives in Shaba, and that Laurent Kabila’s People’s Revolutionary Party and Antoine Gizenga’s Democratic Force for the Liberation of the Congo had provided some military support to Mbumba’s forces as well. The avowed aim of all concerned had been to bring Mobutu down by capturing the copper-rich Shaba, which had provided about three-fourths of Zaire’s foreign exchange.

It may be worthwhile to mention at the end that the relationship between the MPLA and the FNLC forces had fluctuated during the period of the Angolan Wars as well as afterwards. For instance, while during the civil war the FNLC had rendered a significant service to the MPLA forces, the former had nurtured a grievance against the Neto government for its inability to integrate them into the Angolan army. Further, the relationship between FNLC and MPLA had been strained by General Mbumba’s reported refusal to accept Angola’s advice in teaming up with other Zairian dissident groups led by Gizenga and Kabila. It is reported that Neto himself had made several abortive attempts to reconcile the various Zairian resistance leaders and had become impatient with Mbumba’s intransigence and his autonomous style of operation in the eastern region of Angola. It is further maintained by Ogunabadejo that the FNLC leader, “having sensed some equivocation on the part of the Angolan leaders, decided on his own to

576. See Adelman, Old Foes, n. 564, p. 6.
577. See Ogunabadejo, n. 571, p. 225.
to present them with a fait accompli. It may, however, be mentioned that Mbumba had moved rather cautiously with a small force in the initial phase of his attack and that after achieving some successes, in that period, he had moved the bulk of his forces into Shaba.

In conclusion, it may be stated that the eruption of the Shaba crisis in 1977 had reopened many of the old wounds of Zaire, by bringing back the memories of the Katangan secession. While the FNLA leadership had been politicised in revolutionary Angola, at the same time they had clearcut political programmes of overthrowing the autocratic rule of Mobutu in favour of a democratic government in Zaire.

578. Ibid.
Shaba I

Shaba I had begun on 8 March 1977 when some former Katangan insurgents, riding mostly on bicycles had proceeded from their bases of operation in Angola to cross the southern borders of Zaire to launch an attack on the Shaba province. According to available reports the invaders had put on tiger symbols on their uniforms and had called each other "comrades", in either French, Swahili or Portuguese languages and that they had chanted "socialist rhetorics". Further, these invaders had condemned Mobutu, tribalism and the United States in their slogans. It has been mentioned earlier that Nathaniel Mbumba, the former Police Commissioner of Shaba had masterminded the invasion. In fact Mbumba had himself led the operation along with his ELNC volunteers and reportedly claimed the credit for launching the incursions. This military operation, had been described as the "80-Day War" by President Mobutu. Shaba II, also had taken place in the background of widespread discontentment in Shaba due to the bitter memories of the Katangan civil war and the controversial UN action as well as a severe drop in the world prices of copper. These discontentments, however, had been accompanied by economic and political crisis which had often reached "truly desperate".

579: For details see Adelman, Old Foes, n.564, pp.5-6.
proportions". These problems, had been compounded by a high level of corruption, economic mismanagement, huge international debt as well as the virtual uselessness of the Zairian army.

It has been mentioned earlier that the FLNC insurgents had initiated the strike into Shaba without prior coordination with other opposition groups. But they had all been well-organized and disciplined and had moved at first in small groups of ten to twenty men from their support bases inside Angola and had employed tactics of friendly persuasion by setting up zones of civil administration in their areas of operation. After achieving initial successes on this score, the insurgents had moved in a larger group and had invaded Southern Zaire to occupy the three important mining and communication centres namely, the cities of Kissenge, Dilolo and Kapanga in Shaba province. The rebels had continued their fight by moving through southern Zaire, and by occupying towns and villages on the way. In course of time they had proceeded further by capturing the important town of Mutshatsha, the regional command headquarters of Zaire in Western Shaba. After achieving these spectacular successes the rebels, however, had moved forward towards the copper centre of Kolwezi, a move that had unnerved the Zairian government. As for Mobutu he had flown over to the Southern copper mining centre of Kolwezi to workout a strategy to face the menace.

It may be mentioned that the Zairian army had received its military training from the Western quarters as well as Chinese and North Korean support in 1973-1975. Despite this it had suffered from serious limitations in respect of its morale, leadership and the maintenance of equipments. On the other hand the movement of Zairian troops into Shaba had become difficult owing to poor road communications, as well as the fact that most of the air force planes had not been operating due to lack of fuel and spare parts problems. The morale of the force had shrunk due to mutiny and desertion among units ordered for duty in Shaba. The Zairian army, in fact, had displayed no disposition to fight a battle against the rebels. The poor performance, of the Zairian army could be attributed to the fact that the forces had been overstretched and seriously demoralized as a result of irregular pay, poor training and repeated purges.

In fact within a matter of weeks General Mbumba's forces had driven the Zairian army out of the towns of Kasaji and Mutshatsha and that they had found themselves in control of the strategic road from Dilolo some thirty kilometers to Kolwezi. This lightning success had given the FNLC access to

583. See Turner and Young, n. 296, p. 256.
the rail links between Lubumashi and Kamina a situation which had spread great amount of panic in Kinshasa a fact which had prompted President Mobutu to make an urgent international appeal for assistance.\textsuperscript{586}

As regards the involvement of outside powers behind the invasion, it had been alleged that the governments of Angola, Soviet Union and Cuba had backed the insurgency attack. As for Angola's complicity the Zairian Foreign Minister Ngunza Karl-I Bond had alleged that some 5000 troops, equipped with sophisticated weapons, including rockets and missiles and officered by men specialized in guerrilla and subversive warfare had come from across the Atlantic to invaded Zaire from Angola.\textsuperscript{587} General Bumba Moasso Djogi, Commander of Zaire army(FAZ) had stated: "I confirm that my soldiers have seen Russians, Cubans and Portuguese at the side of Katanga gendarmes."\textsuperscript{588} A US State Department official had maintained that "the invaders were receiving logistical support from Angola."\textsuperscript{589} The Angolan government, however, had denied any involvement in the fighting and had urged the West to ignore Mobutu's plea for military aid, as it would merely help to create a new "Vietnam" situation in Zaire.\textsuperscript{590}

\textsuperscript{586} Ogunbadejo, n.571, p.226.

