CHAPTER VI

UNITED STATES' RESPONSES TO THE CONGO CRISIS

Process of Decolonization

The history of American association with the Belgian Congo could be traced as far back as, 1894 when the US government had established a Consulate in response to the efforts made by Belgian king Leopold II to harness the rich resources of his colony with the help of foreign private companies. In the process, one of the American companies namely to American Congo Company had engaged itself in developing the rubber plantations in the Congo. The treatment meted out to the Congolese native by the Belgian king had produced severe criticisms in Britain as well as in the United States. The Senate, for instance, had moved a resolution in 1893 urging Belgium to improve the conditions of the Congolese natives. It may be recalled that American Blacks had also reacted violently to the atrocities committed against the native population and had formed an organization
called the Congo Reform Association to take up their cause. Also the eminent Black leader William Edward B. Du Bois had urged at the firm Pan-African Conference held in 1900 at Paris that the Belgian Congo should become "a great Negro State of the world" and at its prosperity should be counted "not simply in cash and commerce, but in happiness and true advancement of its Black population."¹

The name of Congo, however had not figured in American circles for a long time until the advent of second World War. But the Congo, in the meanwhile had, received wartime prominence because of the fact that President of Belgian Union Miniere, Edgur Edouard Sengir had provided the American scientists with Uranium from the Congo which had helped them in the production of the first nuclear bomb that had been dropped in the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

At the end of the war and especially after the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty organization (NATO), Americans had preferred not to criticize Belgium for its colonial policies. On the other hand, statements had been made by prominent Americans highlighting the impressive role played by Belgium in the Congo. For instance, Senator Allan J. Ellender (Democrat, Louisiana) after his visit to the Congo in 1953 had stated;

"...... Even Belgian government got out of this territory the natives would suffer. To my way of thinking it will require years of schooling and training before the natives are able to govern themselves. Darkness would return here, if the settlers leave and permit the natives to take over entirely"...²

Chester Bowles, a former Under Secretary of State, at the end of an African tour in 1955 had commented "Not even the most optimistic Congolese patriot dreamed that in five years his country would be an independent state".\(^3\)

Despite these adverse remarks, the process of decolonization in the Congo had been initiated with the independence of Ghana in 1957. Kwame Nkrumah, who had led the Ghanian movement to its successful outcome, had begun the process in Africa by hosting two international conferences at Accra called the First Conferences of Independent African States (April, 1958) and the All African Peoples' Conference (December, 1958). In the wake of hosting the latter the Ghanian leader had invited two prominent Congolese politicians, namely Patrice Lumumba, and Joseph Kasavubu to attend the conference. It may be stated that both the leaders

3. Chester Bowles, Promises to Keep My Years in Public Life, (New Delhi, 1972) p.419.
after their return had organized public demonstration against the Belgian rule. In fact, Lumumba had been instrumental in organizing a successful riot at Stanleyville in 1959, which had followed by riots at various places led by Kasavubu and other Congolese leaders. It had been described as to how those developments had prompted Belgium to invite the Congolese leaders to a Round Table conferences in January 1960, as well as to announce the intention of its withdrawal from Congo on 30 June 1960 after holding parliamentary elections in May 1960. The Belgian government also had promulgated a constitution called the "Loi Fundamentale" or the "Basic Law".

The response of the US government to the political developments had been one of open support for Belgium during this period. This is evident from the testimony provided by the Secretary of State for Africa, Joseph Salterthwaite before the House Sub-Committee on Africa on 5 March 1959. The Assistant Secretary stated:
"... The Belgian government has carried on a very enlightened policy in the Belgian Congo at least to the extent of educating the Congolese to become good artisans and raising their standard of living to the extent that it is probably higher than in any other dependent area." ⁴

The US government had also been careful in respecting the sentiments of Belgium in respect of its colony. This was evident from the fact that the State Department had not allowed some American blacks to visit Congo, left that "might encourage the African natives to press for main independence"⁵ Also it may be stated that in May 1960, the US government had extended an invitation to a group of Congolese leaders for a visit to the United states and curiously enough, the Belgian government in response had sent only its own

⁴ See **Briefing on Africa, 1959, Hearings Before** the sub Committee on Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (Washington DC, 1989) P.8.

⁵ Phillip Forner, n.l. p.44.
nationals on this trip to represent the African country.

