Sovereignty and Personal Rule in Zaire

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Zaire's [1] real political system operates outside conventions of formal state sovereignty. As formal state bureaucracies collapsed under Zaire's president Mobutu Sese Seko (1965-97), the country's ruler increasingly exercised authority through control over markets, rather than bureaucracies. Control became less territorial and more centered on domination of an archipelago of resources that could be used to generate income and attract powerful allies. Abjuring "development," administration became incidental to the profitable exploitation of resources for personal gain. Bureaucracies, feared the ruler, acquire their own interests and powers [2]. Rather than providing security to citizens, the regime held on to power through opposite means. Even outsiders' recognition of Zaire's sovereignty has become contingent to what are violent, essentially private commercial arrangements as a means of exercising authority.

This reconfiguration represents a stark contrast to earlier characterizations of Zaire's political system, particularly what Callaghy called a "Zairian absolutism" of effective accumulation and exercise of patrimonial control in the 1970s and 1980s within the framework of a centralized (if ineffective) state administration [3] As reliable Cold War era outside sources of income faltered, Mobutu's first response to crisis was to intensify old strategies, consolidating power not through state structures, but via patronage to loyal strongmen. His apparent monopoly over the distribution of resources to a single patronage network discouraged him from innovating, even as the pace of change quickened in the late 1980s. Strongmen quickly discovered, however, that changing conditions brought them new opportunities to profit on their own. Enterprising politicians used old positions of privilege to take advantage of new opportunities and resources that came with defection from the president's network. Yet how did Mobutu weather for so long the collapse of not only Zaire's state institutions, but also his presidential network of strongmen and aspiring politicians that really ran Zaire before the 1990s? And after Laurent Kabila finally removed Mobutu from power in May, 1997, how has the nature of state collapse under Mobutu influenced Kabila's own construction of authority?

THE POLITICS OF RESOURCES IN ZAIRE

Global recognition of the sovereignty of the Zairian state was central to Mobutu's political strategy, especially as this allowed him to attract diplomatic support and foreign aid. As noted by Jackson, global recognition of sovereignty bestowed such prerogatives on rulers of weak African states [4]. Beyond the Cold War era analyzed by Jackson, however, unquestioned formal sovereignty also served the useful purpose of simplifying deals with some foreign firms and creditors -- another key component of Mobutu's politics. Such a view is consistent with analyses

http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v1/3/4.pdf

ISSN: 2152-2448

which concluded that the exercise of political power in Zaire owes more to informal political networks based upon economic control, rather than formal notions of proper state behavior. As they stress, however, such political practices clashed with economic efficiency [5]. Yet from at least 1990, Mobutu discovered that the contradiction between the exercise and consoldation of political power, on the one hand, and economic inefficiency, on the other, rapidly decreased his capacity to reward loyalty among associates. Changes associated with the end of the Cold War aggravated this. He had to find a way to fragment the power of increasingly unruly strongmen and do so while tapping new sources of wealth. This strategy continues to be pursued by Laurent Kabila.

Mobutu's success as a patrimonial ruler saddled him with an extensive network of clients who exercised power in their own right. Mobutu later managed this vulnerability with new non-bureaucratic strategies of rule through manipulating market opportunities, even where actual sources of accumulation were not under his direct control. For example, in 1976 Mobutu gave the German firm Orbital Transport and Raketen, A.G. virtual sovereignty over a 150,000 square kilometer portion of Shaba in exchange for rents [6]. Kabila later used this same strategy to oppose, then unseat Mobutu. Mobutu left individual military units and commercial syndicates to forage on their own, signaling what appeared to be the dissolution of Zaire. Different factions jealously guarded useful territory and opportunity from rival entrepreneurs. But competition among these groups reduced chances of mutiny or coordinated attack on Mobutu. Individual strongmen appealed to Mobutu for protection against local rivals even as they consolidated virtually autonomous fiefdoms organized around commerce in diamonds, gold, coffee, timber, cobalt and arms [7]. This benefitted Mobutu insofar as it forestalled resistance and contained challenges amidst collapsing patron-client networks. Mobutu realized that his best chance for survival lay in using opposition among factions of his patronage network to neutralize the network's threat to him.