\textsuperscript{587} As cited in Patriot (New Delhi), 17 March 1971.

\textsuperscript{588} New York Times, 3 April 1977, p.5.

\textsuperscript{589} Ibid, 19 March 1977, p.1.

denying any Soviet, Cuban or Angolan complicity in the fighting, the Soviet press had maintained that the Western powers were seeking to utilize the occasion as a pretext for interfering in Zaire's internal affairs. Also in a hard hitting speech made later Soviet Communist party General Secretary Leonid I Brezhnev had further warned foreign powers not to intervene in the internal affairs of Zaire. It may be mentioned, however, that the government of Zaire had broken off its relations with Cuba by charging that it had uncovered documents from a Cuban diplomat, providing direct evidence to the effect that Havana had been involved in the invasion of Shaba. President Carter at a news conference, however, had maintained that there had been no "hard evidence or any evidence as far as that goes, that Cuban or Angolan troops had crossed the border into Zaire."

It may be worthwhile to mention that on the eve of Shaba I, Neto had charged that Zaire, backed by the US had been planning a major military operation against Angola, which had been code named as "Operation Cobra". It had reported that the operation would be launched in late 1977 with an aim to take over the oil-rich Cabinda province first which would then be followed by proceeding to overthrow the MPLA government. The government of Angola had thus, presented a statement to the UN.

denying the presence of any Cuban troops among the rebels and had concluded that the rebellion in Shaba had been an outcome of general discontentment among the people in Zaire. Following Shaba I on 3 August 1977, Neto had further accused Mobutu of trying to seize Cabinda and for allowing West Germany to construct a missile-launching ramp on the Angolan borders. He had stated, "our main problem now capping all others is the problem of defence from Zaire." In the background of these statements it may be possible to surmise that while the Angolan President had not unleashed the Katangans, but he had possibly given them the "go-ahead" direction towards the Shaba incursions in 1977.

It may be mentioned that following Shaba I, President Mobutu had approached some Western powers namely, the United States, Belgium, France, West Germany as well as several Arab states namely, Morocco, Sudan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia for help to ward off against the invasion. While the Soviet Union, like the United States, had maintained somewhat a low profile with regard to Shaba I, all of these states, however, had intervened in the conflict largely due to what they perceived to be the threat of a new Soviet expansion in Africa. These Western powers and Arab states, being alarmed by the aggressive and large-scale involvement of the Soviet Union in Angola, had felt the need to act swiftly inorder to

halt the Soviet drive across the continent. As for the African stakes in Shaba, these had essentially been political. A threat to the security and internal stability of a country as large and strategically important as Zaire, with its eight land borders had been a matter of concern throughout the continent, because a state system as insecure as the Africans had its own "domino theory".

It may be stated that among the allies who had come to the rescue of Mobutu during Shaba I, the US government had maintained the most cautious and reserved line despite of the long and close relationship that had existed between the two countries. Further, Washington's stakes in Zaire had been very high. American private investment in Zaire had ranked only behind its holdings in Nigeria and South Africa. Zaire had also become major supplier (95 percent) of cobalt to the United States. Several US large construction firms had substantial investments in projects in Zaire. Further, American banks had played a crucial role in the financing of many of the prestige projects launched by Mobutu. Also efforts to bail out the Mobutu government from bankruptcy had been spearheaded by Citi Bank, whose senior International advisor Irving Friedman had paid a visit to Zaire after the outbreak of Shaba I. Citibank had also been the architect behind the agreement signed between Zaire and its Western creditors designed to keep the country from defaulting on massive loans.

596. See Ogunbadejo, n. 571, p. 226.
It may be stated that though initially the United States had stepped up its military supplies to Mobutu, after discovering that there had been no direct Angolan or Cuban involvement in Shaba I, it had decided to reduce its assistance to the Zairian leader. The Citi Bank, for instance, had informed Kinshasa that a $250 million loan committed earlier would not be processed until the situation in Shaba had been stabilized. The US Congress had also tightened its aid to Mobutu during the height of the Shaba crisis by slashing military sales credit from $30 million to $15 million. Senator Dick Clark (Democrat, Iowa) and Representative Charles Diggs (Democrat, Michigan), Chairman of African Sub Committee of Senate and the House of Representatives respectively had cautioned the Administration against rescuing Mobutu. The general restraint could probably be attributed to the US determination to rid itself from unreasonable fears of Communist threats as well as to embark on a more realistic and progressive foreign policy.

It may be mentioned that the State Department had decided for an emergency airlift of $15 million worth of military and medical supplies to Mobutu while rejecting Zaire's request for arms and ammunition. These supplies in "nonlethal" military aid had consisted of a cargo plane as well as radio equipments.

599. See Ogunbadejo, n.571, p.226.
and spare parts. A number of factors had probably contributed to Administration's decision. The situation in Zaire had to reckon with the change in Administration from President Ford to President Carter, in January 1977. The new team under Secretary of State Cyrus Vance had consisted of its volatile black ambassador to UN, namely Andrew Young, who had no particular fascination for accepting Kissinger's thesis that Zaire was America's best friend on the African continent. The new Administration had no personal ties with the Mobutu regime, and that many of its members had preferred Nigeria as America's most stable ally instead of Mobutu. Young, for instance, had reportedly remarked that if Mobutu "can not stop a couple of thousand gendarmes, we should not send the Marines to help him".