The reaction of the Congress towards the process of decolonization had been marked by expressions of "caution" and "moderation". Senator Leverett Saltonstall (Republican, Massachusetts) for instance, had stated that the African states while striving for their independence, should not indulge in "breaking friendship and assistance with their former masters" Saltonstall however had gone onto add that United States should adopt a balanced and creative middle path approach towards emerging it should initiate steps African States" and that| to induce both Europe and Africa to work together as partners".  

With regard to the process of decolonization, however, Americans had been on the horns of a dilemma. While the US had felt committed to the principle of self-determination in general, at the same time it had been obvious of the fact of

its alliances with European colonial powers in a
global defence net work, for its own security as
well as survival. In the circumstances, the US
policy makers had found it hard to challenge the
African possessions of European powers as any such
move might weaken or undermine their alliance
system and endanger the western unity against
Soviet expansionism.

A powerful section in the United States
however, had urged the Administration for a more
positive stance towards the issue of
decolonization. The American Blacks, for instance
had highlighted the issue by calling upon the US
government to adopt a more dynamic policy towards
the colonial question. Another powerful section
namely, the American Corporations also had a stake
in the process of decolonization, as it had the
possibility of opening up opportunities for them
once colonial ties had been dissolved and that the

7. See Hans J. Morgenthal, The Impasse of Power
privileged positions of their European competitions had been removed. Also, military planners, drawing upon the experiences of the Second World War had been interested in the potential use of African facilities in a possible war against the Soviet Union. Further the Captains of industry and American resources planners had been alive to the importance of ensuring continued access by the US to the critical raw material of resources of Africa during the period of the Cold War. In the circumstances, these interests had urged upon the US Administration to respond quickly, if an opening had been created, in the direction of decolonization by any of the European powers.
Formulation of US Policy

The crisis in the Congo and the Cold War competition that had followed on its wake had provided the American policy-makers with the basic stimulus to formulate the United States policy towards the central African state. The request for military assistance, as mentioned earlier, had prompted them to go ahead with that task in a sense of urgency, as things had been getting out of hand in Congo. But the formulation of American policy towards Congo had to be conceived within the broad framework of its overall policy towards Africa evolved since World War II. In fact, Africa did not constitute a "priority area" since the Second World War, as it had regarded as the "responsibility" and "preserve" of European colonial powers which had been the allies of the United States in the Cold War against the Soviet Union, American policy-makers, had therefore sought to refrain themselves from indulging in acts of
interference in the affairs of the Black continent. The factors which had prompted to invoke a change in the US attitude had been the Cold War, the process of decolonization, American Strategic interests and the need to have access to African raw materials, the prevention of extension of Soviet influence, and building of economic, political and cultural relations which had been aimed at inducing the African countries to remain oriented towards the West in general and to the United States in particular.

The Cold War had prompted the US government to think pragmatically in terms of the advantages which a friendly Africa had offered as against a situation in which the countries of the Black Continent had taken into Soviet orbit. The manifestation of this situation had already become evident in the Middle East as well as in the North

Africa. In the existing scenario the US policy makers, had naturally sought to resist any further extension of Soviet influence from these areas to infiltrate into Black Africa. The advent of Nikita Khrushchew to power in the USSR as well as the skillful policies followed by him to woo the emergent Afro-Asia states had prompted America policy makers to adopt policies calculated to him the goodwill of the elites of emerging Black Africa States and thereby to prevent the growth of Soviet influence.

The formulation of American policy towards Africa, had been a by product of the East-West Struggle and by its overall objectives of continent. As a global policy, the United States had proceeded along two levels namely the military and the ideological. Militarily, the United States had sought to prevent the Soviet Union from "Stepping over the lines of demarcation which had been established at the end of the World War II" whereas ideologically, American interest had
consisted "in the denial of African continent to military and ideological conquest by the Soviet Union".

Within this overall framework, the US government had responded to the crisis in the Congo by advising the African government to look for UN support in order to maintain law and order in the country. Reflecting on the development, President Eisenhower in his memoir had ruled out the deployment of US troops in the Congo even as part of the UN contingent. He had mentioned, however, of his decision to place a US naval attack carrier on the month of the river Congo for its possible use in the case of emergency. The position of US Administration had been reflected in the action by its officials. The US Ambassador to the UN, Henry Cabot Lodge, for instance, had spoken energetically in favour of a UN Force and had pledged American support for the same in the form of transport, communication as well as food for the Congo. The US
Ambassador Timberlake, also had urged upon his government to send 100 tons of flour to the Congo immediately, "less hunger riots in Leopoldville should turn into anti-white riots".  