Mobutu used this method because it did not require a command hierarchy that could acquire interests of its own and it obstructed rivals' attempts to build their own organizations. The existence of multiple centers of accumulation in Zaire facilitated this radical decentralization of politics. An archipelago of copper, cobalt, gold and diamond deposits in parts of the country leaves broad stretches of *Afrique inutile* that physically separates some political groups. Because of the breakdown of rail and road networks, mineral rich provinces like Shaba and Kasai do much more business with southern neighbors than with Zaire's domestic market. Kivu in the east has closer contact with Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda than with most of Zaire. Collapsing infrastructure also encouraged Mobutu's associates to exploit local opportunities rather than joining others to mutiny against Mobutu. In this context ownership of air cargo firms highlighted contours of political competition or alliances better than did formal agreements or individuals' titles. Competition at these centers of accumulation for control over trade is what left a political space for Mobutu to manage crises. Sovereignty, then, is important to Zaire's state rulers as a license to make deals with essentially private allies.

The pretense of Kengo wa Dondo (the Prime Minister and putative "official" rival to Mobutu from 1994 to 199[7] to implement reform and impose austerity showed how benefits of sovereignty were shared while factions struggled to control resources. As head of the "democratic opposition" *Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social* (UDPS) some outsiders treated Kengo as a "responsible" alternative to Mobutu. Creditors saw in Kengo a sovereign interlocutor who acknowledged debts and agreed to implement reforms. His status as a reformer positioned Kengo to reap the benefits of manipulated liberalization to favor his faction's power and attract foreigners interested in Zaire's resources. Mobutu profited from Kengo's reputation as a reformer (global interlocutor) when this attracted renewed creditor and foreign firm interest in Zaire, giving Mobutu assets and relationships that he then used to support his personal power.

Political struggle focused on resources and trade, as opposed to formal declarations of political authority or state institutions, has created a special role for some mining companies in Zaire. These firms utilize their unusual capacity to do business in this contentious political environment. Their arrival reinforces the decentralization of Zairian factional politics, since many of these firms become insinuated into local strongmens' political strategies and share in the commercial benefits of Zairian state sovereignty. Here, too, firms find that they can manipulate liberalization to attract creditor support for their operations. Some even try to convince creditors to subsidize their joint ventures with local strongmen! For these outsiders, the cloak of Zaire's sovereignty helps conceal to others the extent to which their deals are integral to the country's personal politics.

The specific features of decline after the Cold War's end and Mobutu's response to this crisis highlights the innovative strategies that Mobutu and his rivals used to reshape politics within conventions and formal boundaries of Zaire that global society recognizes. As I will later detail, these actions then imposed constraints and introduced opportunities that influence Kabila's efforts to rule the country. But first, I examine how Mobutu's rejection of conventional state building options and specific features of his patrimonial politics reshaped Zaire's political economy.

MOBUTU ELIMINATED CONVENTIONAL STATE-BUILDING OPTIONS

Zaire boasts many commercial and diplomatic opportunities that can be translated into political resources. Taking 1986 as a baseline, before mineral exports began to fall precipitously, copper, cobalt, zinc, and diamond exports of state-run firms generated $1.15 billion in the formal economy. Coffee, the country's main agricultural export, added $80 million [8]. This left uncounted profits from money laundering, illicit exports and the drug trade, which Mobutu translated into patronage when he exercised direct control over the exchange of these goods. Trading a staunch anti-communist stance for aid from superpower patrons netted him $448 million in 1986 [9]. Visible non-tax resources at Mobutu's disposal thus stood at almost $1.7 billion in 1986. Added to this was United States support for loans from multilateral creditors in return for aiding UNITA rebels in Angola and access to a Zairian air base at Kamina to resupply UNITA [10].