By way of background to this scenario it may be stated that during his campaign President Carter had criticized military assistance to Zaire and had pledged military non-interference abroad except in cases where it would be interfering directly the national security of the United States. This sentiment had been reflected in a reported statement made three days after the crisis by the US Secretary of Defence Harold Brown, "The US position is that the military assistance is not

603. As cited in Adelman, *Old Foes*, n.564, p.8. Ambassador Young had reportedly remarked, "While the US is highly concerned about the threat to Zaire, it is not necessarily our job to interfere in defence of Zaire's territorial integrity". He had, however, pointed out that the best US policy should be to continue to support Nigeria's efforts to mediate between Zaire and Angola. See *New York Times*, 12 April 1977, p.5.
the preferred way of helping developing countries"^{604}, as well as by President Carter himself a month later: "we have an aversion to military involvements in foreign countries"^{605}.

The reluctance on the part of Administration had been to avoid another East-West showdown on the patterns of Angola. The Vietnam legacy and the open congressional resistance to American involvement in the Angolan civil war as well as a thorough review of US policy in Africa as carried on by the Carter Administration might have contributed to the low profile^{606}. As for Mobutu, he had launched a most scathing attack on the US government for the cautious response. Giving an interview to the *News week*’s reporter Arnaud de Borchgrave, Mobutu had stated:

...I confess we are bitterly disappointed by America's attitude. Neto is a pawn of the Cubans and Russians, but you would not face up to the threat. It is your weakness versus their will power and strength..."^{607}.

Zaire had felt particularly concerned over continued refusal by Washington to endorse in its official comments that the Soviets and Cubans had engineered the Katangan insurgency as part of their neo-colonialist design in Africa. A reported statement had been made by Ambassador Young to the effect that "despite Angola's pro-Soviet regime, it still sells its oil..."^{604}

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{\textsuperscript}604. As cited in Ibid.


{\textsuperscript}606. See Hull, n.560.

to the US". There were further remarks made by Senator Olds Clark who had stated that "the responsibilities incurred by backing a winning faction often grow to be as costly as that coming from backing a losing one and that the US should confine its support for principles rather than for cliques and individuals. These statements were sufficiently depressing enough for the Mobutu government in Zaire.

The New York Times in an editorial had endorsed the Administration's path of caution and had advised it to desist from military and political maneuvers by rushing into the internal affairs of Zaire. Commenting later in another editorial the paper had stated that "a peculiar international game is now being played out in Central Africa, the playing field in Zaire with its weighty geopolitical and ideological considerations imposed in the pathetic conflict". The paper had gone to present the dilemma for the US policy-makers as they had been sympathetic to a traditional ally like Mobutu. The paper had felt apprehensive over a perspective that a Soviet zone of influence could be formed to spread from Angola on the Atlantic across to Tanzania and Mozambique on the Indian Ocean, and thereby jeopardizing the US security interests in Southern and Central Africa.

The geo-strategic and political factors had prompted the US Administration to send further shipments worth of $400,000 as well as $600,000 to Zaire as well. Two of US military allies, namely France and Belgium had, however, taken part directly in the supportive action towards the Mobutu government. There was consensus in US circles that the invasion in Southern Zaire had reflected an aspect of large scale Soviet initiative in Africa and also the fact that if permitted, the Marxist state of Angola would form a belt through the heart of the continent running from Angola and Congo on the Atlantic to Mozambique on the Indian Ocean. Since the American policy-makers had been apprehensive that large scale US entanglement might bring about a greater and combined Soviet-Cuban thrust into the Shaban situation as in case of Angola in the past, the Administration had probably decided to provide its silent blessings behind the energetic efforts that had been made by Mobutu's allies.

With the refusal of the US government to intervene in favour of Zaire in a big way as in the case of Angola, Mobutu's survival had seemed to depend on external support and in this game the Zairian President had appeared to have played his cards rather skilfully. He had, for instance, resorted to a diplomacy in March-April 1977, (during the period of the FLNC's virtual unopposed advance in Shaba) not to approach the UN or

the ONU, but to those countries who had appeared sensitive to the implications of Soviet-Cuban backed invasion over Shaba. It may be mentioned in this regard that while both Belgium and West Germany had come to the rescue of Mobutu, his most energetic allies had turned out to be France and Morocco. The major part of the French intervention had been the provision of military transport aircraft that had been used to airlift Moroccan soldiers to Kolwezi. In the process France and Morocco had completed the military operation in barely a week's time by throwing out the Katangan invaders. As for Paris, it had defended its action by stating that though Zaire was not a former French colony, it was in fact the largest French-speaking community in the world after France itself and that Zaire had every right to seek support and aid from Paris.613.

Several Arab nations had also backed Mobutu strongly. They had included Morocco, Sudan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The Egyptian President Sadat had argued that the attack on Zaire could be construed as an increase in USSR expansionist threat in Africa and especially with regard to Moscow's influence in Libya and Ethiopia. Further, Sadat had defended his supportive action by stating that the attack on Zaire had constituted as an attack on the source of the Nile and also that Mobutu had been Egypt's major ally in Africa.614.

613. See Ogunbadejo, _n. 571, pp. 226-227.
As for Morocco it had intervened in the crisis in response to what it had visualized to be the new Soviet threat in Africa. King Hassan also had perceived a link between his own immediate problems with the POLISARIO Front in the Sahara and Mobutu's encounter with the former Katangans. In fact Morocco had provided generously to Zaire's war efforts by providing war efforts from its royal army. It may be mentioned that these soldiers led by Colonel Loubaris had been airlifted by the French aircrafts to Kolwezi on 9 April 1977. Within days they along with the Zairian troops had launched a massive counter attack on the FNLC forces and that in course of a less than a week by 14 April 1977 the combined forces had been able to reoccupy all the towns that had been captured by General Mbumba's forces. The Moroccan intervention, however, had been initiated secretly through a diplomatic mission made by Zaire's Foreign Minister Nguza Karl Bond on 25 March 1976.