The Administration however had been confronted with the problem of providing security as well as safety for about 2000 Americans who had been left stranded in various danger zones of the country. Ambassador Timberlake in this regard had sought for permission from the Leopoldville government for possible use of American helicopters to evacuate its citizens from the Congo. After the permission had been granted, the US government had undertaken a massive airlift and had succeeded in evaluating about 1500 American citizens.

As regards the reasons as to why the US had acted through the UN, former Secretary of State Dean Rusk had stated:

"...Why was this decision taken? The alternative to United Nations intervention would have been evidence and chaos and a ready-made opportunity for Soviet explanation which the United States would have been compelled to encounter."^{11}

According to Assistant Secretary Mennen williams, the United States had decided to support the Congolese government economically but had refused to provide troops in order to "avoid a direct East-West confrontation in the Congo" Former US Ambassador to the UN, Adlai stvenson had maintained that direct intervention would have been interpreted as an attempt by the United States to reimpose colonial rule.

After receiving the Congolese request for American Military support the discussion within the administration had revolved round three options namely (1) to do nothing (2) direct US intervention (3) to work through the UN. Cleveland, had gone on

^{11} Ibid. 17 July, 1960.
to add that after careful thinking the option number (3) had been accepted for implementation\textsuperscript{12}. The first two options had not been considered seriously since the UN option had been "the instinctive reaction of Eisenhower and top echelons of the state. The UN option had been accepted because of one common perceptions that had shared by key members of the Eisenhower Administration namely, that the Congo had not been vital to US security and that the Soviets would not intervene unless the UN efforts had been discredited as well as that a success in the multilateral effort would enhance the viability and effectiveness of the UN. The former UN chief representative in Katanga, Coner Cruise O' Brien had been of the opinion that "though the decision to turn to UN was a gamble", the US had been confident that it would" win its points by a kind of parliamentary diplomacy which it had successfully negotiated with Afro-Asian

The decision regarding the response to the Congo crisis had been taken after a series of meetings between top officials of the US Administration, namely, Secretary of State, Christian A. Herter, Under Secretary of State Livingston Merchant and Assistant Secretaries of State Francis O. Wilcox (International Organization) Foy D. Kohler (European Affairs) and Joseph C. Satterthwaite (African Affairs). There had been no evidence of a bureau level dispute on the issue, as the unanimous consensus had been in favour of the UN option.

This unanimity had been reflected in the reported remarks of Herter that "if the UN did not exist, one would have to be created." 13

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The absence of controversy on the UN option could be attributed to the fact that European view had predominated within the Administration. It may be pointed out in this connection that the bureau of Africa under the Eisenhower Administration had been staffed largely by officials who had spent long years on European assignments. Also prominent officials like Secretary Herter, Under Secretary Douglas Dillon as well as an influential advisor to the President Eisenhower namely Robert Murphy had all shared a common European like. President Eisenhower himself had a strong European bias, which could be found from the remarks made in his memoir that he had been specially interested in the development of close ties between the Oongo and her former European ruler. Though the decision had been largely influenced by the combined efforts of the bureau of Africa as well as international organization the options of several veteran

Europeanists had been taken into account at the policy-formation process\textsuperscript{16}.

The UN option might have appeared satisfying also to the NATO partners of the United States despite the fact of their strong sentiments and bias in favour of Belgium. This is evident from the Statement made by the British Prime Minister Harold Mc.Millan on the floor of the Parliament, that the withdrawal of Belgian troops from the Congo before the arrival of a UN force would have left "a complete vaccum in the unsettled new republic."\textsuperscript{17}

The option of French government, however was that "the Belgian forces had not only the right but the duty to protect lives when public order had broken down in Congo."\textsuperscript{18} It may be stated in this connection that while France and Britain had been supporting

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. 15 July, 1960, p.3.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, 16 July, 1960, p.3.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. 17 July, 1960. p.8.
Brussels openly, the US government had been working behind the scenes through the UN to protect the Belgian interest in the Congo.19

Thus, the US government had approached the Congo problem in the initial phase of the crisis by turning to the United Nations in order to avoid the Cold War conflagration in Black Africa. It had to remain watchful, however, with regard to the evolution of political developments in the Congo. The UN option, had been considered as appropriate since the American policy makers had probably made the calculation that it would be possible on their part to keep the political developments in the Congo under control through interventions by friendly UN officials working in the ONUC.