Mobutu was quite successful at incorporating creditors into his political alliance during the 1980s. Callaghy observed that Mobutu masterfully manipulated relations with creditors, alternating promises with brinksmanship to keep loans coming [11]. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) returned to Zaire in 1983 after a five year absence, and proceeded to disburse $1.3 billion to Mobutu's government over the next five years. A senior IMF official in Washington resigned to protest what he claimed was improper US pressure on the IMF to treat Zaire leniently in Paris Club debt negotiations that granted Zaire a six year grace period on bilateral debt payments.

Creditor patience with Mobutu seemed almost limitless during the Cold War. From 1976 to 1990, IMF officials devised 14 stabilization programs for Zaire. Between 1975 and 1985, gentle treatment at Paris Club debt renegotiations led to rescheduling $3.5 billion of Zaire's 1985 external debt of about $7.5 billion. Mobutu also boasted personal ties to at least one World Bank official. In one instance, he hired as his personal assistant a World Bank official who had access to confidential information about granting aid to Zaire [12]! This shows the extent to which Mobutu exercised autonomy in these relations, rather than simply acting as a Cold War client to France or the United States [13].

These resources underwrote Mobutu's patron-client network, giving him control over the distribution of resources to loyal associates. The prevalence of large, politically motivated projects in the 1970s and 1980s underscores the importance of outside finance to sustaining Mobutu's patronage network. The Inga-Shaba project, costing $1.5 billion in 1983 alone, typified this reliance on external resources. The project included a hydroelectric dam to supply electricity to mining areas in Shaba. Although electricity could have been generated more cheaply closer to mine sites, the project provided construction contracts for foreign firms, a return for US and French support of Mobutu during revolts in Shaba, an area which supplied about half of Zaire's mineral exports in 1977 and 1978 [14]. Shaba's massive and inefficient Tenke-Fungurume copper mine, designed to tie-in to the Inga project, typified Mobutu's increasing reliance on exploiting natural resources with the help of outsiders to accumulate wealth.

Mobutu's November, 1973 nationalization of large local firms further foreclosed a political strategy based upon collecting revenue from entrepreneurs supported with pro-growth economic policies. Mobutu instead expropriated agricultural and commercial enterprises from mostly foreign owners, converting them to political resources for the president to distribute to loyal associates. Most beneficiaries had no managerial experience [15]. The economically destructive policy drove down the proportion of agricultural exports in Zaire's foreign trade from 28 percent of total earnings when Mobutu took power in 1965 to about 6 percent in 1990 [16]. While providing commercial agriculture properties for political clients, the policy gutted tax revenues from agricultural trade, which declined from 61 percent of state revenues in 1973 to 28 percent in 1978 [17].

This internal shrinkage of productive capacity, along with alternative (foreign) partners, reinforced Mobutu's reliance on arrangements with foreigners to run state-owned mines, the most promising remaining indigenous source of wealth. Reliance on outsiders ended Mobutu's need to underwrite expensive state bureaucracies, some of which had shown past tendencies to become vehicles of secessionist movements. Exercising private control over many of Zaire's resources with foreign help, Mobutu now safely abandoned expensive clinics, schools and public works that served citizens but contributed little to his stock of political resources. Rural areas no longer providing much in the way of state revenues could be abandoned as political burdens as Mobutu faced growing pressure to choose which clients would be patronized and which would be jettisoned.

Mobutu's allocation of 2.1 percent of state spending to health and education in 1990, versus 17.5 percent in 1972, reflects a rational choice from the perspective of a weak state ruler [18]. The destruction of agricultural production for export also followed Mobutu's disinterest in cultivating support among small agricultural producers and entrepreneurs in exchange for revenue and legitimacy. Those who produced for export in the 1980s thus faced extremely low official prices for their goods. For example, the Zairian state marketing board that bought and sold coffee, *Office Zairois de Café*, paid farmers seven cents per kilogram of coffee in 1985 while smugglers paid 42 cents [19]. Most of these marketing boards disappeared by the early 1990s, as farmers smuggled produce or grew only subsistence crops.

