

ARE AFRICAN LEADERS BORN OR CREATED? UNMAKING OF PROGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Christopher Isike ^a, Musa Abutudu ^b

^aUniversity of Zululand, South Africa

^bUniversity of Benin, Nigeria.

Corresponding author: cisike@pan.uzulu.ac.za

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Abstract: Post-independence Africa has been plagued by a profound crisis of leadership which has had dire consequences for peace and development. This has become so perennial that it is now a political pathology generically associated with Africa even though its dominant characteristics such as corruption, insufficient accountability of public officials, ethnicization of politics, dictatorship and sit-tightism are common in Asia, Europe and the Americas. Often, the West (leaders and peoples) has blamed Africa's development problems on bad leadership and dictatorship without acknowledging its role in propping up and maintaining such leaders in power. None of the above denies the fact that bad leadership is prevalent in Africa; however, its prevalence begs the broad question of whether African leaders are born or created.

This article uses the case of Patrice Emery Lumumba of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to address this broad question. It asks specific questions around why the DRC, one of the resource richest countries in the world has remained poor, wretched and underdeveloped since independence? What has been the role or absence of leadership in the DRC crisis? What is the role of the West and its allies in creating and nurturing a leadership crisis in the DRC? And how has this perpetuated the crisis of political instability, armed conflicts over resource control and chronic underdevelopment which appear intractable? The article argues that the situation in the DRC today is the consequence of a profound leadership crisis which started on Independence Day in 1960, and that

this leadership crisis was created and watered by mainly the United States, Belgium, Western banks and transnational companies. This post-independence interference in African politics reconditions African leaders and impacts on their ideological stances and policy choices in ways that retard progress and development for the continent.

Keywords: ethnicization of politics, conflicts, underdevelopment, human security

INTRODUCTION

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been embroiled in a protracted crisis of political instability, armed conflicts over resource control¹ and chronic underdevelopment since its flag independence², and like most other African states that were colonised, the DRC crisis is rooted in the colonial legacy of forced amalgamation and divide-and-rule politics. Indeed, Belgian colonial politics of divide-and-rule set the tone for and has exacerbated ethnic and political intolerance, and the greed that is at the core of armed conflicts in the DRC today. According to Osaghae (1999), the DRC has never known stability since it gained political independence in 1960, and there seems to be no way out of the social, political and economic malaise that presently engulfs it. Indeed, the DRC crisis is complex given its multifaceted character and dimensions of violent conflicts. For example, the second civil war which erupted in 1998 has been described as Africa's First World War because it involved seven African states; Angola, Burundi,

Eritrea, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe at different stages. It has also been referred to as the world's deadliest conflict since World War II (Robinson, 2006). Apart from the collusion of the various national and international corporations and regimes which have vested interest in the DRC crisis, there have also been conflicts over access to and control of her enormous resources (basic and mineral) as well as over differing political agendas of the different ethnicities that make up the DRC.

Expectedly, the crisis has come with huge human security costs that impact negatively on the overall development of the DRC and its peoples. For example, between the outbreak of civilwar in 1998 and 2008, over 5.4 million people are recorded to have lost their lives and the vast majority of them died from non-military sources of insecurity such as malaria, diarrhea, pneumonia and malnutrition. The effect on economic productivity is more apparent in the fact that although they constitute only 19% of the national population, children accounted for 47% of these deaths³. And in spite of the fact that many have returned home in the last 5 years, there are still 1.5 million internally displaced persons while approximately 45,000 continue to die each month (IRC, 2008). Underscoring its pervasive poverty, a UNDP Report (2008) ranks the DRC at 168 out of 177 countries on the Human Development Index, amounting to a fall of 22 places since 1992. This is manifest in earlier reports that indicate 16 million people in the DRC have critical food needs, with people in some parts of the eastern part of the country existing on \$0.18 per day (OXFAM, 2001). According to the UNDP Report, 75% of the population lived below the poverty line of less than \$1 a day; 57% had no access to drinking water; 54% had no access to basic health care, and that there was a 47% chance a Congolese living in the DRC would die before his or her 40th birthday (UNDP Report, 2008).

In terms of the environment, the battle over mineral resources as well as over a basic resource as water has greatly compromised the country's environmental security with concomitant effects on already endemic poverty. For example, endangered species such as gorillas and apes are often overrun in the heated battle to exploit minerals while the number of poor people who hunt these animals for food has also increased thus despoiling the environment further. When we add the gross human rights abuses⁴ to the equation of political, economic, social, community, food and environmental insecurities which bedevil the DRC, the human security nature of the crisis and its implication for human factor decay and national underdevelopment becomes clear.

Against this background, a simple but germane question is why has the DRC known no peace since 1960? An important follow-up question is why has the DRC remained poor, wretched and underdeveloped in the midst of its enormous mineral wealth? While there are many plausible causal factors and explanations for the present state of the DRC, a most significant factor is leadership⁵. What has been the role or the absence of leadership in the crisis? What is the role of the West and its allies in creating and nurturing a leadership crisis in the DRC, and how has this perpetuated the DRC crisis?

In grappling with these concerns, this paper contends that the seemingly hopeless situation in the DRC today is the consequence of a profound leadership crisis which came to the fore at the very inception of this Congolese state, and that this leadership crisis was created and watered by mainly the US and Belgium as well as Western banks and transnational companies (Vann, 2002). Indeed, the events leading to the abortion of the government of Patrice Emery Lumumba (the first and only elected leader of an independent DRC until 2006) in 1961, his subsequent gruesome assassination a few months later, and the failure to emplace a democratically elected national government in the DRC until 45 years later is the genesis of political instability in DRC. Accordingly, this chapter examines the political philosophy and leadership practice of Lumumba in the short time he was Prime Minister of the DRC⁶. It also x-rays some of the internal and external influences that caused a shift in his leadership focus, facilitated his premature exit from the political arena and subsequently led to his death, and which have combined to perpetuate the crisis of underdevelopment in the DRC. This is critical not only in terms of our understanding of the forces that underlie and define political instability, economic underdevelopment, armed conflict and their attendant human insecurities in the DRC, but also how this understanding could potentially guide its present political leadership to initiate the process of achieving the kind of DRC that Lumumba idealized, struggled and died for. However, before unraveling the essence of Patrice Lumumba and the unmaking of progressive leadership in the DRC, it is germane to advance a theoretical explanation of the trajectory of western neo-imperialism in Africa in general and in the DRC in this case. This is to underscore the potency of the external actors and influences in engineering and fuelling the crisis in Africa's resource-richest state.