19. Ibid. 16 July, 1960, p.3
The United States in the United Nations

The United States on its part and its Western supporters did not in the beginning want any bold steps for the withdrawal of Belgians from the Congo, as proposed by USSR. Later, however USA along with some European and Afro-Asian states supported vigorous steps for the immediate withdrawal of Belgian troops and other foreign elements from the Congo, for the Congolese unity and to preserve peace in Congo.

During Eisenhower period Lumumba who was fiercely anti-Belgian had held the stage in Congo as the central figure and that the US Administration had been severely affected and plagued by his charismatic personality. As he wanted a speedy withdrawal of Belgian troops from his country, he made appeals to the governments of Soviet Union as well as radical African states. The

United States in the circumstances had felt greatly concerned as the Soviet Union had responded energetically to Lumumba's request and had actually pledged to intervene along with the troops belonging to the radical African States placed under the UN command. The matter, had headed for a tense situation for the United States as it had gathered concrete evidence of active Soviet involvement in the form of supplies, of arms as well as military and technical assistance to bolster up Lumumba's efforts in the Congo.\(^1\)

In the meanwhile, the situation had aggravated in Congo by the power struggle that had ensured between Kasavubu and Lumumba as each one of them had dismissed the other through radio broadcasts to the nation. On 12 September 1960, however, no Congolese Parliament in a surprise move had voted to support Lumumba.

The next stage in the struggle for power, had taken place at the UN in New York as both Kasavubu and Lumumba had moved over there to press for their respective recognition. The matter, however, had been discussed and voted upon first in the Credential Committee and final in the General Assembly on 22 November 1960. The voting at the UN had been marked by hectic US lobbying in favour of Kasavubu, which had eventually resulted in ensuring victory for the Congolese President over Lumumba.

The UN voting had finally sealed the political fate of Lumumba as soon after his return to Leopoldville, Congolese leader had been arrested and put inside prison under the orders of the Mobutu government which could be characterized as "anti-communist" "anti-Lumumba", as well as "pro-west".

The whereabouts of Lumumba after his arrest could not be traced until February 1961, when

reports were received to the effect that he had been murdered at the hands of his unknown enemies somewhere on the way as he was proceeding towards stanleyville after escaping from the Jail\textsuperscript{23}.

When John F. Kennedy assumed the Presidency he had also encouraged 'American initiatives in the form of behind the scene activities for reconvening of the Congolese parliament, as well as for the formation of a federal government consisting of all Congolese factions. At the same time he had authorized the Defence Department to draw up a "contingency Plan" with a view to prevent the Soviet Union from providing military supplies to the Gizenga Government in stanleyville and had in this regard altered a Naval Task Force operating in the Gulf Guineea for a possible "emergency" role in the Congo. The Administration had further encouraged the efforts made by the UN Concitiation Commission and President Kasavubu for a series of meetings

between Congolese leaders which had eventually resulted in recovering of the national parliament the lomévanium University, near Leopoldville on 27 June 1961.\(^{24}\)

The more challenging task that remained before the ONUC and the US government following the submission of Gizenga had been the presence of Belgian troops as well as the "assorted white mercenaries" recruited by Tshombe from Belgium, Rhodesia and South Africa. It had been further complicated by the fact that Tshombe had continued with the issue of his own currency and also that he had successfully prohibited any efforts at hoisting of the Congolese national flag over katanga.

The UN operation was commenced on 27 August 1961 under the title "Rumpunch" to disarm and case out no Katangan gendarmes. It had been supplemented by another military operation called "Round one". These tough actions had caused huge upouurs in

British, French and in NATO circles, which had prompted in UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold to undertake a trip to Katanga to review the situation as well as to make an attempt to soften the feelings of the NATO members. But while travelling to Ndola in Rhodesia to discuss the Katanga situation with Tshombe Hammarskjold had met his tragic end. His death, however, had forced the UN Authorities to sign a ceasefire agreement with Tshombe on 30 September 1961.