In conclusion, it may be stated that during the Shaba I, the United States had been involved in the Zairian domestic affairs rather marginally. In view of its low-key diplomacy it appears that the CIA might not have been involved deeply. Further, the US had appeared to have acted largely in supportive fashion with other allies of Mobutu. But with the new French initiative and offensives in Zaire, a new "scramble for Africa" had been originated. In the past such scrambles had taken between Belgium and the United States for domination and control of Zaire. After Shaba I the French government had seemed to be competing with the United States in that regard.

615. For details see Ibid,p.228; See also Mangold,n.585, pp.109-110.
Shaba II

In May 1978 the FLNC had struck into Zaire once again on a series of fresh incursions from their bases in Angola. These military offensives, which had been initiated on 13 May 1978 with the seizure of the important mining centre of Kolwezi in Shaba Province, had been described as Shaba II. These attacks, which had continued for a period of one week only, had been suppressed with the help of French and Belgian paratroopers airlifted in US planes. Though much shorter than Shaba I or the "80 Day War" of 1977, the 1978 conflict had claimed a considerable number of victims in the period as well as afterwards during the mopping-up operations until June 1978. It may be mentioned that Shaba II had attracted considerable coverage in the Western press owing to the fact that a large number of white civilians had met their death during the course of the war. These casualties had included apart from a small number of European troops also a large number of black civilians and black troops both belonging to the FAZ and of the Katangan insurgents.

By way of background to Shaba II it may be stated that the invasion of Shaba I had been successful from the point of view of Katangan insurgents because the members of FAZ had fled at the sight of the enemy. But from a politico-military viewpoint the invasion had failed because the invaders
had wrongly anticipated that there would be a simultaneous popular uprising in Shaba following their arrival. The village folk in Shaba, on the other hand, had remained passive because of their fear of retaliation by the FAZ. In fact on the aftermath of Shaba I the FAZ units had resorted to a punitive "pacification" programme in the zones occupied by the FLNC forces which had led to the exodus of a significant fraction of Shaban population into neighbouring Angola. It had been estimated that the number of such refugees had exceeded 200,000, a fact which reflected the brutal nature of a reoccupation campaign as perpetrated by the ill-disciplined FAZ forces.

The Shaba I invasion had failed because the group under General Mbumba had offered no real programme or ideology except their call for the overthrow of Mobutu as well as some vague references to its commitment to a democratic rule in Zaire. Mobutu, on the other hand, had consolidated his power considerably "by playing the role of a master political chess-player", juggling up governmental and military leaders to neutralize any threat to his authority. In fact maneuvering had been the key to Mobutu's continued retention of unrivalled power in Zaire. Further the invasion had demonstrated that despite the serious disenchantment in domestic circles, no viable alternative had existed in respect of Mobutu's rule in Zaire.

617. Ibid.
618. See Turner and Young, n. 296, p. 257.
619. See Adelman, Zaire's Year, n. 616, p. 42.
Shaba I had been regarded as a model operation as it had set a pattern for "a generally-accepted division of labour between Africa and Europe, and within the Western alliance". At the same time it may be stated that Mobutu's successes had proved to be merely "short lived", as the FLNC had not felt defeated in a real sense. In fact, the FLNC forces had retreated themselves into Angola with a plan to be regrouped for a making a further attack on Zaire. Secondly, Mobutu had not followed up his military successes with the far-reaching reforms required to ensure long-term stability for his regime. It may be mentioned however, that whether or not Shaba II could have been averted, but the fact remains that the Zairian reprisals and the huge exodus of refugees as well as the continued Zairian support towards the FNLA and FLEC groups in Angola and Cabinda respectively had prevented any hope of reconciliation between Angola and Zaire.

As regards the actual operations it may be stated that the FLNC had adopted a different strategy during Shaba II. For instance, they had fielded a larger and better equipped force and had entered the Shaba province through the narrow strip of Lunda territory in Zambia. Infact the military thrust made by the Katangans had been so sudden and effective that despite previous warnings and the presence of about 8000 Zairian troops in Shaba, Kolwezi had fallen to the invaders.

620. See Mangold, n.585, p.110.
even at the beginning of the offensive. By their capture of Kolwezi, however, the invaders had struck at the "lungs" of the Zairian economy as well as had endangered the lives of European population in that mining city. Thus, the ELNC had precipitated a very different kind of international response as contrasted with Shaba I in 1977. It may be mentioned, however, that the invaders had been joined this time by some youth elements from the ranks of the Kolwezi informal sector as well as unemployed ones. The ELNC units had also exhibited considerable discipline in their relations with the civilian population and had announced the formation of provisional governing committees in the occupied towns of Kolwezi and Mutshatsha. But very soon the control exerted by the ELNC leaders over their men had begun to decline, as its leadership had no prepared plans for either the consolidation of administrative control over the occupied territory or for pursuing the initial ELNC advantages. As a result of this confusion the foreign troops who had arrived in a week's time consisting of 700 French followed by 1700 Belgians as well as supported logistically by the US Air Force, they were able to repulse thrusts the FNLC attacks rather comfortably.

As regards the initial response of the US Administration to Shaba II it may be stated that the immediate task for the government had been the problem of the evacuation

621. Ibid, p.111. See also Turner and Young, n.296,p.257.
622. See Turner and Young, n.296,p.258.
of largely French and Belgian expatriate population as well as about 100 Americans, (mainly construction workers employed by the US firm Morrison Knudsen) who had been engaged in building a 1000 mile high tension wire across Zaire to bring power to the copper mines in Shaba province. At the same time the Carter Administration for its part had reflected a growing anxiety to respond quickly to Cuban and Soviet interventions in Africa. It was not found wavering as in case of Shaba I to make allegations with regard to Cuban complicity with the Shaban invasion. It appeared that following Shaba I, the US had decided to give a signal that it was willing to support friends in Africa and the Middle East against Communist interventions. Thus Shaba II had represented for Washington as what Shaba I had been for France, i.e. an opportunity to demonstrate its firm resolve, however, at limited cost to itself.

