CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

REASONS FOR THE SHABA CRISSES

ETHNIC FACTOR

FOREIGN ECONOMIC INTERESTS FACTOR

KATANGSESE GENDARMERIE FACTOR

ANGOLA FACTOR

MOBUTU FACTOR
Shaba, the erstwhile Katanga province, constitutes the backbone of Zaire’s economy, providing "two-thirds of the nation’s foreign earnings." [1] It is rather "a veritable geological scandal. It contains 60% of the uranium of the world, 73% of cobalt, 8% of copper, without taking into account a host of rare and easily exploitable minerals." [2]

But this rich province has been a centre of trouble for the Zairian government since the advent of independence. The province has been inhabited by the Lunda tribes whose political proclivities were always in favour of secession from the Zairian state. There had been a strong willingness among Lundas to enjoy exclusive control over the rich resources found in the province which could not be possible as long as it remained an inalienable part of Zaire.

2. Colonel Roger Trinquier : "Katanga": Le Monde (May 26, 1978)

See also
Crawford Young : Politics in the Congo (USA, 1965) pp.15-16.
Map 1. Zaire: Political Sub-Divisions

Source: C. Young and T. Turner: "The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State"
Primarily, this yearning goaded the Lundas to extend full support to Moise Tshombe's secessionist party called Conakat in early 60s enabling him to launch a separatist struggle against Zaire's central authority, which was contained by January 1963, "thanks to the intervention of UN troops."[3] Since then the region remained calm till the second half of 70s when Nathaniel Mbumba, the Shaba version of Tshombe, mobilized his FLNC(Front de liberation national congolais) volunteers, and launched assaults to dismantle Mobutu's authority in the Shaba province opening "yet another chapter of internal conflict with international dimensions" [4] in Zaire.

The Shaba crises have been interpreted as "external invasions" [5] launched by the FLNC raiders, "the lineal descendants of the old Katanga gendarmes," [6] as well as the prolongation of the "popular movement for a 'second' independence." [7] Very few examples are available that can provide the peer for the "simultaneous economic, military and political crises" [8] to which Zaire was subjected during the 1977-78 Shaba crises which could be tided over by Western military aid.

Actually, "for Zaire herself and for much of Africa, the

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3. Hull, n.1, p.4.
4. Ibid; p.4.
USA and several of West European States, Shaba I and Shaba II were crises of some importance. At stake was not only the future of one of the largest countries in Africa, but also the stability of a continent in which the majority of the fifty-odd sovereign states are poor, militarily weak and politically fragile, having in many cases inherited borders from the colonial era which do not correspond to tribal allegiances and boundaries." [9] They not only revived fears of East-West conflict, but intensified them and undermined the hopes for African unity. "The possibilities of an ideological split among African states similar to that of the moderate Monrovia and radical Casablanca blocs of the early 1960s have been opened." [10]

The Shaba crises were one among the many crises in the history of Zaire, which has undergone the pangs of "as many or as deep earlier post-colonial convulsions as this huge central African state. Between 1960 and 1967 revolts, secessions, UN peacekeeping attempts, and general disruption made the then named 'Congo' synonymous with 'tempestuous rage'". [11] Zaire, perhaps, offers "an archetypal example to support the thesis" [12] that "there is an inherent tendency toward instability in Africa." [13]

It is conceded that "Zaire was born in controversy and baptized in turmoil" [14] and the decolonization unleashed problems of

11.Adelman, n.8, p.36.
13.Ibid;
"underdevelopment, revolt, ethnicity, communal conflict and wars of secession." [15] But they could not stamp out the existence of Zaire as a state, although it was sapped up economically and politically.

Notwithstanding, there are unmistakable differences between the Shaba crises of seventies and the Katangan problems of early sixties. The Katangan problems were the offshoots of the Belgian colonial policy and other foreign powers' intervention which fuelled the "forces of fragmentation". [16] But opinions are divergent regarding the whole phenomenon of stimuli-responses which constituted the Shaba crises. One version is "that the 'invasion' was mounted by the ex-Katangan 'mercenaries' trained and financed by the Soviets with Cuban and Angolan support. The other is that the conflict was essentially an internal affair of Zaire, a popular uprising against a corrupt regime propped up by Western capitalism." [17] Both versions carry weight, but emphasis varies.