The United States government had provided its solid backing to these UN operations despite strong words of denunciation that had been voiced by its NATO allies. Ambassador Stevenson, for instance, had maintained that the "UN operations would go down in history to the credit of the UN" and also Assistant Secretary Harban Cleveland had hailed the UN action as" the most dramatic illustration of the UN power for peace." Further

Assistant Secretary Williams had stated that the US government had recognised the need of "seeing through the UN operated to a successful conclusion". 26

By way of a concrete measures of support, the US government had provided four transport planes to the UN for the movement of its troops as well as the equipments inside the Congo.

Being authorized by a fresh resolution of the Security Council on 25 November 1961, the UN representative in Katanga, O'Brien had once again launched another military operation called "Round Two" for the expulsion of Katangan gendarmes and mercenaries. The operation which had taken place at the disposal of the UN Command in the Congo. The US government had also provided the UN Operation with its most vocal and strong support which had been evident from the remarks made by Under Secretary George Ball that "if Katanga is not peacefully

integrated the Congo will face Civil War and anarchy and be open to communist penetration.\footnote{Ibid. 11 December, 1961.} UN had become largely dependent on US support during these operations in view of the strong hostilities that had been demonstrated by its NATO allies towards "Round Two".

In the final showdown between the UN troops and the Katanga forces, called the "Round Three" started on 4 December 1962 and had continued till 21 January, 1963, Tshombe had made the announcement of his surrender as well as the termination of his two and half years of secession.

Though the response of the congress to the military measures taken in Katanga (Round Three) had no been favourable, the number of supporters for the American policies in Congo had increased considerably and that their views could be turned up in the words of Senator Joseph S. Clark: that the UN and US policies in the Congo had been a
"striking success". The UN offensive against Katanga and the involvement of active support as provided by the United States, however, had represented a stormy chapter in President Kennedy's active involvement in the affairs of the Congo. "Thus, the year 1963 had started rather auspiciously for the Central government with the reintegration of South Kasai in the fall of 1962 as well as the successful completion of Round Three on 21 January 1963. The integration of Katanga, however had prompted Tshombe and a group of his supporters to leave the breakaway province as they had been fearful of reprisal at the hands of the control Government. The Leopoldville government, however, had adopted a conciliatory attitude towards the whole situation in Katanga.  

President Johnson inherited from the Kennedy Administration a "troubled Congo", with the immediate prospects for the country being "not-too.

promising" despite the integration of Katanga. In fact, the President had been confronted with the immediate problem of the withdrawal of the UN troops from the Congo scheduled for 31 December 1963, owing to the fact that UN had been faced with almost financial bankruptcy due to the refusal of France and the Soviet block countries to meet their contributions arising out of UN Operations in the Middle East and in the Congo. While the Soviet Union had demanded that the US and NATO powers should meet the entire cost of both the UN Operations, the Western powers led by the United States had requested the UN Secretary General, U. Thant to reconsider his decision with regard to the withdrawal of UN troops. They had requested the UN to maintain at least a "token" presence in the Congo. A compromise agreement had eventually been worked out by which the tenure of the ONUC had been extended for six months still 30 June 1964.

The prospects of UN troops withdrawal had the most demoralizing effect on both Adoula and the US
governments. As for the Adoula government it had to confront with the immediate threat of disintegration due to the two factors, namely the lack of enthusiasm on the part of political leaders and factions in the country towards process of national reconciliation. As far as the United States was concerned, it had not only been worried about the "internal security gap" in the Congo, but also because the UN had become the "deterrent" to political violence" and a "dependable military arms for the Adoula Government."^{29} Thus on the make of UN troop withdrawal the US government had given its major attention to the reorganization of the Congolese army and had entrusted the task of its military mission in Congo (COMISH) established in August 1963.

The US Government had helped to reorganize the Congolese police with an assistance of $538,000, following the police mutiny at

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Leopoldville in May 1963. Further it had provided 178.6 million in the form of economic assistance of the Congo government apart from sustaining Adoula in power. It may be stated that the Congolese treasury had become practically barren during his three year tenure as the Prime Minister. In the words of Catherine Hoskynes by 1964 Congo had become the first country in Africa to be solely depended on American assistance." As the events had unfolded, the US government had succeeded in the UN to assume a new role for itself as the "protector" of Adoula regime through its generalizd support and specific interventions" in Congo.