Meanwhile, the long-term shift of government expenditures to the president's office reflects Mobutu's personal control over state resources (Chart [1]. Yet World Bank statistics report lower percentages of state spending under direct presidential control. For example, the World Bank reported that 64.7 percent of Zaire's budget was reserved for Mobutu's discretionary spending, versus a Zairian official report of about 95 percent in 1992 [20]. A former Zairian official suggests that this discrepancy reflected creditor efforts to portray Mobutu's corruption in the best possible light to convince observers that perhaps Mobutu would support reform after all and that debts were collectable [21].

CHART 1: Privatization of Government Expenditures [22]

	President	Agriculture	Social Services
1972	28%	29.3%	17.5%
1974	26%	32.1%	12.4%
1976	29%	30.9%	13.2%
1978	29%	41%	11%
1980	33%	42%	11%
1982	35%	32%	10%
1984	39%	30%	9%
1986	39%	29%	7%
1988	49%	18%	4%
1990	80%	11%	2%

1992	95%	4%	nil

Nonetheless, Mobutu's "privatization" of the state budget in 1990 coincided with growing impatience among creditors with Mobutu's unkept promises of economic reform. In 1991, the IMF announced that Zaire lagged on payments of $81.7 million to the organization and would receive no new loans. Three years later the IMF expelled Zaire. This added to a rapid increase of outside pressure on Mobutu, along with rising popular demands for reform. Ironically, Mobutu's reaction was to still more radically privatize the state itself. At first he did not abandon wholesale his strongmen associates. Instead, he allocated almost no state expenditures to social services or infrastructure after 1992, using the funds to replace resources lost elsewhere.

This state retreat from citizens reflected the extent to which Mobutu relied on his extensive personal networks rather than effective institutions for regime survival. The extremely negative effects of Mobutu's rule on most Zairians likely foreclosed a reversal, since official accountability to popular needs would generate organized calls for him to leave office. Most Zairians lived in an economy that had shrunken 40 percent between 1988 and 1995 and suffered inflation that rose to 23,000 percent in 1995 [23].

Twenty-five years after independence, only 15 percent of the roads inherited from Belgian colonial rule remained passable [24]. Guidebooks for foreign travelers reserved lurid language for Kinshasa, warning that rampant day-time banditry and rogue police exceeded the fabled dangers of Lagos. Visitors provided tales of arduous travel up the Zaire River, evoking Joseph Conrad's description of the impenetrable forests and a lassitude from which state structures are absent [25].

As private control over state resources destroyed the productive capacity of state agencies, Mobutu's ability to extract resources from the informal sector assumed ever greater importance. Abjuring "development" in any conventional sense, Mobutu now used state power exclusively as a resource to help associates profit from clandestine trade, avoid taxation and explore new rackets that manipulated state regulatory authority such as passport sales, money laundering, and drug trafficking. These activities generated considerable wealth. Estimates of exports of gold and diamonds from Zaire in 1992, for example, suggest a trade worth a half billion dollars annually [26].

Mobutu's intensified strategy of building political authority through market control increasingly impinged upon local authorities who used access to illicit trades to help themselves and their neighbors weather the collapse of state institutions [27]. MacGaffey and Vwakyanakazi show how community trade networks that developed in the 1970s and 1980s contravened predations of Mobutu's political network. Many of these entrepreneurs still had to deal with local strongmen who used state office and ties to Mobutu for extortion. But MacGaffey and others found that some operated independently of political interference as a "civil society" capable of addressing politicians [28], which would pose a threat to Mobutu's authority.

Financial and political stakes for the control of this trade were high. Taking 1990 as a base, Mobutu controlled over three billion dollars. His control over the output of state-run mining firms contributed one billion dollars to his political resources. These and other state revenues devoted to the president's office totaled $1.5 billion annually, rising in the late 1980s to compensate for the decline in multilateral creditor lending. Overseas development assistance in 1990 brought in $822 million, despite Mobutu's deteriorating relations with creditors and donor governments [29]. These sources of income together generated only $1.121 billion in 1993 (Chart [2]. Adding to this, Mobutu no doubt benefitted from Zaire's half billion dollar diamond trade

Chart 2: Recorded Trade Originating from Zaire ($mn) [30]