Announcing the military attack in course of a press conference President Mobutu had stated that the Communist-backed Katangan rebels had been supported by the Soviet Union, Cuba, Algeria and Libya. Mobutu had also made an appeal to several governments for military help which had included the US, France, Belgium, Morocco and China. The crisis, however,

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624. See Mangold, n.585, p.111.
had caught the Western observers by surprise as both government officials as well as American diplomats in the Zairian capital had described the situation in Shaba province as fully under control. As for the US government it had alerted its Airborne unit for possible rescue of 77 American citizens stranded in Kolwezi area. President Carter had also scheduled a meeting with the leaders of both the houses of Congress with a view to request them to authorize him with greater powers to send economic and military assistance to friendly governments in Africa under pressure such as in Zaire. The meeting which had continued for ninety minutes, had, however, brought forth promises of sympathetic considerations from the Congressional leaders. At the same time President Carter had declared that he had been trying to speed up the delivery of "non-lethal" military equipments to Zaire which had been in pipeline for sometime. He had also responded immediately to the new Zairian request for sending some spare parts, medical supplies, communications equipments as well as gasoline.

It may be mentioned that the Belgian and French troops had been flown in an American-supported operation to rescue more than 2500 foreigners, mostly Europeans who had been trapped in Shaba. About 1500 Belgian paratroopers and

626. Ibid, 16 May 1978, p. 15.
628. Ibid, 18 May 1978, p. 3.
as many as 1000 members of the French Foreign Legion had been flown in 18 US C-141 transport aircrafts. At the same time according to a highly-placed US official, about 1500 paratroopers had placed on alert for a possible rescue mission in Zaire. According to the same source, US had provided to Zaire $17.5 million in credit for non-lethal equipments and medical supplies etc. The combined French and Belgian operation, however, had succeeded in evacuating about 2500 paratroopers as well as in ousting the rebels from their control over Kolwezi.

While responding to the Zairian menace it had been stated earlier that the Carter Administration had complained of undue restrictions imposed by the US Congress. At the time of consulting the Congressional leaders the President had sought for more flexibility in legislation so as to enable him to offer incentives to those countries like Zaire who had remained friendly with the US. This position of the Administration, however, had been contended to by the US ambassador to the UN namely Young in course of his programme on the CBS television programme, "Face the Nation". According to Young, he had every doubt whether the Presidential hands had been tied by legislation. He had stressed that there

was no need to repeal the legislation which had imposed limits on US covert involvements. He had argued further that the US should not be allowed to be pushed into a situation whereby in its efforts to counter Soviet and Cuban military activities, it would automatically become involved in a crisis. "A steady, quiet approach was more effective than rushing in troops", Young had declared.

The leading US newspapers had also supported the contention of Ambassador Young with regard to the Zairian situation. For instance, the Washington Post in an editorial had stated that while during Shaba I much of American public opinion had regarded Mobutu's appeal as unworthy on various grounds but the friends of Zaire on the other hand had helped it to "fill the breach". The editorial, however, had cautioned the US government against any precipitate response during the current phase of the crisis. The New York Times in an editorial had condemned the corrupt and inept regime in Zaire headed by Mobutu and had commented that the regime could hardly be described as an appropriate vehicle for a demonstration of American resistance to the Russians and the Cubans.

At a news conference President Carter had publicly complained that Cuban President Fidel Castro "could have done much more had he genuinely wanted to stop the invasion" of Zaire by the Katangan insurgents.

He had maintained that in Angola the Cuban government had more than 2000 troops and that 4000 of them had been stationed in the southern part of the country alone from where the rebel attack had been launched. He had further stated that he had "firm proof" that the Cubans had been involved in the training of the Katangans. The President, however, had stressed that both Castro as well as the Angolan government should pledge not to invade Zaire again. Following the presidential charge against Cuba, the White House had made public a memorandum prepared by Herbert Helu, the head of CIA's Public Information summarizing the Administration's arguments. The memorandum had stated that the Cuban presence in Angola had been all pervasive, and that the Katangan insurgents had been trained and armed by the Cubans and possibly by the East Germans for several years and that such assistance had the active support of the Angolan and the Soviet governments. The memorandum had stressed further that the March 1977 as well as May 1978 invasions had taken place with the full cooperation of the Angolan and the Cuban government.

It had been reported further that while the Administration had stressed the role of Cuba in the training and equipping of the Katangan rebels, the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, however, had not agreed to such a contention. For instance, after a three hour private meeting between the CIA Director Admiral Stansfield Turner and the members of the Foreign Relations Committee both Chairman John Sparkman as well as prominent members, namely Senators George McGovern (Democrat, South Dakota) and Frank Church (Democrat, Idaho) had expressed their serious doubts as to the actual involvements of the Cubans in Shaba Crisis.

It may be mentioned that the Belgian-French operation had been crowned with success as over 2000 Europeans had been evacuated within a period of three days and that the FLNC had been rapidly dislodged from Kolwezi. A new attempt at peace keeping, however, had been initiated with the establishment of an "Inter-African Force" (IAF) whose immediate task had been to disarm the mutinous elements of the Zairian army as well as to provide security for the Europeans who were living in the copper belt between Lubumbashi and Kolwezi. This arrangement had probably been on the pattern of developments following Shaba I when Moroccans had undertaken such a role.

During discussion on African security at the 1977 Dakar as well as at the 1978 Paris Franco-African summit such a consensus had seemed to emerge. It appears that in Western capitals such arrangement had also been accepted. In the process, an IAF force consisting of 1500 Moroccans, 600 Senepalese as well as smaller forces from Togo, Gabon Central African Republic and Ivory Coast had been formed and that these forces had been flown to Zaire in the US as well as French and Belgian military aircrafts. While France had provided standardized equipment for such a force, the US and Saudi Arabia seemed to have provided finances such a force. Thus, the net result had been an innovation in regional peace keeping which had worked outside the framework of existing formal alliance or international organizations.  