The second argument carries more weight than the first one. The Shaba crises could not be solely "spawned in Moscow, gestated in Havana, and hatched in Luanda" [18] as the Western leaders clamoured. They were also the logical culmination of the regime's efforts to preserve the paraphernalia of "the perpetual malnutrition of 18-22 million (Zairian) people for some undefined greater good such as security of supply for 12,000 tons of cobalt

16. Ibid;
18. Young, n.6, p.189.

Source: Young and Turner
yearly" [19] to the Nato powers. The Mobutu administration has been "essentially based on corruption, nepotism, and a secret police network" which implies "that a constantly increasing attention has to be paid to maintaining the regime in power rather than coming to grips with the problems of satisfying the basic needs of the masses." [20] And the Shaba crises "laid bare the deeper aspects of what appears to be a permanent crisis confronting Zaire. What had once seemed a powerful and reasonably effective regime is overwhelmed by a deepening social crisis provoked by the pauperization of the mass of the populace, evaporating internal legitimacy and external credibility, a crushing debt burden, and the transparent unreliability of its numerous armed forces." [21]

**REASONS FOR THE SHABA CRISIES**

Before we proceed to study the crises in their multi-hued contours and ramifications an elaboration of five different factors becomes necessary. They are as follow: ethnic, foreign economic interests, Katangese gendarmerie, the Angolan factor and Mobutu.

1. **Ethnic Factor**

Ethnic diversity in Zaire has been the primary cause of the tribal dissensions menacing the very survival of the state. There had been no single dominant tribal group in the country as a whole, but some tribes wielded effective influence at local or regional level because of their size or past tradition, strategic

21. Young, n.6, p.169.
location or modernization. The most important among them had been the Kongo, the Mongo, the Luba and the Lunda, which played the pivotal roles in the regional politics.[22]

The south-eastern parts of Shaba have been the homeland of the Lunda tribes whose ethnic solidarity and ambition to exercise exclusive regional sovereignty have spawned grave problems for the Zairian authorities since independence. Lundas have had a grand past. During the 17th-18th centuries they had established a large kingdom which straddled over the whole of Shaba, even extending westward into Kwango and east to the Luapula river, and exercised supremacy over a number of smaller tribes. They traded in copper, ivory, and slaves. In 1870 the Arab merchants came from East African coast to collaborate with these tribes in the slave trade.[23] This period had been marked by fierce tribal rivalries which could not be effaced from the Lunda history. This apparently spilled into the 1960s-70s moulding the politics of

22. It is estimated that more than 200 tribes dwell in Zaire, having different languages, dialects, customs and traditions. See

Clifford Geertz: Old Societies and new States (New York, 1971) p.118.
B.Chakrovorty: The Congo Operation: 1960-63 (Historical Section, Ministry of Defencer, Govt. of India, New Delhi, 1976) pp.4-5.

Map 3. Language Distribution and Ethnic Groups

Source: Young and Turner
of the post-independence era of Zaire.

Both Moise Tshombe and Nathaniel Mbumba belonged to the Lunda tribal fraternity.[24] Tshombe tried to epitomize the glorious past of the Lundas and yearned to establish a huge kingdom in which the Lundas would enjoy paramount influence. His envisaged kingdom included Leopoldville (now Kinshasa), South Kasai, Katanga(now Shaba), northern Angola and northern Rhodesia (now Zambia).[25] In 70s Mbumba also longed for a similar type of Lunda political power by overthrowing Mobutu's regime and gaining control over the minerals' sanctuaries of Shaba.[26]

The colonial era actually chiselled on the Lunda minds the paranoia for their past grandeur. It stoked their tribal insularity by encouraging the non-Lundas and non-Shabans to monopolize all avenues of economic prosperity in the Lunda heartland which impoverished the Lundas. Since the inception of this century, Shaba(Katanga), thanks to its abundant minerals, became the centre of heavy foreign investments in the mines, metallurgicals, plants, secondary industries, communication and social services which ushered in numerous opportunities for economic advancement for the local populace.[27]

25. Tshombe was also a member of the Lunda royal house and the son-in-law of the Lunda paramount chief Mwata Yamvo to whom he was related both by blood and marriage as he had married his daughter. See Crowley, n.22, p.69.
These opportunities required certain skills which the indigenous Lunda tribe lacked due to its non-receptivity to the European influences, and hence it lagged behind in tapping the benefits. These opportunities were actually grabbed by the Luba tribes who originally hailed from Kasai, but were mostly based in the northern sector of Shaba, bordering the Kasai region. The Lubas were highly receptive to the European influences. They constituted a sizeable part of the labour force working in the Belgian and other foreign mining companies in the region and took full advantage of the educational opportunities offered by the Catholic missionary schools. This helped the Luba tribes to procure most of the jobs available either in the administration or the industrial and commercial arenas. [28]