OLD BUT POTENT: IMPERIALISM, DEPENDENCY AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF WAR IN AFRICA

Dependency, as a theory that seeks to explain the skewed economic relationship between developed

and underdeveloped states, might not put a refreshing spin on explaining Africa's underdevelopment, but it remains a potent tool of analysing it. This is because western exploitation of the continent continues unabated as was the case in the 1960s and 70s in Latin America. Built upon classical views of imperialism such as Leninism, dependency theory was used to explain the economic penetration and exploitation of Third World states, particularly Latin America in the 1960s and 70s, by the rich capitalist states. It came as a critique of Modernization theory which attempted to explain Third World underdevelopment as an inherent cultural problem within Third World countries (Rostow, 1960; Gerschenkron, 1962). The thrust of the modernization argument was that these countries were underdeveloped because their societies and economies were 'backward' or insufficiently 'modern' socially and psychologically compared to western socio-economic and political culture (See Moles, 1999). Therefore, for the Third World to develop, it needs to follow, for example, the historical economic development trajectory of the developed world; open up its economy to foreign investments which help to stimulate growth and modernization of the economic sector. This will in turn create more productive employment at higher wage and a better life for the masses. As capital accumulates, business will reinvest its profits, thus creating still more products, jobs, buying power and markets. Eventually a more prosperous economy evolves and the benefits will continue to trickle down to the masses (Parenti, 2001)⁷. However, modernization theory bears little relation to reality in the Third World as what has rather emerged is an intensely exploitative form of dependent capitalism or imperialism; the process whereby the dominant politico-economic interests of one nation expropriate for their own enrichment the land, labour and raw materials, and markets of another people (Parenti, 2001).

Focussing mainly on the externalist dimensions of Third World underdevelopment, dependency proponents such as Gunder-Frank (1967) and Johnson (1972) argued that the problem of underdevelopment could not be solved outside the context of the international system as "the basic situation of dependence leads to a global situation in dependent countries that situates them in backwardness and under the exploitation of dominant countries" (dos Santos in Johnson, 1972:71). For example, in explaining the external mechanisms of control by the metropole (the developed industrialized North) over the satellite (the underdeveloped agricultural South)⁸ Gunder-Frank (1967), contends that the *centre* maintained the *periphery* in a state of underdevelopment for

purposes of overexploitation. In this sense, underdevelopment in the periphery is created by the centre rather than being inherent in the periphery and this is nurtured through a relationship of dependency in which the dominant centre exploits the resources of the subordinate periphery and develops at the expense of the periphery. In this relationship, the growth of the periphery depends on and is subordinated to the economic and capitalist needs of the rich centre which must necessarily continue to plunder the periphery for its mineral resources, cheap labour and market potentials to survive.

Building on Andre Gunder Frank, Cardoso and Faletto (1979) contextualized dependency in Latin America by focussing on its actual impact on national economies, social relations and the kind of state they gave rise to. Their study involved an analysis of different types of export economies in the region, ownership of these economies focusing on how these impacted on development. They found out that social actors were faced with real choices and the variations in the structure of the dominant class explained different political outcomes. Thus they concluded that independent development was not impossible and that a socialist revolution as espoused by Frank is not inevitable.

Although largely criticized for being a simplistic class analysis of international relations, lacking conceptual depth and for its over-politicization as a tool of analysis (see Mole, 1999), dependency remains a useful paradigm for analysing the skewed economic relationship between rich and poor countries and the underdevelopment it spews. This is more so that relations between the two continue to be characterized by exploitation, dominance/subordination and war, which are all hall marks of neo-imperialism or neo-liberalism. Based on Lenin's famous piece on imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism, the quest for the globalization of capital produces conflict at three levels; one between imperialist powers over the scramble for economic advantages; two, within peripheral states

as their super-exploitation by the imperialists provoked self-determination movements and worsened the contradictions (inequalities) of capitalism in the peripheral states, and three, an international revolution (clash of civilization) as the world will be divided into spheres of interests with states defending capitalist interests by all means⁹. Based on these conflict potentialities, it is possible then that war can be by design given its potential benefits to the designer.

In spite of decolonization, imperialism remains rife in Africa in the form of what Nkrumah (1965) calls neo-colonialism (colonialism without colonies)¹⁰, and it is

being nurtured through the creation and promotion of conflict and war in the continent. Indeed, the west has managed to keep control over Africa, its people and their profitable mineral resources. For example, according to Nabudere (2001: 11), “as the European powers scrambled out of the African continent, they ensured that what they left behind would serve their interests”. One of these is the character of the post-colonial state which inherited all the attributes, institutions and structures of the colonial state, including its administrative principle, ideology, values of greed and exploitative culture (Nabudere, 2001: 13). According to the *Economist*, the crisis of state legitimacy which breed ethnic conflict and wars of insurrection in post-colonial Africa “were simply bequeathed by departing imperial powers who left highly centralized, authoritarian states to a tiny group of western-educated Africans who rushed in and took over. Europeans established some of these states, such as Congo, as businesses to be milked for profit. Their successors simply continued the practice” (Economist, 2000). Also, economic, financial and social structures of dependence created during colonialism still remain and are being continually reproduced by multinational corporations, other agents of globalization and through cultural imperialism with the active connivance of a comprador class aptly labeled by Ayandele (1967) as educated hybrids¹¹. According to Parenti, a comprador class is one that cooperates in turning its own country into a client state for foreign interests, and is usually well rewarded for this cooperation. In this way, the client state becomes open to foreign investments on terms that are decidedly favorable to the investor. Parenti contends further that in a client state, “corporate investors enjoy direct subsidies and land grants, access to raw materials and cheap labour, light or nonexistent taxes, few effective labour unions, no minimum wage or child labour or occupational safety laws, and no consumer or environmental protections to speak of”.