It may be stated the pressures of circumstances on the eve of Shaba II had brought much more direct American military support for Mobutu. With the scale of the Soviet-Cuban intervention hovering in Ethiopia new arguments had been provided in favour of effective action by the United States. The situation had been presented as if Shaba II had bore the hallmark of Soviet machination and had required direct confrontation. Also, the general Western reaction to Shaba II had been swifter than it had been to Shaba I. While the European interests between Belgium and France had clashed over the rescue operation

638. See Mangold, n.585, p.112.
in Kolwezi, still the US had probably worked behind the scene to see that both of them had worked in a combined manner. At the same time it may be mentioned that strong pressures had been exerted to induce Zaire towards rapprochement with Angola. This had succeeded once again temporarily by August 1978 both the countries had found that such a policy had proved to be advantageous from their mutual stand points. The Western powers also had initiated a process of military reforms in Zaire to discipline the FAZ and that the work had been entrusted to several nations. For instance, France and Belgium had been asked to look after the army, the Chinese the navy and that west Germany had been asked to provide a telecommunication system.

Finally, it may be mentioned that President Carter had been unable to substantiate fully his charges that the Cuban and the Soviet Union had masterminded the Shaba invasion in 1978 and that in June 1978 he had been forced to retrace from his stance. This had been due to the fact that the documentations as provided by the CIA had not been fully convincing to the members of the Congress and also due to the fact that on 17 May 1978 Fidel Castro had informed the Chief American diplomat in Havana to the effect that Cuba had no role in the Shaban invasions. Further, Castro had indicated on that occasion as to how he had sincerely tried to dissuade the FLNC from invading Shaba ever since the plan had been hatched in April 1978. It has been

639. See Turner and Young, n. 296, p. 389.
mentioned earlier that the leader of FLNC, M'Bumba had consistently rebuffed any efforts that had been suggested in the past by other opposition groups to tie all their movements into a broader political effort. All these factors had thus, indicated clearly that the initiative for the Shaban attacks had come from the leader of the FLNC himself.

By way of conclusion to the Shaba invasions it may be stated that the Carter Administration had been divided on the issue of providing support to Mobutu and Zaire. While Mobutu had been able to invoke his long record of intimate relationship with the United States both through the conventional diplomatic channels as well as through the CIA. With the change in Administration occurring in 1977, a new perspective in respect of US-African policy formulation, had been brought about. For instance, the key figures in the Carter Administration namely, Richard Morse, Anthony Lake, Andrew Young and Donald McHenry had not shared the earlier Nixon-Kissinger perceptions of Zaire as the "lynch pin of African stability". These US officials, who had been skeptical of the Mobutu regime, had relied on developing effective working relationship with states closer to the African mainstream such as, Nigeria and Tanzania rather than with Zaire which had been outside it. There was also strong skepticism in the Congress concerning Zaire and Mobutu. These had been demonstrated during Shaba I, when the American response
had been officially described as "limited and measured", a situation which had brought sharp reactions from Mobutu.\textsuperscript{641}

As regards the US attitude vis-a-vis the Soviet activities in Shaba, two different schools had existed side by side within the Administration. According to a position advanced by Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance the Soviets had been usual "merely reactive to targets of opportunity, helping the Katangese rivals", since it had given them a chance for some "low-cost, low-risk adventurism".\textsuperscript{642} The National Security Adviser to the President, Zbigniew Brzezinsky on the other hand had taken a second view that the Soviets had a grand design for Africa and the Middle East in addition to their attempts to occupy a commanding position on the rim of the crucial oil routes.\textsuperscript{643} Due to such sharp divisions in the ranks of American policy-makers, the US policy towards Zaire during Shaba I had shown some ambivalence. But following the Ethiopian situation as well as the excessive increase in Soviet thrust that had been demonstrated after it had prompted the Administration to take a bold posture towards Zaire during Shaba II.

\textsuperscript{641} See Turner and Young, n. 296, pp. 388-389.


\textsuperscript{643} Ibid.
The Carter Administration, Mobutu and the "Zairian Sickness" (1977-1978)

An attempt will be made in the present section to analyze the response of the United States towards the domestic setting in Zaire during the first phase of the Carter Presidency (1977-1978). The setting had been described by Mobutu as the "Zairian Sickness" in course of a speech made before his party Congress (MPR) on 25 November 1977. In his speech, Mobutu had highlighted the severe economic and political malaise that had engulfed Zaire since the termination of the Angolan Civil war in 1976. The developments during the wars over Shaba in 1977 and 1978 had laid bare the deeper aspects of "what appears to be a permanent crisis confronting Zaire". In the process, the Mobutu government, which had once seemed a powerful and reasonably effective regime had been overwhelmed by "a deepening social crisis provoked by the pauperization of the masses of the populace, evaporating internal legitimacy and external credibility, a crushing debt burden, and the transparent unreliability of its numerous armed forces". A study of the above-mentioned factors will therefore be relevant to examine the symptoms surrounding the phenomenon "Zairian Sickness".

To begin with it may be stated that symptoms of profound social malaise had begun to surface in the form of wildcat strikes in Shaba and Kinshasa in 1976-1977. Though the strikes had been officially declared as illegal, the state-sponsored Trade Union Organization called Union Nationale des Travailleurs Zairois (UNTZA) had sought to preempt itself into the field of organized labour and in the process a spontaneous and sudden eruption of discontentment had surfaced in Zaire 645.