Such a scenario generated a strong feeling of antagonism and frustration among the authentic, indigenous Katangan tribes, the Lundas, against the Kasaian immigrants, particularly the Lubas, and bred social tensions among them. The Lundas resented the exploitation of their region by the strangers, as this had pushed them out of the work and deprived them of opportunities in their own homeland. They could not stand shorn of such predicament so easily, and subsequently it got embedded in their psyche that the remedy lay only in a separate state where they would lord over their natural wealth. [29]

Thus, the idea of an independent Lunda state of Shaba (Katanga) had been around since long. The ethnic and regional party Conakat (Confederation Des Associations Tribals du Katanga), founded by Moise Tshombe in 1958, gave vent to it. The party rejected the privileged position which the Kasaian immigrants had accomplished in Shaba(Katanga) and advocated its economic and political separation from the rest of Zaire.[30]

The formation of the Conakat Party had goaded the Luba tribes to form their own party that could help safeguard their privileges, and cope with the secessionist threats of the former. The Balubakat Party led by Jason Sendwe of North Katanga vowed to protect the interests of the Kasaian immigrants. The Lubas persuaded other non-indigenous tribes to join hand with them resulting in the birth of the anti-secessionist Cartel Katangais. Both parties participated in the general elections of May 1960. The Conakat party won more seats and managed to form the provincial government which later on declared the secession and independence of Katanga on July 11, 1960. The electoral battle between the two parties advocating antagonistic aims greatly stoked the fire of hatred and dissension that already permeated the Lundas and Lubas.[31]

The 1960s secessionist moves fizzled out. But the ethnic ambition of the Lundas did not peter out. The tribal distrust between the indigenous ones and the strangers continued to grow.

   See also
   Mennen Williams: *Africa for the Africans* (US, 1969) p.94.
For the time being the Lundas made a retreat and waited for the opportune time to strike again.

Mobutu's takeover of power in 1965 seemed to beckon tribal harmony. But it proved wrong. The Shaba crises of 1977-78 vindicated that the tribal animosity still lingered among the Lundas, and their ambition to be masters of the Shaban resources had not waned.

The role of ethnicity could be played down in view of the changes that characterized the polity of Zaire in the aftermath of the early 1960s upheavals. Crawford Young says that the contours of the ethnic conflict scenario had changed as "broader regional alignments have become more salient; this trend is reinforced by the remarkable pace of diffusion of the major linguae francae, especially Lingala and Swahili. In the urban centres, these are becoming first languages for the new generations. [32]

Such rationalization cannot be brushed aside. But the fact is that ethnic cleavage continued to widen even after the failure of the 1960s secessionist bid in Katanga. Young, though equivocally, concedes that "although the Mobutu regime has laid great stress on combating ethnicity, over the years its regional identification has become more marked. This is not evident in regional breakdown of ministers or Political Bureau members; numerically the ruling organs of the state are reasonably representative. However, among the key members of the immediate presidential entourage, and especially the security forces, the

32. Young, n.6, p.179.
Equator predominance is manifest. This provides an additional focus for animosities toward the regime."[33]

Albert Ndele, the former governor of the Central Bank of Zaire from 1961 to 1970, threw a good deal of light on the way Mobutu had concentrated power and favour in the hands of people from his province of Equator in an interview to the Sunday Times (London) in May 1978. He said: "When the president came to power, one of his principal themes was the necessity to struggle against tribalism. He stressed competence as opposed to tribal affinities as the test for selecting public officers. Unhappily he did not stick to his original intentions. It is those from Equator who are now the chosen people - de la terre promise....Men from Kasai, Katanga, Bakongo have been systematically put aside in the new state system, systematically deprived of positions and maltreated. Young officers, even those trained overseas, come back to find that if they are not from Equator there is no possibility of advancement. The most influential people in the administration are now also from this region. The majority of quota places for University entrance - up to 70 percent - are allotted to young people from Equator, and they are also recruited for priority places on university staffs. Beyond that the whole of commerce, at least in consumer goods, is in the hands of the president's own family. What Mobutu has done is to tribalise and regionalise all the key posts in public administration." [34]