It is from this comprador class that a number of lame-duck African leaders emerged or were installed as a first condition for independence. As Nabudere (2000) contends, the psychological impact of colonialism has left Africans and their leaders bereft of self-confidence and that this lack of confidence has served western interests very well indeed (Nabudere, 2000:13). Underscoring the import of this phenomenon (mental colonization), which Chinwezu (1989) conceives of as the worst impact of colonialism on Africa’s underdevelopment, Nabudere contends that it is the very basis on which economic and strategic policies are implemented in Africa. According to him:

The African masses who have some self-confidence left are undermined by the activities of western-

educated rulers who, together with their ‘donor’ supporters and beneficiaries, simply continue the practice of colonialism. It is this lack of confidence that explains why the African post-colonial state can never serve the needs of the people of Africa

(Nabudere, 2000: 12)

Within the context of neo-colonialism/neo-imperialism and dependency as it applies to the West’s need for continuous access to Africa’s resources, the significance of ‘getting the right leader’ for a resource-rich country like the DRC becomes clearer. The right or ‘good’ leader in this case would be that who is willing to play along with the west and open the country up for easy access to its resources. It is in this light that the emergence of leaders like Joseph Mobutu in the DRC was orchestrated and financed by the US and Belgium with a view to advancing western economic interest in that country. As reward for his cooperation with the west, Mobutu was assured regime stability through the establishment of security forces, armed and trained by the US. He and his cronies¹² were also allowed to line their pockets with millions of dollars in foreign aid and loans from the US government while it looked the other way (see Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). In this way, dependency is perpetuated to facilitate the underdevelopment of Africa while at time enabling western development. Conversely, any leader who did not toe the conventional line was promptly labeled a ‘bad’ leader, ‘communist’ or ‘terrorist’ to be removed by all means no matter the costs. And that is why at the onset of flag-independence, the first line of radical African nationalist leaders found themselves either overthrown in military coups backed by European powers or murdered as was the case of Patrice Lumumba in the DRC (Nabudere, 2000: 11). Accordingly, the imposition of pro-western leaders on African states not only fuels the crisis of political legitimacy which bedevils the continent, it has also been used to as a conduit to facilitate the exploitation and underdevelopment of the continent for the benefit of the west.

ENTER PATRICE EMERY LUMUMBA: WHO WAS HE?

To strengthen its economic foothold on its now erstwhile colony and realize its neo-imperialist ambitions, Belgium needed a political stooge to run the newly independent DRC. That leader was certainly not Patrice Lumumba. Therefore, when Lumumba, against all odds, won the national election held in May 1960 and was eventually recognized to form a government (which he did on 23 June, 1960); the battle line for the soul of the DRC was drawn. The question is whether indeed the present political climate in DRC could in any way be linked to the

nation's political history of 1960 with Lumumba at the centre? In trying to address this question, it is imperative to decipher the man even if in brief.

Patrice Emery Lumumba was born on July 2, 1925, in the tiny village of Onalua occupied by a minority tribe (Batetela) in northeastern Kasai, in Belgian Congo as the DRC was then called. As a child, Lumumba attended Protestant and then Catholic schools run by white missionaries and thus quickly became lettered enough to start writing articles and poems with pro-nationalist fervors for the Congolese press. As a young man, Lumumba found a job as a postal clerk in Leopoldville (now called Kinshasa) in 1954. While there, he rapidly became a community leader and organized a postal workers' labor union. His activities were encouraged by local members of the Belgian Liberal political party. By 1956, he had become an accountant at the post office and moved to Stanleyville (now called Kisangani); a position that soon got him into trouble with the law. Shortly after assuming his accountant post, Lumumba was invited with others to undertake a study tour of Belgium under the auspices of the Minister of Colonies. On his return he was arrested on a charge of embezzlement from the post office. He was convicted and condemned one year later (1957), after various reductions of sentence, to 12 months' imprisonment and a fine (Encyclopedia Britannica).

While awaiting sentence in 1957, Lumumba was active as he refused to be dissuaded from his goal of a truly independent Congo. For instance, he sought and got appointed as a sales director for a brewery in Léopoldville and moved back there where he kept busy mobilizing and politically socializing the Congolese populace. In December of 1957, Lumumba attended the first All-African People's Conference in Accra, Ghana, where he met nationalists from across the African continent and was made a member of the permanent organization set up by the conference. His outlook and terminology, inspired by pan-African goals, now took on the tenor of militant nationalism. Added to this were his exciting personality and public speaking talents which soon won him prominence in his party. On his return from prison in 1958, Lumumba became more active in politics and subsequently helped to found the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC), a nationalist political party which aimed to represent all Congolese, rather than representing regional, sectional or tribal interests as was the case with his Congolese comrades such as Moïse Tshombe and Joseph Kasavubu.

Following the agreement at a Congolese Independence Conference¹³, which was convened by the Belgian government in January 1960, that the DRC would be granted independence in June 1960,

Lumumba's party (the MNC) won convincingly at the national polls held in May 1960. After several failed maneuvers to prevent him from assuming office as Prime Minister, he was eventually sworn in as Prime Minister on 30 June 2000 where he gave the famous speech that eventually became his Achilles heel¹⁴. More than 50 years later, the average Congolese still believes that particular speech was the beginning of Lumumba's travails and the DRC crisis (FGD with Congolese students, 2 October, 2009). To buttress this view, within a month of his historic inauguration, an international conspiracy was hatched within the top echelons of the US and Belgian governments to terminate Lumumba's rule using top members of the Congolese political (comprador) class as instruments (Weissman, 2002). Therefore, as 1960 gave birth to Congo's independence, it also gave birth to a nightmare as the euphoria of independence did not last long. Within days of Lumumba's inauguration, a US/Belgian sponsored mutiny with the Congolese army started a cycle of ethnic, secessionist and resource control violence that consumed not only Lumumba, but also the DRC as a body politics. By the end of the first spate of violence in DRC in 1961, Patrice Lumumba had become a statesman, sage, and martyr of Congolese liberation, and by his death wrote his name on the scroll of African history during his short and unhappy lifetime.