In the years 1977-1978 Mobutu had also resorted to more repressive treatments towards his political opponents. He had, for instance, imprisoned the then number two figure in his government, Nguza Karl I-Bond on grounds of treason following Shaba II and had him sentenced to death. It was through the intervention by Western nations as well as by the US government in particular that Karl I Bond had somehow escaped from the clutches of death 646. Since the treason charges had looked fictitious and without strong foundations it had appeared to most observers that his real crime had been probably the fact that he had been described by the Western Press during the 1977 crisis as a possible successor to Mobutu 647. Further repressiveness had been

645. See Turner and Young, n. 296, p. 74.
647. See Turner and Young, n. 296, p. 74.
demonstrated in February 1978 with the public execution of fourteen alleged leaders of a millenial sect in Bandundu, which had run into conflict with the state. It had been followed by a further execution of thirteen civilian and military figures in March 1978, who had allegedly been involved in a plot against the regime. The mood of profound demoralization had been eloquently expressed by Archbishop Kabanga of Lubumbashi in March 1976 when he had attacked the Mobutu regime for the general crisis in economic, social and moral sphere. These expressions, however, had been made in a symbolic sense.

Another feature of the "Zairian Sickness" had been the rampant corruption that had predominated in high circles led by Mobutu himself. It has been mentioned as to how according to the ex-CIA operative's (John Stickwell) testimony, he had quietly pocketed $1.4 million of US money from funds intended for Holden Roberto's army in Angola and that he had built for himself and his military as well as civilian bureaucracy a life of opulence and corruption. It was reported that Mobutu had held controlling interest in Zaire's largest taxi company, Banque de Kinshasa, skyscrapers in Ivory coast and substantial chunk in Zaire's wholesale and retail trade such as the luxury store, "Zaire Lux". He seemed to have pocketed 40 percent of the world.

648. Ibid.
649. As cited in Ibid, p.73.
proceeds of the fight that had been held in Kinshasa in 1974 between Muhammed Ali and George Foreman. It is reported that Mobutu had built not only places in all eight provinces of the country but had palatial residences in France, Belgium and Switzerland. It is also mentioned in private circles that Mobutu had major business interests in Zaire's two main diamond mining concerns namely, Miba and Britmond as well as financial interests in Tenke Fugurume Mining Society, a consortium of investors in Zaire from US, France, South Africa and Japan. His personal fortunes were said to be in excess of $3 billion, sometimes more than that of even most well-known American tycoons. He was also reported to have constructed houses in the capital cities of Abidjan (Ivory Coast) and Dakar (Senegal) as well as at Bangui in the Central African Republic.

In course of his testimony on the Hearings entitled, "Political and Economic Situation in Zaire: Fall 1981", before the Sub Committee on Africa of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Nguza Karl I-Bond the ex-Prime Minister of Zaire had provided a detailed background of the domestic scene in the country under Mobutu as well as the features of the "Zairian Sickness". According to testimony as provided on 15 September 1981, Karl I Bond had made a number of serious

650. For details see KabwIt, n.574, p.398.

allegations against Mobutu concerning his massive theft of US and other Western aid, widespread abuses of human rights and for bringing about violent changes in the domestic front. Karl I Bond was of the opinion that sustenance of Mobutu regime was due to continued support provided by the Western nations and particularly by the United States. Otherwise, according to Bond, Mobutu's regime could not have survived the armed uprisings of Shaba I and Shaba II. Reflecting on the economic front the former Prime Minister of Zaire had pointed out that the Western powers had imposed five conditions in return of their continued support after Shaba II. They were namely, the control of the activities of the Bank of Zaire through the IMF, the control of the activities of the Ministry of Finance through the appointment of IMF experts to key positions in the Ministry, reconciliation with neighbouring Angola, general amnesty to political prisoners and national reconciliation, liberalization and democratization of political institutions. Bond was of the view that while Mobutu had accepted these conditions under constraints of domestic circumstances, he had not actually implemented these measures in true sense. Infact Mobutu had resorted to flagrant practices of corruption and had encouraged high-ranking military officers and administrative officials to enrich themselves at the cost of state exchequer. The Zairian exile had appended a testimony from John C.Pritchard of the Presbyterian Church of

652. See Congressional Hearings on Political and Economic Situation in Zaire, n.646, pp.3-10.
653. Ibid, p.4.
654. For details see Ibid, pp.5-8.
the United States to support his thesis. According to Pritchard:

...The people of (Zaire) have suffered and are suffering disastrously under the leadership of President Mobutu. The United States is so closely identified with President Mobutu that we will also be thrown out in that inevitable change. US policy should, therefore, be searching for some way in which to create distance between us and the President of Zaire... Our policy should be one of disengagement and of disinvolve ment because in the minds of the Zairian people he is our puppet. To them, we put him in power, and we have maintained him...655.

Karl I Bond had also appended a declaration made by the Permanent Committee of the Roman Catholic Bishops of Zaire dated 23 June 1981, had described the widespread corruption, as well as social conditions, the inhuman sufferings, the lack of human rights and the general situation which had prevailed in Zaire 656. The Chairman of the African Sub Committee, Howard Wolpe and Representative Stephen J. Solarz (Democrat, New York) had subjected the former Zairian Prime Ministers with questions on Western economic and geopolitical stakes in Zaire.

Chairman Wolpe, in his introductory remarks had provided a perspective for analyzing US policy towards Mobutu. He had indicated that Zaire had a political system

655. As cited in Ibid, p. 4.
which had been in continuing crisis which had prompted the subcommittee to express its reservations with regard to the military components of US aid and concerns about the slow pace of economic and political reforms in Zaire. The Chairman had also presented the division of opinion in American circles with regard to Mobutu. According to Volpe, while some American academic observers had pointed out that the US interests in Zaire might be seriously compromised by the fact that the Americans government had been bolstering an oppressive and unstable regime headed by Mobutu. He had some on to add that other observers, however, had insisted that President Mobutu had demonstrated enormous skill in holding together a fragile political system and that chaos would follow if the Zairian general were to leave office. The discussion in the Congress had thus indicated the nature of controversies that had been aroused concerning the personality of Mobutu.