The Zairian historian, Elikia M'Bokolo also wrote: "There is

33. Young, n. 6, p. 178.
no doubt that the actual regime, installed in 1965 by General Mobutu, made efforts to realize one of its major objectives: to destroy the centrifugal tendencies, and build a 'Zairian nation'. But one does not efface in so little time the sentiments having quite deep roots. Many of the measures, undertaken to fight against the particularisms, paradoxically contribute to their sustenance; it is the case particularly in regard to the rule of quotas, which distributes according to per region and per tribe the places available for public employment and higher education; it is the case also in practice in accordance with which the 'commissaire' of one region (provincial governor) should hail from another province. The persistence of the particularisms, unanimously acknowledged today, is quite well obvious, particularly in the region where these sentiments have been the most ardent." [35]

The thesis that Mobutu has helped the proliferation of ethnic dissensions is evidenced by the repressive acts perpetrated against certain tribes belonging to the Shaba region. According to Colette Braeckman, several eyewitnesses "(missionaries, expatriates, international functionaries) relate the deterioration of the situation in Shaba during the span of last ten years....After the failure of the Katangese secession and the installation of President Mobutu in Kinshasa, Shaba was literally occupied by the foreign forces: the troops of the Zairian Armed Forces(FAZ) were composed of soldiers of other provinces, who behaved as if deployed in conquered territories,

and the governors, particularly repressive, were nominated from outside, among whom was the famous Manzikala, who provoked the exodus of thousands of refugees belonging to the Lunda tribe towards Angola. As for the Katangese gendarmes, we know that several of them who, being so called pardoned by Mobutu, returned to their country, were executed soon after their return, some of them being obliged to drink petrol....while others thrown from high-flying helicopters."[36]

After the 1977 invasion, "the province of Shaba was the theatre of ferocious repression. Dozens of thousands of the Zairian refugees would arrive in Angola and all their evidences concur: 'the FAZ have looted us, robbed us, raped us. They have burnt our villages, bombarded the entire region, committed thorough massacres and pillages...' From 1977 to 1978 the conduct of the FAZ in Shaba was much more odious than perversity: the troops sent by Kinshasa were composed exclusively of soldiers from north who lived on the terrain and acted as forces of occupation."[37]

The massive purge of early 1978 which involved hundreds of officers and non-commissioned officers from Shaba, Bandundu, East and West Kasai provinces, was mainly aimed against the members of the Lunda tribes. [38] The aftermath of the Kolwezi episode saw the rounding up of about 300 young Lundas "on suspicion of sympathizing with the rebels," [39] and they were subjected to

37. Ibid;
39. Ibid;
various kinds of persecution and torture and "forced to sing
songs of praises for Mobutu in the presence of French
legionnaires and Belgian paratroopers, then dumped in military
planes for Kinshasa where there have been persistent rumours that
some have been executed." [40]

It was also ascertained by refugees who crossed over to
Zambia from Kolwezi during the crises that the Zairian army
indiscriminately killed hundreds of Lunda tribesmen "in retalia-
tion for their alleged support of the Katangan exiles." [41]
Braeckman also writes that during 1977-78, the situation in
Shaba was characterized by "an exacerbated tribalism and by a
repression which hit both the common people and elites. It is,
therefore, at the same time the spiritual chief of the Lundas,
Mwat Yavo, was accused of complicity with the invaders, and
M.Nguza Karl-I-Bond, in-charge of Zaire's foreign affairs, was
arrested, condemned to death and then pardoned. In fact, we know
today that President Mobutu had tried to seduce Mwat Yavo by
giving him money, and scholarships for the youths of his village,
and several other benefits, in nature, hoping that in return the
spiritual chief would dissuade General Mbumba and his men from
launching retaliations. Mwat Yavo accepted the cakes, but
undertook no mediation. Likewise, it is probable that Karl-I-Bond
was in touch with the rebels, but he did not succeed in
convincing them to renounce the action; this failure cost him
his liberty and nearly his life."[42]

40: Kabwit, n.38.
41. Ibid; p.397.
42. Braeckman, n.36.
"According to the recounted tales of terrorism, entire villages were being raged and burned by soldiers, while the inhabitants were being tortured to extract information from them. At the last count, the UN Refugee Committee in Zambia said that the number of refugees was well over 2,000. Moreover, the Zairian army has reportedly planted landmines in no-man's land—vacated by the villagers—at least 30 miles deep near the extreme northwestern tip of Zambia and along the Angolan border."[43]

Such persecution of certain tribes belonging to the Shaba region did not stem from sudden determination to quell the insurgency, but it had its roots in ethnic distrust and disdain which the Mobutu regime harboured towards the Lunda tribesmen. On the other hand, these tribes were also not immune from strong rancour against Mobutu. They were susceptible to alienation from the Mobutu regime which appeared to maraud their rich resources for the benefit of the non-Shabans. Ever since the days of Tshombe their slogan has been "We, the Lundas, we have the riches of the world in our hands but it is the foreigners of the North who benefit from them." [44]