APPRAISING LUMUMBA'S POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND POLITICS AS A CONGOLESE LEADER

Patrice Lumumba was a nationalist, pan-Africanist, anti-imperialism revolutionary, a reformer and a martyr of these ideals. We contend that for history to judge him correctly either as a "good" or "bad" leader, his political actions in the 67 days he was Prime Minister of the DRC must be measured against the internal and external social and political environments of the post-colonial DRC state. These environments combined to create Patrice Lumumba and the kind of leader he was for the short time he was Prime Minister, and the DRC that we have today. For example, the struggle for democracy and development in the DRC is a continuation of the bigger struggle against neo-imperialism the end result of which would be a truly free Congolese nation as Patrice Lumumba had dreamed¹⁵. Lumumba's struggle for economic independence, social justice and political self-determination, coupled with his dislike for a political system that was structured along tribal lines¹⁶ marked him out as an outstanding and remarkable nationalist leader. Like a number of Africanist leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Leopold Senghor, Murtala Mohammed and Mahmoud Ghadafi, Lumumba boldly supported pan-Africanism and total liberation for post-colonial Africa. When he finally assumed political leadership

of the DRC, he proclaimed his regime one of “positive neutralism”; a return to African values and rejection of any kind of imported ideology, including even that of the Soviet Union (Mckown, 1969) and for which he was conveniently killed.

This ideology was heavily reflected in his inaugural speech as prime minister where he reinforced and reiterated his political vision of the Congolese people’s sense of dignity and self-confidence. In the midst of an independence ceremony in which the Belgians had congratulated themselves on successfully “civilizing” the Congolese and preparing them for self-rule, Lumumba spelt out in graphic terms the reality of colonial oppression, describing it as 80 years of “humiliating slavery which was imposed upon us by force”. He lamented thus:

We have known harassing work, exacted in exchange for salaries which did not permit us to eat enough to drive away hunger, to clothe ourselves, or to house ourselves decently, or to raise our children as creatures dear to us.... We have known ironies, insults, blows that we endured morning, noon and night, because we are Negroes.... We have seen our lands seized in the name of allegedly legal laws, which in fact recognized only that might is right.... We will never forget the massacres where so many perished, the cells into which those who refused to submit to a regime of oppression and exploitation were thrown (Vann, 2002)

As a reformer Lumumba adopted a republican approach. He wanted to democratize all institutions and to separate the Church from the State. For him the amelioration of the conditions of life for Africans is the only true meaning which independence can have (Legum, 1961). In particular, he resented his nation being a neo-colony of the Belgian monarchy. He witnessed firsthand the experience of colonial masters who did not want to let go of their hold on Africa, of masters who were reluctant to give the Congolese their independence and all this much he expressed in his inaugural speech, and which in many ways gave a sense of the direction he was preparing to take the country. Unfortunately, he never got a real chance to prosecute his agenda of genuine decolonization as his days became numbered from day one of his premiership because of his speech.

Lumumba believed in the social, political and economic emancipation of the people of Congo and being fired by this political zeal and conviction, he pressed vigorously towards its realization. His revolutionary actions addressed justice issues, oppression and the determination in fighting for the cause of independence from the colonial oppression. This has earned him an important place in the history of liberation struggle, not only in Congo but also in Africa as a whole where resistance to colonial rule

remained very strong (Fanon, 1963). We could get a clear understanding of his position in this regard when we reflect on this statement which he made in his last letter to his wife in December 1960:

No brutality, no agony, no torture has ever driven me to beg for mercy, for I would rather die with my head high, my faith unshaken, and a profound trust in the destiny of my country, than to live on subjection, seeing principles that are sacred to me laughed to scorn. History will have its say one day- not the history they teach in Brussels, Paris, Washington or the United Nations, but the history taught in the countries set free from colonialism and its puppet rulers. Africa will write her own history and in both north and south of the Sahara it will be a history of glory and dignity (in Thomas, 1972: Appendix)

Indeed, the time has come for Africa to write or rewrite her history day is now when Africans are eager more than ever before to re-write their history, especially the history of those political leaders who were in the past called all sorts of names that portrayed them as failures.

Lumumba is a martyr of Congolese democracy and development as his desire to bring freedom to the Congo cost him his life. His murder has made him a symbol of struggle for champions of African nations' attempts to unite and to break free from the influence of the European powers that once colonized the continent. For example, six years after his demise, realizing the importance of Lumumba’s political ideology to the realization of their economic and political independence and the struggles that characterized his personality, the DRC state led by Mobutu proclaimed him a national hero. In his nationally broadcasted speech during the ceremony where Lumumba was “canonized” as a national hero, Mobutu said:

...Glory and honor to that illustrious Congolese, that great African, the first martyr of our economic independence...how can we fail to recall that great figure Patrice Lumumba, for great he was, and great he will remain. It would be hard to forget that important passage in his historic speech of 30 June 1960, that profession of faith, that masterly exposition of what the Congo must do to achieve its economic independence (Thomas, 1972: 325 – 326)

Indeed Lumumba was a dedicated revolutionary who was totally committed to the liberation of his country from imperialism, and in retrospect, this is significant given the control that Western multinational companies and governments still hold on the natural resources and the economy of Congo and many African Countries (Boyd, 1997). He insisted that Congo state would not be divided up-with the country’s wealth controlled by the provinces-as the

Belgian rulers had hoped. Nor would his party, the MNC, accept the Belgian king as the head of -state in an independent Congo. As Hennessy (1961) contended, the important point in the Lumumba story is he proved that the legitimacy of a postcolonial regime in Africa relates mainly to its legal mandate; but even more, legitimacy relates to the regime's credentials as a representative of a genuine nationalism fighting against the intrigues of neo-colonialism. This is why Lumumba was and is still being extolled as the "best son of Africa," the "Lincoln of the Congo," the "Black Messiah," whose struggle was made noble by his unswerving demand for centralism against all forms of Balkanization and rendered heroic by his unyielding resistance to the forces of neo-colonialism which finally killed his body, but not his spirit (Hennessey, 1961). A good example of Lumumba's intransigent resistance to Western attempts to undermine Congo's independence is reflected in the fact that *Lumumbaism* became a part of the lexicon of DRC politics and an ideology of its own with varied meanings¹⁷ (see Thomas, 1972, 326).