It may be mentioned further that the opinion in the Congress had been to end all military assistance to Zaire in view of the poor record of Mobutu in the domestic front. During the discussion on the US authorization for Zaire during the Financial year 1980 Representative Stephen J. Solarz (Democrat, New York) had set the tone for discussion in the following manner:

President Mobutu's regime has a poor record on both human rights and economic management. The bureaucracy seems more interested in extracting the wealth for national development. The army... seems more interested in plundering the people than protecting them.

On the other hand, Mobutu has recently agreed to some reforms including the appointment of an IMF official to the Central Bank to control the misuse of foreign exchange and its flight into certain European bank accounts, and its flight into certain European bank accounts and the installation of a legislative council...

The Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Richard Moose testifying before the subcommittee had defended the State Department's request for a 25 percent increase in assistance to $10.6 million. Further, Moose had mentioned Zaire's $5 billion debt to private and official American lenders and underscored the substantial humanitarian element built into US policy towards Kinshasa. The official had stated:

...There is no way, in our opinion for us to walk away from the problems of Zaire... our policy is to encourage and facilitate reform and recovery by linking our assistance to Zaire's progress in actually implementing change. We believe our interests in that part of Africa warrant continuation of this policy so long as there is such progress. But if there is not, then we should consider policy options other than those which we are now pursuing...

The subcommittee, which had consisted of few Democrats and three Republicans had recommended to end all military assistance to Zaire.


With regard to the economic issues it may be stated that Zaire had incurred huge debt, some of these owing to the rise in the prices of petroleum imports and the fall in the copper exports which were beyond the control of the Zairian authorities. Others, namely, the squandering of funds on prestige projects were, however, done with the connivance of Zairian authorities. As regards the debt problem, a series of agreements between Zaire and the donors had begun in 1976 which had been described as the liberalization measures. These had included political measures like holding of elections in 1977, the administrative decentralization as well as economic measures like the ending ofprice controls etc 660.

It may be mentioned that under the IMF direction between the period 1976-1978, four sets of international negotiations had been established involving stabilization plans, bilateral debt rescheduling (under Paris Club) and agreement with commercial banks (termed London agreement) and general consultative group meeting to assess the over-all economic progress and planning 661. At the June 1977 Consultative Group meeting in Paris Government of Zaire had presented a 19 page paper of goals, priorities and activities. For March 1978 consultative Group meeting


Government of Zaire had produced a much more extensive document (180 pages) which had been amalgamated into winter 1977 draft with elements of November 1977 Mobutu plan 662.

It may be stated further that Zaire's major creditors which had included 11 foreign governments, several private banks and a number of internal development institutions, had held a series of meetings for rescheduling of Zaire's debts. The Zairian government for its part had formulated the "Mobutu Plan", which had called for the installation of officials from the IMF and other international institutions in the country's central bank, finance ministry and custom's office. The plan had also called for an austerity budget, an emphasis on agricultural development, and decentralization of the country's economic structure. The implementation of the plan, however, had been delayed due to the uprisings in Shaba in 1977 and 1978 663.

As regards the US developmental assistance it may be stated that during the period (1977-1978), a part of it had been "privatized" by the elites in command of Zaire as part of their self-enrichment strategy 664. David Gould had given two striking example of the "privatization" in the sector of military assistance as well as food for peace. For

662. Ibid, p.15.
instance, military supplies from the US had been systematically diverted by top military officials to their own private stores, which had been sold later in black market. As regards food for peace, the bureaucrats-businessman in command had made colossal profits by smuggling commodities across the Zaire river to Congo/Brazzaville to obtain precious foreign currency. Also American rice had been sold at nearly ten times the agreed price. It may be mentioned, however, that in cases of both military and food aid the US government had been fully aware of the extent of theft and misuse of American assistance, but had persisted in continuing the same.

As for the US government it had strongly defended the usefulness of continued aid to Zaire on the following grounds:

"...The Government of Zaire...has indicated that it will increase the allocation of resources for agricultural production and social services. ...The AID programme will...continue efforts...to improve the nutrition and health of the poor...The PL 480 Title and programme will continue to provide essential food and commodities for local manufactures..."...Total US public and private investment in Zaire amounts to nearly $1 billion Zaire's size, central location and economic potential make it important to the stability and development of Central and Southern Africa. ...Our concern about Zaire's long term economic and political stability have led us to be receptive to Zaire's requests for continued security assistance...


It may be mentioned that one of the top political officers in the US embassy in Kinshasa, namely, Robert Remole had made a strong plea with the US ambassador Walter Cutler to distance the American government from the Mobutu regime due to its corruption, and inefficiency. He had further stressed that like Iran under Shah, Zaire was an enormously wealthy land ruled by a dictator who was friendly to the West but was among the world's greatest human rights offenders. Remole had asserted that the US should not identify itself with that discredited personality of Mobutu.

It may be mentioned by way conclusion to American support for Mobutu that there were arguments both in favour as well as against. The arguments in favour had been the fact of the size and strategic geographic location of Zaire. In area Zaire was the biggest of all black African countries. Situated in the very heart of Africa, it had common frontiers with no fewer than nine other lands. It has neither to been one of the biggest recipients of American aid in all Africa. Secondly, need not to remain passive in the face of what might turnout to be a Soviet-Cuban backed initiative to disrupt a country represented by many Africans as being one of the few remaining US clients in the African continent. The arguments against helping Mobutu had been

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the fact that he had lost his broad-based support among his people, despite his remarkable and popular successes in holding Zaire together after the upheavals of the 1960s. Since the early 1970s, however, General Mobutu has become increasingly authoritarian and his regime increasingly corrupt. These factors had weighed against any support for him.\footnote{669}

Making a balance stock of the entire situation it may be stated by way of conclusion that despite a bad press in the west the US government supported the continuance of Mobutu government in office. As for the US, the picture in Zaire is not one of dependency since as compared to its active involvements in other theatres like Vietnam and Cuba, the American involvements in Zaire since 1960 can be described as successful in purpose.

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\footnote{669} Ibid.