Talking about the genesis of the instability syndrome plaguing Shaba, Elikia M'Bokolo opines: "The agitation and the political instability of Katanga, rebaptized as Shaba by the regime of General Mobutu Sese Seko have continued for the last twenty years, and manifested under various forms like pure and simple territorial secession led by Moise Tshombe, 'Monsieur Tiroir Caisse', between 1960 and 1963; in 1967 the revolt joined

43. Kabwit, n.38.
44. Jeune Afrique, Exclusive, No.918, August 9,1978.
by Katangese gendarmes, the former soldiers of the separatist State, and the 'Frightful': and today, the military incursions led by the 'rebels' whom we tend to call the 'Katangese gendarmes' and who, in an unanimous opinion, find in their province of origin the active complicity of the mass of the population."[45]

Unlike Zaire, Katanga(Shaba) has been "une expression géographique",[46] but it does not mean that it is bereft of "the extraordinary complexity of the ethnic groups distributed on this territory." [47] It is difficult to specify the precise number of the ethnic groups inhabiting the region, but the major groups are Luba and Lunda which have played the actual political roles since last 20 years. These two tribes have rich past, and they had ruled this region for centuries. Hence, they have always nurtured a particularistic personality which is characterized by rich culture and a spirit of solidarity amongst their members which could not be traced among other tribes of the region.[48]

The Belgian colonization aggravated the feeling of particularism and regionalism, as it brought about industrialization in the region which meant draining the wealth out. This trend even continued after independence, further pushing up the impoverishment of the Lundas. Kinshasa always played the significant role in this looting, but the Shabans had no say in the corridors of power in the capital. Hence, it was quite natural that alienation from the central government should crop up. [49]

45. M'Bokolo, n.35.
46.,47.,48.,&49. Ibid.
Even Shaba was never economically integrated with other parts of Zaire, although the other parts of the country, particularly the Equatorial region from where the present ruling elites hailed, thrived at its cost. This also added fuel to the alienation. M'Bokolo wrote: "Economically, Congo could not exist without Katanga: but the converse was not true. The mines province exported its minerals through Angola and through Mozambique and through the two Rhodesias (Zambia and Zimbabwe), through South Africa and through Mozambique: the BCK (the railtrack of Bas-Congo-Katanga) only played a complementary role. Hence, on the economic map, Katanga was more integrated with the white slope of Southern Africa than with Congo."[50]

However, the FLNC leader, Nathaniel Mbumba repudiated the charge of particularism or regionalism against his movement. He asserted that most of the "gendarmes katangais" died during the controversial span of 1963 and 1967 and his troops were genuinely constituted of "militants....hailing from all the regions and ethnies of Congo" and their objectives were to gain control over the whole of Zaire, "contrary to the opinion of those who believe or who want to make believe that it is merely the continuation of the Katangese secession."[51] Of course, "in 1978, the Zairian refugees in Angola were more than 2,00,000 but they were no more uniquely the inhabitants of Shaba: some had come from Bas-Zaire or even from Kivu, pushed by the repression and the misery."[52]

According to Professor J.C. Willame, who once taught at the National University of Zaire, "there does not exist, in effect,

50. M'Bokolo, n.35.
51. Ibid;
52. Braeckman, n.36.
only one strata of Katangese rebels, but many. Undoubtedly, there are some old combatants of the secession, but they should be quite few in number: their middle age should average 40 years. This initial group was joined by other Katangan youths of the Lunda tribe in majority who had been forced into exile in 1967 following the repression unleashed in Shaba by the ex-governor Manzikala. Nathaniel Mbumba was one of the new comers. The former chauffer of the Gecamines and the former commissaire of police at Kolwezi, Mbumba, had acted as a friend of Lundas, who enjoyed quite great prestige at the mining centre. Following quarrels with the governor, he was arrested, beaten, and then disappeared in Angola like many others." [53]

Arthur Gavshon, delineating the nature of the Lundas' ethnic ambition, says: "A history of shifting allegiances since the sixteenth century qualified the Lunda for the role they played in the post-colonial era as black Africa's true surrogates who, since 1960, served seven different sponsors, usually white. Their causes may have changed but their mission remained constant. It was - and is - to win ultimate control over the enormously rich mineral resources in the land of their fathers." [54]