However, on a critical note, there are perceptions held by the average Congolese that Lumumba, like all mortals, was not without faults and that "canonizing" him as a "saint" and as "the best leader the DRC never had" is misplaced (FGD with Congolese students, 2 October, 2009). According to them, Lumumba was not a good leader because in personal character, he was known to be brash, hasty, an extremist, and as an opportunist who latched in on the anti-colonialist rhetoric of the time to become a populist (FGD, 2009). According to them, his brashness and extremism impacted negatively on his leadership, he was said to have made mistakes which today have cost the DRC and its people so much pain. For example, one of the Focus Group discussants, Herman Bamata recounted how in one instance Lumumba fired the army chief because he was white and then went on to arbitrarily promote non-commissioned black officers to officer cadre overnight. According to Herman, his father was a beneficiary of that particular promotion exercise as he was promoted from Under Sergeant to Lieutenant. They all agreed that as a leader, Lumumba did not read the Congolese situation correctly otherwise he would have been more diplomatic in his speeches and actions and that would have saved his people the dire consequences that followed his fiery nature. According to Junior Vela, "if Lumumba was a bit more strategic and conciliatory like Mandela, he would have stayed alive and the DRC would be better today". For Didien Kabwe, "a good leader is kind and empathetic to other people's needs and that always defined how they negotiated on behalf of their followers. Lumumba was blinded by his beliefs

without considering the reality (illiteracy, poverty) of the Congolese people". Philip Aweaye was even more damning: "Lumumba was never a hero for me. He was a big talkative with no vision and as such was populist and opportunistic". However, when they were asked who or what created the 'Monster' (brash, hasty, extremist, non-skilled negotiator, opportunist and populist) in Lumumba, they agreed it was a bigger 'monster' called colonialism, neo-colonialism and dependency. In simple terms for example, if the colonialists had allowed black Congolese to attain university education, trained Congolese soldiers and public servants to eventually become officers and able administrators in a post-colonial DRC, there would have been no 'monstrous' Lumumba. In the same vein, if the western international community led by the US and the UN had acted based strictly on the principles of collective security and responsibility, Lumumba would not have evolved into the communist threat that he became to the US at the time. In other words, Lumumba was a creation of western colonialism and neo-imperialism. Accordingly, it is our position that given the exigencies of the time, which were deliberately created by the US, Belgium and their allies¹⁸, Lumumba had little choice but to act the way he did. This is more so that he was let down by the international community, especially the United Nations (UN) in which he placed much hope, in his days of need. For example, as the report of the Belgian Parliamentary Enquiry Committee set up in 2000 to determine Belgium's culpability in the murder of Lumumba concluded, crucial to the final fall of Lumumba was the split between the Congolese Prime Minister and the UN Secretary General Hammarskjöld, because "it forced Lumumba on the one hand to (openly) ask for the support of the Soviet Union and on the other hand encouraged the United States (behind the scenes) to organize active opposition against Lumumba (with the first plans of physical elimination)" (Weissman, 2002). Also, internally, Lumumba soon began to realize that the divide-and-rule politics of their Belgian colonizers had eaten deeper than he had thought into the ranks of the nationalist struggle. As a result, in his last months, he began to edge away from the politics of national liberation to tackle other profound socio-political issues within the polity. Francois, his son and now a political activist in Kinshasa, explained: He discovered in the course of 1960 that not all Congolese had the same interpretation of independence, that our 'brothers' were fighting for something completely different. So in his actions and in his speeches he became more precise and spoke for workers, justice and equality (Kanza, 1979). Some Congolese people interpret his decision to 'escape' from house arrest under the protective security of UN forces to go back to his region to prosecute his claim

to the government of the DRC as a form of deviation from his nationalist stance (Interview with Dr Kambala, 10 December 2009). This kind of shift, added to the deliberate misinformation spread about Lumumba by the western-controlled government in Kinshasa then, contributed to multiplicity of understanding about (him) Lumumba and what he stood for. According to Dr Kambala and Mr. and Mrs. Lukusa in Empangeni, there are so many stories about Lumumba such that they are at a loss as to what to believe about Lumumba. While the Lukusa family believes Lumumba perhaps meant well for the DRC, Dr Kambala is not inclined to believe so, and rather takes the view that Lumumba will remain an enigma.

THE EXTERNAL CONSPIRACY TO UNMAKE PROGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP

In the last 10 years (2000 to 2009), facts have emerged that put paid to conventional speculations that the ouster, capture, torture and brutal assassination of Patrice Lumumba was the result of secession politics within the DRC. Indeed, as the facts now show, it was a classical case of neo-imperialism aimed at fostering a post-colonial *dependencia* between the DRC and western Europe, and it was deliberately concocted and coldly executed by the US, Belgium and their allies (de Witte, 2001; Weisman, 2002). In this scheme of things, Lumumba became the proverbial dog that was given a bad name to hang it. As aforementioned, Lumumba had given every indication, from his politicking rhetoric and activities to his first speech as Prime Minister that he was not going to be a tool of western neo-imperialism in the DRC. Having failed to stop him in the polls, it was only a matter of time before he would be 'removed'. However, for his "removal" to be garbed in some legitimacy, it was necessary to set Lumumba up for failure by sponsoring dissent, rebellion and insurrection in the DRC. There developed a number of political conspiracies involving the CIA, military elements in the US and Belgium, African mercenaries and an international ring of diamond merchants whose combined efforts formed a perfect trap from which Lumumba could not escape (Gordon, 2002: 75). His chilling murder therefore effectively killed the dreams of masses of workers, peasants and the poor who had hoped on the revolutionary social change which Lumumba represented to them.