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Oil	$167	$148	$165	$40	$130	$156	$160
Tin	$16.4	$14.2	$8.2	$5.3	$3.9	$5.0	$5.5
Diamonds	$400	$320	$220	$200	$289	$296	$376
Coffee	$692	$548	$483	$487	$330	$432	$450
Copper	$813	$892	$525	$302	$136	$120	$150
Cobalt	$404	$418	$218	$125	$54	$120	$160
Zinc	$82	$79	$59	$28	nil	nil	$12
ODA*	$634	$823	$494	$262	$178	$235	
TOTAL	$3208	$3242	$2172	$1449	$1121	$1344	

* Overseas Development Assistance

and possibly from portions of a half billion dollar diamond and arms trade between Zaire and Angolan UNITA rebels from the 1980s [31]. Thus, even if Mobutu controlled all of Zaire's trade and production, formal and clandestine, he faced declining overall accumulation of wealth. Meanwhile, foreign firms limited their investment in mining equipment, which cut production in the formal sector even further.

Mobutu's dilemma was that he could intrude even more into clandestine economies, but doing so generated ire on the part of strongmen and local authorities who tapped these economies for their own benefit. Even then he could not replace all lost political resources. Having weathered the collapse of a bureaucratic state that many thought would be his downfall, Mobutu now faced a true crisis: the serious recession of his patronage system and the loss of external state support that Jackson (1990) attributed to Mobutu's status as a sovereign ruler.

LIBERAL ILLUSIONS

By 1990, Mobutu faced serious challenges to his ability to rule through patronage. Foreign state officials not only ended their support for Mobutu, many openly backed his rivals. Belgium, France and the U.S. now pressured Mobutu to begin political and economic reforms. A key Belgian socialist party leader, Ronald van den Bogaerd, openly supported Etienne Tshisekedi, a long-time Mobutu rival, as an alternative to the president [32]. Even formerly supportive French officials condemned Mobutu's regime, cutting aid in 1991 to about $100 million, one-third the level of aid two years earlier. French President Mitterand promised that "French aid will be conditional towards authoritarian regimes and more enthusiastic for those beginning a democratic transition" [33].

Impatience among U.S. officials posed even greater problems for Mobutu. The U.S. Undersecretary of State for Africa, Herman Cohen, criticized Mobutu in testimony before the U.S. Congress in 1991. Zairian reformers seized on these statements, and those of Melissa Wells, the U.S. ambassador to Zaire, to indicate that U.S. officials expected a democratic transition in Zaire [34]. U.S. official ire at Mobutu, however, focused on Mobutu's inability to service his debts to the U.S. government, which, under provisions of the Brooke Amendment, required that the U.S. Congress cut off aid. Soon after, the World Bank broke with Mobutu. The immediate cause was Mobutu's appropriation of $400 million from Gécamines, the state-run copper mining conglomerate, and his refusal to allow an audit of the firm's books. The break with the U.S. and the end of South African and U.S. backing for his alliance with UNITA rebels in Angola deprived him of a key clandestine patronage resource, and reduced his capacity to manage his associates' clandestine diamond mining and arms transfer businesses with Angola [35].

Mobutu appeared to bend to domestic and outside pressure to reform in April, 1990 when he announced the legalization of independent opposition parties. The convening of a national conference in Congo across the river from Kinshasa appeared to provide a model for reform. Zaire's conference opened in Kinshasa in August 1991, under the leadership of Archbishop Laurent Monswengwo Pasinya, known for his neutrality and apparent lack of political ambition. Television and radio carried live debates that culminated in the formation of a Haut conseil de la Republique (HCR), which was expected to negotiate a hand over of power from Mobutu to Tshisekedi, the conference's choice for interim leader. Students protests in 1990, along with foreign condemnation of Mobutu's repression of them, generated even higher popular expectations of change.