2. Foreign Economic Interests Factor

As said above, Shaba has been highly rich in mineral resources which attracted the European explorers and investors leading to the concentration of European settlers in the

province. They mostly hailed from Belgium because of the Belgian policy to keep off other foreign powers from its colony of Congo.[55] Shaba's mineral potentials had been already documented by the mid-1890s.[56] The Belgian colonialists envisaged that the long-term fiscal viability of the province required a sound productive infrastructure to enable the exploitation of the resources. Simultaneously, they felt that the security imperative of the colonial state demanded that the capital needed to tap the mineral resources be predominantly Belgian. By the beginning of this century Belgian capital began to evince interest in the province. Large financial groups came in using their leverage of undertaking risky financial ventures to secure exceedingly generous terms. [57]

In 1906 the powerful financial tycoon 'Societe Generale de Belgique,' came in with the launching of three major undertakings: the Union Miniere du Haut-Katanga (UMHK), the Societe Internationale Forestiere et Miniere (Formiere) and the Compagnie du chemin de Fer du Bas-Congo au Katanga (BCK). [58] Among these three, the UMHK gradually turned into a vast empire with its core complex of copper installations, centred in Lubumbashi, Likasi, and especially Kolwezi, which had produced about 300,000 tons of copper by 1965. In addition,UMHK produced in the mid-1960s about 10,000 tons of cobalt, more than half the total amounts internationally traded. [59]

55. Lemarchand, n.29, pp.78-80.
57. Ibid;
58. C.Young & T.Turner: The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State pp.33-34.
59. Ibid; p.289.
In 1980 values the total capital investment in UMHK since its launching in 1906 has galloped to 5 billion Belgian francs.[60] In 1965, UMHK assets were assessed to be 21.3 billion Belgian francs (US $430 million) and it produced 50% of the Zairian state revenues and 70% of Zaire's foreign exchange. The ore bodies exploited have been exceptionally rich in copper—from 4 to 6 percent, some as high as 15 percent or twice the Zambian figure. American producers in the postwar era have been handling ore bodies with less than 1 percent.[61] Net profits of UMHK were 31 billion Belgian francs between 1950 and 1959 and 16 billion during the span of 1960-66. [62]

Such huge Belgian mining interests in Shaba have goaded their owners to try to keep the province largely free from the control of the central government in Kinshasa. Even prior to independence the Belgian and other foreign settlers and mines owners evinced tendency for autonomy in the province. In May 1958 they formed the Union Katangaise, a multi-racial party under the leadership of a Belgian settler, Achille Gavage. The Union advocated the division of the Congo into large autonomous regions linked with a confederation with Belgium. It encouraged immigration from Belgium and other Western countries to Katanga. It also called for a Belgian military presence there to protect it from subversive movements. In the middle of 1959 the Union joined Conakat and in December 1959 nexus between them further strengthened as the Union offered technical and economic

60. Young and Turner, n.58; pp.259-260.
assistance to Tshombe. Subsequently, with the approach of independence the powerful business circles supported by that Union in collaboration with Tshombe strove to carve out a separate Katanga state. [63] Tshombe received massive financial backing from the Belgian company UMHK. Until the beginning of 1963 the company operated within the shadow of the Katanga secession, providing all the revenue to the Tshombist state.[64]

Moreover, the end of the Katanga secession did not usher in any radical change in the attitude of the foreign mining interests. They always looked for opportunities to realize their goal of autonomy from the central government. Mobutu's assumption of power in Kinshasa greatly menaced these interests. His twin nationalization and Zairianization programme, beginning in 1973, affected the Belgian and other foreign interests. All the plantation and local commercial companies were taken over from the foreigners, and handed over to the Zairians. [65] In 1967 Mobutu had already nationalized the UMHK. It is believed that Mobutu wanted to weaken the control of the foreign interests over the Zairian economy so that the repetition of the Katanga phenomenon was avoided. Kamitatu has related the cause of the UMHK nationalization to the Katanga secession. He writes: "the political aspect of nationalization was the presidential determination to remove from UMHK the capacity to offer financial

65. Hull. n. 1. n. 8.
backing to potential political opponents of the regime, in particular Moise Tshombe, considered to be the protege and secular instrument of UMHK."[66]

But Mobutu's such drastic measures provoked these companies to provide the rebels with money and encourage them to oppose his government.[67] More details about the help given by foreign mining interests in Shaba to the FLNC rebels would be in Chapter III.