While the US and Belgium were plotting his murder, other Western powers were equally convinced that Lumumba represented a big danger to their neo-colonial enterprise in Africa hence none spoke against or did anything to stop the unjust intrusion into the sovereignty. To justify this claim, for example, on 19 September, 1960, the American President and the British foreign minister Lord Home

discussed the Congo crisis. The minutes of that meeting suggest that London could have known of Washington's plan to assassinate Lumumba who had, in the mean time, been removed from office. The president expressed his wish that Lumumba would fall into a river full of crocodiles (de Witte, 2001: xv). Four months later on 17 January 1961, that wish came to pass when Lumumba was literally delivered to 'crocodiles'; his political enemies in Katanga province who before then had vowed to kill him if they laid their hands on him. Expectedly, Lumumba was brutally murdered and so was democracy, good governance and development because it took 46 years (1961 to 2006) for the second democratic elections to be held after the first in 1960. No doubt, if the democratic wave of 1960 was allowed to consolidate, the DRC would have matured by now into a more stable, prosperous and developed state. What specific roles did Belgium and the US, singly and jointly, play in unmaking progressive leadership in the DRC?

As aforementioned, until 1999, there has been much speculation over the roles that the Belgian and US governments played in Lumumba's ouster and murder. Even the Belgian Parliamentary Commission that investigated Lumumba's assassination was 'careful' not to openly implicate Belgium for its complicity as it concluded that (1) Belgium wanted Lumumba arrested, (2) Belgium was not particularly concerned with Lumumba's physical well being, and (3) although informed of the danger to Lumumba's life, Belgium did not take any action to avert his death, but went ahead to specifically deny that Belgium ordered Lumumba's assassination (Blum, 2007: 158). However, the commission's report concluded that authorities in Brussels and Belgium's King Baudouin knew of plans to kill Lumumba and did nothing to save him. It also acknowledged that the government covertly channeled funds and arms to regional secessionist groups within the Congo that were violently opposed to Lumumba. The report put much of the blame on Baudouin, who died, in 1993, alleging that the King pursued his own post-colonial policy behind the backs of elected officials (Blum, 2007: 158).

The 1996 book "Crisis in the Congo" by Ludo de Witte and the 1990 doctoral thesis of Jacques Brassine ("Investigation into the murder of Patrice Lumumba") had each turned up evidence of Belgium's role in Lumumba's death, and the subsequent end to Africa's wave of anti-imperialist movements (Carrillo, 2001: 5). de Witte cited a telegram sent three months before Lumumba's death from Count Harold d'Aspremont Lynden, then minister for African affairs, to Belgian officials in the DRC. The content of the telegram explained that "The main aim to pursue in the interests of the Congo, Katanga and Belgium is clearly Lumumba's

definitive elimination" (Wright and Fenby, 2002: 165). Given that the Congolese leader had already been deposed from power and placed under house arrest at the time¹⁹, there was no mistaking the meaning of these words. According to de Witte, Belgian operatives directed and carried out the murder, and even helped dispose of the body. During this period, the Belgian government was opposed to all possible forms of reconciliation, direct or indirect, between the Congolese leaders. The expression "limination d finitive" by Minister d'Aspremont Lynden in the telegram to the ambassador Rothschild in Elisabethstad - should be seen from this perspective (Weissman, 2002). In addition to these evidence, other earlier investigations have uncovered ample proof that the assassination of Lumumba was the direct result of orders given by the Belgian government and the Eisenhower administration, acting through the CIA and local clients financed and "advised" by Brussels and Washington (Osmańczyk and Mango, 2003: 2571). The attempts to deny any direct involvement of the Belgian government in the murder of Lumumba have proved futile. This is because the Belgian government has officially accepted "moral responsibility" for aiding in the 17 January, 1961 murder of Patrice Lumumba (Carrillo, 2001: 5).

Similarly, on the side of the US, Weissman (2002), based on classified U.S. government documents, including a chronology of covert actions approved by a National Security Council (NSC) subgroup chronicles American involvement thus:

** In August 1960, the CIA established Project Wizard. Congo had been independent only a month, and Lumumba, a passionate nationalist, had become prime minister, with a plurality of seats in the parliament. But U.S. presidential candidate John F. Kennedy was vowing to meet "the communist challenge" and Eisenhower's NSC was worried that Lumumba would tilt toward the Soviets.*

The U.S. documents show that over the next few months, the CIA worked with and made payments to eight top Congolese -- including -- who all played roles in Lumumba's downfall.

The CIA joined Belgium in a plan, detailed in the Belgian report, for Ileo and Adoula to engineer a no-confidence vote in Lumumba's government, which would be followed by union-led demonstrations, the resignations of cabinet ministers (organized by Ndele) and Kasavubu's dismissal of Lumumba.

** On Sept. 1, the NSC's Special Group authorized CIA payments to Kasavubu, the U.S. documents say. On Sept. 5, Kasavubu fired Lumumba in a decree of dubious legality. However, Kasavubu and his new prime minister, Ileo, proved lethargic over the*

following week as Lumumba rallied supporters. So Mobutu seized power on Sept. 14. He kept Kasavubu as president and established a temporary "College of Commissioners" to replace the disbanded government.

** The CIA financed the College and influenced the selection of commissioners. The College was dominated by two Project Wizard participants: Bomboko, its president, and Ndele, its vice-president. Another CIA ally, Lumumba party dissident Victor Nendaka, was appointed chief of the security police.*

** On Oct. 27, the NSC Special Group approved \$250,000 for the CIA to win parliamentary support for a Mobutu government. However, when legislators balked at approving any prime minister other than Lumumba, the parliament remained closed. The CIA money went to Mobutu personally and the commissioners.*

** On Nov. 20, the Special Group authorized the CIA to provide arms, ammunition, sabotage materials and training to Mobutu's military in the event it had to resist pro-Lumumba forces.*

** On Nov. 27, Lumumba escaped from his official residence and was captured and arrested 2 days later.*

** On Jan. 14, the College of commissioners asked Kasavubu to move Lumumba to a "surer place." There was "no doubt," the Belgian inquiry concluded, that Mobutu agreed. Kasavubu told security chief Nendaka to transfer Lumumba to one of the secessionist strongholds. On Jan. 17, Nendaka sent Lumumba to the Katanga region. That night, Lumumba and two colleagues were tortured and executed in the presence of members of the Katangan government. No official announcement was made for four weeks.*

The US government released archive material related to the Kennedy assassination that included an interview with the White House minute-taker under the Eisenhower administration, Robert Johnson. In a meeting held with security advisers in August 1960, two months after Congo achieved its formal independence from Belgium, Eisenhower ordered the CIA to "eliminate" Lumumba, according to Johnson's account (Blum, 2007). The assassination took place less than seven months after the DRC had declared its independence, with Lumumba as its first prime minister. The next step was to destroy the evidence. Four days later, Belgian Police Commissioner Gerard Soete and his brother cut up the body with a hacksaw and dissolved it in sulfuric acid. In an interview on Belgian television, Soete displayed a bullet and two teeth he claimed to have saved from Lumumba's body (Bochkaryov, 1984: 28).

Clearly then, there was a grand conspiracy involving the Belgian and the US governments to eliminate Lumumba and this meant ousting him from office and ultimately killing him to prevent any possibility of him being a force to reckon with again. The UN is also not spared from this international conspiracy as it did not do much to uphold the independence and sovereignty of the DRC. For example, despite entreaties to it from Lumumba, the UN refused to send peacekeepers to rescue the nation when it was plunged into chaos. The capital of Brazzaville was under siege and Lumumba begged for Western intervention with no success. Finally, he asked the Soviet Union who responded with military aid. Russian involvement further drew the ire of the CIA who was already undermining Lumumba's government. It was only after Lumumba's ouster in September 1960 that the UN managed to send in peacekeepers to the DRC. Even then, it was a weak peacekeeping team as it confined itself only to 'protecting' the Prime Minister, who was himself confined to his official residence. Again, the issue of UN conspiracy with the comprador elements within the Congo through the US is palpable in the way Lumumba 'escaped' from his official residence, and how information regarding his escape was handled. For instance, how did Lumumba escape under the 'watchful' of UN security forces supposedly stationed in his official residence to protect him? And how did Mobutu, who was now in charge of the DRC government get to know of Lumumba's escape and were on his trail within hours?²⁰ Indeed, the philosophy behind the conspiracy to undo Lumumba and prevent any form of reconciliation and peace with the DRC since his ouster in 1960 is to have unrestrained access to the country's vast resources. In the face of this imperial philosophy which benefits the west at the development expense of the DRC, it becomes easy to define a "good" or "bad" leader in the DRC.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

What is the possibility, given the contagion effect thesis²¹ that other African leaders did not learn negative lessons from the way Lumumba was treated by the international community, especially the US? For instance, is it impossible that the received wisdom was "don't toy with the West or else they will come after you and get you (the Lumumba treatment)"? If so, how did this 'wisdom' affect the policies of post-colonial African leaders towards US and other western interests in the continent? Also, is it plausible these leaders learnt any lessons on how to treat their political enemies? For instance, hunt them down, brutally suppress and annihilate them before they become strong enough to give you the 'Lumumba treatment' with the help of external support? If so can this possibly explain political

intolerance and the brutal suppression of political opposition which have been cited as a possible cause of armed conflict in post-colonial Africa? In this context, can we say African leaders are created or conditioned by the western-led international economic system to be "good" or "bad" leaders depending on who is benefitting at the time from such leadership?

In the case of the DRC, a question that will remain unanswered is what would the DRC be like today if Lumumba was not killed, but allowed and supported by the international community to govern? This is because from his very inception as Prime Minister on 30 June 1960, his days were numbered and he was subsequently ousted from office 67 days later on 5 September, 1960. He spent the better part of these 67 days dealing with mutiny and secession which were orchestrated from outside the DRC and so it becomes unfair to judge Lumumba's leadership outcomes based on his performance. Rather, this paper has sought to measure his leadership through his ideals and the fact that he died standing up for these ideals rather than capitulating to western imperialist dictates. Of course, we will never know if he would have eventually capitulated and become a stooge of the west, and a sit-tight and corrupt leader, but even so, it would have been a function of western influence more than the result of an inherent African trait. The reconditioning of African leaders by the west is not a post-independence phenomenon. It started from the transatlantic slave trade era through to the colonial period, and as Chinwezu (1987) contends, the psychological impact of such mental colonization is more potent than the actual economic rape of the African continent. This is because it impacts on the ideological stance and policy choices that post-colonial African leaders have made and continue to make. Patrice Lumumba was one leader who refused to be dissuaded from his political stance of attaining real independence for the DRC; "its right to an honorable life, to a spotless dignity, to an independence without restrictions"²², and he paid the ultimate price for his 'intransigence'. By conspiring to remove Lumumba prematurely from office and eventually murdering him, the US, Belgium, the UN and the comprador elements within the DRC started the process of unmaking progressive leadership, peace and development in the DRC.