The Shaba crises were also the prolongation of the conflict between the Katangese gendarmerie, which backed Tshombe's secessionist movement in early 60s, and the Central authorities, represented by Lumumba and Mobutu respectively. Actually, the Katangese gendarmes were the creatures of Belgian colonialism. Initially, they were trained to serve as gendarmerie of the key Zairian province of Katanga that earned half the colonialists' foreign revenue. With independence they were induced to become the military arm of Moise Tshombe's failed venture to establish Katanga as an independent state.[68]

The failure of the secessionist attempt in 1963 relegated the gendarmes to oblivion for the time being. But the insurgency in the north-eastern region of Zaire in 1964 offered an opportunity to their leader, Moise Tshombe to stage a comeback and incorporate them in the Zairian military set-up. Ironically,

67. Chatterjee, n.22; p.241.
68. Gavshon, n.54; p.121.
Tshombe was installed in power in May 1964 to negotiate a political settlement with the insurgents. But his efforts to strike a deal with insurgent groups foundered providing him the chance to bring in new military resources to cope with the rebellions. It is estimated that approximately 18,000 Katangan gendarmes were absorbed in the Zairian national army as units.[69] Later in October 1965 Tshombe was removed from the premiership of Zaire by President Kasavubu, but this did not affect the continuation of the Katanga gendarmes in the army.[70] But a change of attitude could be noticed when Mobutu took over power in the coup d'état of November 24, 1965, although Tshombe had declared his support for Mobutu. [71]

The presence of Katanga gendarmes who had harboured fidelity to Tshombe in the FAZ was a grave threat to the Mobutu regime. Mobutu strove to reduce Tshombe's influence. The first inkling of the regime's anti-Tshombe bent came in the composition of Mobutu's first cabinet in which Tshombe's followers carried little weight. Tshombe had to leave for Europe on December 23, 1965. And by April 1966 Tshombe was dubbed "traitor" by the Mobutu regime. By now Tshombe had resorted to conspiratorial activity to oust Mobutu. His dissidence was hooked to unrest among the mercenaries and Katanga gendarme units, which first broke out in 1966.[72] "The 1966 mutiny at Kisangani involved the Baka regiment, a unit of FAZ composed essentially of 2,000 Katangan gendarmes with white mercenary officers, under the

69. Young and Turner, n. 58; pp. 47, 49, 52.
70. Ibid; p. 50.
71. Ibid;
command of Colonel Ferdinand Tshipolo. The colonel and his men had been called back from Angola in September 1964 by then premier Tshombe to reinforce the flagging national army in its efforts to subdue the rebellions. The regiment was left ethnoregionally homogeneous, with its officers and logistical systems." [73] The mutiny could be crushed only when the Mobutu regime hired white mercenary units under Bob Denard paying a heavy bonus. [74]

The second mutiny of 1967, which also began in Kisangani, was unambiguously part of a broader conspiracy orchestrated by Tshombe to overthrow Mobutu. But the kidnapping of Tshombe on the eve of the operation preempted its success. However, the machinery was already set in motion, and the FAZ had to strive hard to cope with it. Beyond the Tshombe plot, there were specifically military factors behind the revolt. It was rather prompted by the regime's efforts to reduce its dependence upon the highly controversial mercenaries including the Katangans. The Katangans were seized with the fear that they could be disarmed or dispersed among other units. [75]

After the collapse of the 1967 mutiny the Mobutu regime resorted to repressive measures against the Lunda tribes, which had constituted the backbone of the Katanga gendarmerie, forcing thousands of them to flee to Angola for safety of life. Later they founded the FLNC which launched the Shaba invasions of 1977-78 in a bid to overthrow Mobutu. [76] More details in Chapter III.

73. Young and Turner, n.58, p.250.
75. Ibid;
76. Chatterjee, n.22, p.235.
4. Angola Factor

The deterioration of relations between Zaire and its neighbouring countries, especially Angola, was a major ingredient of instability and disruption in Zaire. Both Zaire and Angola had turned into sanctuaries for each other's rebels, causing great mutual friction.[77]

No doubt, such friction troubled Angola. But Zaire's susceptibility to troubles has been quite grave in view of the fact that its largest border is with Angola and most of its infrastructure industries and coppermines are located in close proximity to this border. Additionally, Zaire's main transportation and link with the outside world is dependent upon Angola through the Beneguela railway which is the real outlet for Zaire's exports. [78]

Nevertheless, Zaire under Mobutu continued to snub Angola of both Portuguese colonialists and MPLA respectively. Actually, the Zairian collaboration with Angolan liberation movements dated from the early 1960s. But the coup of April 1974 by the Armed Forces Movement in Portugal suddenly made Angolan independence an imminent phenomenon. Zaire, from whose territory the FNLA of Holden Roberto was operating, jumped into the fray over the choice of a successor regime. In September 1974 Mobutu surreptitiously met General Spinola, chief of the Portuguese movement. Both agreed to form a coalition government for Angola to be headed by Roberto, Jonas Savimbi of the UNITA and MPLA

78. Adelman, n.8; p.39.
dissident Daniel Chipenda. This strategy excluded the participation of the majority of the MPLA under Agostino Neto. But it remained stillborn as Spinola was himself ousted by left-wing officers in the very month. And with this withered the dream of Mobutu to promote, with Portuguese connivance, an Angolan successor regime with close nexus with Zaire. [79]

Mobutu had always patronized FNLA, whose ethnic base was located in the northwestern Angolan areas bordering Zaire. Many of the FNLA leadership, including its head, Holden Roberto, had lived in Kinshasa most of their lives. Roberto had quasi-kinship ties with Mobutu through his second wife, who came from the same village as Mobutu's first spouse. The FNLA was permitted to set up its guerrilla camps on the Zairian territory. But in case of MPLA, Mobutu was hostile because of its Marxist orientation. Since mid-60s the MPLA's main external headquarters had been in Congo-Brazzaville. The MPLA guerrilla expeditions were seriously marred by the persistent Zairian denial of transit rights to soldiers moving from the Congo-Brazzaville rear bases into Angola. [80]

Hence, when the civil war erupted in Angola in early 1975, Zaire decided to militarily side with FNLA-UNITA against MPLA. The first Zairian units marched into Angola in July 1975 when the MPLA appeared to be in the ascendant. [81] In August, two more

79.&80. Young and Turner, n. 58.
81. Some have claimed that entry of Zairian troops came earlier. LeoGrande states that 1,200 Zairian soldiers had crossed the Angolan border in March 1975. SEE William M. LeoGrande: Cuban-Soviet Relations and Cuban Policy in Africa in Carmelo Mesa-Lago and J.S. Behkeim, eds.; Cuba in Africa (Pittsburgh: Centre for Latin American Studies, University of Pittsburgh, 1982) p. 23.
para commando companies crossed the border while the South
African troops captured the Cunene Dam site in the south. Just on
the eve of the day set for Angolan independence Zairian units
attacked Cabinda in unison with the irregulars from the Frente do
Libertacao do Enclave de Cabinda (FLEC). It is estimated that
altogether the equivalent of four or five battalions was
committed to rout MPLA forces. By October the Zairian-FNLA forces
forged toward Luanda, and as the independence day approached,
they were less than 20 miles from Luanda.

MPLA managed to turn the tide of battle in November. Its
forces got entrenched at the gates of the capital. Besides, MPLA
mobilized the Katanga gendarme units, which had entered into
alliance with it in January 1975 and had been provided with
equipment and some training by external supporters of the MPLA.
The Katangese gendarmes blunted the Zairian offensive, forcing
the FAZ-FNLA units to retreat. As they retreated, they dissipated
into disorderly bands of marauders. Carmona, principal town of
northern Angola, was fully ransacked before being abandoned
without a fight. In Mquela de Lombo, close to the Zairian border,
Zairian troops staged a mock invasion, masquerading to be MPLA
forces, in order to drive out the populace and plunder their
belongings. [82]

Mobutu's ventures in Angola failed miserably and he tried
to reconcile with the MPLA which was well entrenched in Angola by
early 1976. In March 1976 Mobutu and Neto signed an agreement in
Brazzaville to normalize relations. But the agreement could not
last long and relations between them remained tense and

estranged. Zaire did not relinquish rendering help to FNLA. This could have prompted MPLA to goad the FLNC forces to embarrass Mobutu by orchestrating the Shaba attacks. Nevertheless, the Angolan authorities strongly refuted the Zairian government's accusation that Angola was supporting the FLNC rebels in their ventures in Shaba, stating that Mobutu's allegations were a smokescreen for the internal troubles of the country. (More details would be in Chapter III).

5. **Mobutu Factor**

Mobutu was himself no less responsible for provoking the Shaba crises than any of the aforesaid factors. The economic difficulties coupled with mismanagement, corruption and repression gripping the Mobutu regime from 1965 to 1976, sapped the strength of the Zairian state. [83] A weakened state was bound to foster the separatist elements. In Chapter II a detailed study of the Mobutu regime would be undertaken delineating as to how Mobutu had himself contributed to the Shaba crises.