ENDNOTES

1. The DRC is the resource richest country in Africa given its abundant deposits of important mineral resources such as cassiterite, cobalt, coltan, copper, diamonds, timber, tin and zinc.
2. It is our view that African states never attained real independence from colonialism as not only are there still vestiges of colonialism all over the continent, but

also the economic growth, foreign policy direction and even socio-cultural lives of these states remain tied and skewed to former colonial powers and their interests. The domestic politics of post-colonial Africa states are not spared from the strong influences of these powers and the west generally, and the DRC is a classical example in this regard. Therefore, what Africa actually realized from the decolonization process (assuming there was one) is flag independence; the fact that the colonial flags were lowered and new nationalist flags were hoisted and have remained (See Nkrumah, 1965; Chinwezu, 1987).

3. This is not helped by the fact that there are more than 10,000 child soldiers with over 15% of new recruited soldiers being children under the 18 years. Worse still, 4 out of 10 children in the DRC are not in school, over 400,000 displaced children have no access to any form of education, and about 900,000 children have been orphaned by AIDS (see OXFAM Report, 2001).

4. These include cutting of limbs, rape and sexual slavery by armed groups, which has helped increase the spread of HIV and AIDS

5. We recognize that getting leadership right is not tantamount to development as while it can be a necessary factor, it is not sufficient in itself. However, leadership remains a critical factor in emplacing and coordinating development whether in a democracy or autocracy (see Adejumobi, 2000; Hadenius and Teorell, 2006)

6. This was a main constraint to our work as the period of Lumumba's government was only 67 days and it is too short for a critical assessment of his performance. As a result, our understanding of his person and the political philosophy that characterized, influenced and sustained his zeal in the struggle for the political emancipation of the DRC therefore would serve as our instruments for assessing him as a political leader who had the best of intentions for his country—a complete decolonization that would benefit the population as a whole. To mitigate this limitation and to test the validity of existing literature on trajectory of Lumumba's government, we conducted two focus group discussions with 6 Congolese students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and 2 Congolese families in Empangeni, South Africa.

7. It is basically this same thesis economic globalization adherents put forward to justify the adoption of neo-liberal economic frameworks in the twenty first Century.

8. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), the world is divided between the centre and the periphery, which

fits Gunder-Frank (1967)'s categorization of metropole and satellite, and that the relationship between these two extreme poles is determined by the structure of the world economy which is created and controlled by the centre; the rich North.

9. According to Johnson (1972: 98), "the basis of the US foreign policy is a conception of national interest as inherently involved in the strengthening of international capitalism against the threats of socialism and nationalism". As a result, the US, for example, "has several times intervened in Latin America to radically alter economic policy and facilitate the rise and fall of governments" (Mole, 1999: 5). More recently, following the failure to find nuclear weapons in Iraq, one can safely assume that economic interests more than anything else motivated the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

10. According to Nkrumah (1965), the essence of neo-colonialism is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty, whereas in reality, its economic system and thus political policy is directed from outside.

11. Emmanuel Ayandele argued that colonialism produced a crop of western-educated Africans who on return to the continent (some were resettled against their wishes) started to see Africa as a *tabula rasa* upon which they had the self-arrogated responsibility to rewrite and civilize. He tagged them as hybrids because even though they were Africans by origin, most of them saw themselves and acted more as assimilated Europeans and as such condemned African traditions and values. This identity crisis often led to different forms of conflict with traditional authorities in the nationalist struggle against colonialism (Ayandele, 1967).

12. The list include President Kasavubu, Foreign Minister Justin Bomboko, top finance aide Albert Ndele, Senate President Joseph Ileo and labor leader Cyrille Adoula who were all recruited by the CIA for its Project Wizard. Project Wizard was a CIA covert operation specifically put in place to undo Lumumba (See Weissman, 2002)

13. Lumumba was imprisoned again in 1959 on charges of inciting public violence following the MNC's boycott of the local government polls of that year which was meant to be part of a 5 year decolonization programme. The MNC had seen it as a ploy by the Belgian government to delay Congolese independence and boycotted the elections at first but later contested and won a landslide victory. The Belgian colonial government saw the initial boycott as an affront on its authority and responded with state repression of legitimate dissent. Therefore, in January of 1960 when all stakeholders were invited to the

Conference, Lumumba was still in prison and there was a stalemate because the MNC refused to participate without him. Eventually he was released from prison and Lumumba eventually attended the Conference.

14. Lumumba broke protocol when he got up to give the speech as it was not scheduled as part of the programme. According to Jean Van Leirde, a personal friend and advisor to Lumumba, "the king was very angry. The Belgians wanted nothing to do with him after that. People say it was this speech that brought his end" http://www.africawithin.com/lumumba/who_killed_lumumba.htm (Accessed 29/09/09).

15. For example, according to Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002) Lumumba dreamed of a Congolese people who were capable of forging their own destinies without European influences.

16. The colonialists effectively used this to divide and rule Africa in general and the Congolese in particular

17. For example, to some, *Lumumbaism* is the symbol of faith in a great future for the Congo, wholly free and united. To others, it is an ideology to fight for. However, in our view, *Lumumbaism* means the ideals Lumumba fought for, the ways he recommended for achieving it and in which he dedicated his life and died for. The essence of *Lumumbaism* is the awareness that everyone must fight, in his own sphere and according to his own abilities and chances of success, to take part in the whole liberation struggle of the oppressed peoples and subjugated countries (Thomas, 1972).

18. This is not to mention the colonial legacy of divide-and rule-politics, the exploitative notion and non-developmental nature of the state, and its attendant backlog of poverty that were inherited from the colonial government at independence (see Ake, 1996; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002).

19. After much Belgian pressure, Mobutu took action to arrest Lumumba on 10 October, which he had always refused to do until that time, and it was in exchange for a Belgian promise to provide technical and military support to the Congolese army (Weissman, 2002).

20. Lumumba escaped on 27 November and was arrested by Mobutu's forces 2 days later.

21. Military in African politics theorists have used the contagion effect theory to explain military intervention in African politics. According to the theory, military intervention in politics is contagious and that a coup in country A tended to spark another in country B, especially in instances where these military officers are acquaintances.

22. From Lumumba's last letter written to his wife on 30 December 1960 (in Thomas, 1972: appendix).

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