Tshisekedi's rise as an opposition figure at first appeared as a formal legal challenge to Mobutu's authoritarian rule. More serious for Mobutu, Tshisekedi's visibility, a Luba-Kasai from diamond rich Eastern Kasai, revived old struggles to control resources. Tshisekedi achieved fame earlier as a dissident parliamentarian in 1980 when he and twelve others charged the army with the massacre of over 300 diamond miners in Eastern Kasai. Since then, Mobutu's military allies and businessman associate Bemba Saolona had used official positions and alliances to exploit diamonds in this region and control trade routes that lead from UNITA-held diamond fields [36]. Threatening this network's access to state prerogatives, Tshisekedi tried to use technocrats to run Zaire's Central Bank. Mobutu summarily dismissed Tshisekedi, prompting critics to respond with a *Union sacrée* (Sacred Union) of opposition parties.

Like sovereignty, formal political opposition needs to be understood in the broader context of disintegrating patron-client politics and extreme de-bureaucratization. Multiparty politics did not merely signal the surfacing of factions. Instead, factions marked the end of the more centralized patronage network, Schatzberg's "State as Bandit", in which rivals position for the scramble to parcel out resources [37]. De-bureaucratized patrimonialism instilled an individualistic, acquisitive "capitalist lifestyle" of a Zairian sort. For example, a booklet from Mobutu's era entitled *Devenez Riche Rapidement* (Get Rich Quickly) advised with apparent official sanction "liberating the mind of all doubts as to the legitimacy of material wealth.... A man is more of a man when he has more wealth [38]." This became politically explosive in the Zairian context, since "officially" sanctioned private accumulation among strongmen is easily converted to autonomy by a ruler and the freedom to make their own arrangements with outsiders.

Mobutu faced a serious contradiction. He could use security forces against his rivals to disorganize them, but effective military units could remove him in his weakened state. Yet to do nothing would encourage his opponents. He chose the former. Student protests and the HCR conference were met with army looting and attacks on opponents in 1990 and 1991. Mobutu could do little more than incite rather than command troops, since most soldiers were unpaid.

Violence had costs for Mobutu too. Looting and the destruction of the remaining infrastructure prompted foreigners to leave the country. Copper and cobalt production began radical declines. Unable to attract loans and without maintenance crews, machinery stopped. Banking services collapsed, making formal economic activity almost impossible. Recession of Mobutu's patronage resources was in full swing. Equally significant were shifts in who controlled exports, a matter examined in detail below.

By 1992, Mobutu had become highly vulnerable. Comparing this to Mobutu's patrimonial domination in the 1970s and 1980s, Crawford Young called this the "shattered illusion of the Integral State." Recognizing the unsustainability of Mobutu's course, he wrote that "surely a reinvented Zaire, whatever name it will bear, will be grounded in a relationship between state and civil society profoundly different from that imported by the integral state [39]." But state-building through significant ties to broad societal groups appeared very unlikely in anything but Zaire's long-term future. Mobutu still had recourse to alternative strategies which would weigh heavily in Kabila's reconfiguration of Zaire's sovereignty and political economy.

MOBUTU'S CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Mobutu resorted to short-term measures to reverse the decline of his control over resources, and thus political authority. In 1992 he purchased banknotes from a German company to pay troops, by-passing the Tshisekedi controlled legislative council for fiscal matters. This led to hyperinflation, with the national currency, the zaire, declining to 110 million to the dollar in 1993. In Kinshasa, Tshisekedi's HCR issued a currency of its own, competing to control the benefits of economic activity. Use of a particular version of the country's currency became an indicator as to which rival authority one obeyed. It also signaled a desperate attempt on the part of Mobutu to hold on to instruments of patrimonial control, even while he was not in a position to accumulate wealth.

Mobutu's long-run problem lay in reasserting political authority amidst declining resources. His patronage network would fragment in any event as he lost his capacity to match his old rate of payouts. Much of the (unpaid) army disappeared by the early 1990s, for example, declining from a peak of 70,000 in the mid 1980s to close to 20,000 [40]. His first step was to give new roles to specialized security forces. Through decentralizing the military, Mobutu bent to the reality of radically declining patronage resources. In a vast country with many centers of accumulation he could more easily tolerate their private mining or trade rackets. Each unit jealously watched the other while struggling to control wealth of its own. Organizations that once served the ruler's, if not the state's, interests became more exclusively self-interested commercial syndicates.

The *Guarde Civile*, for example, counted 10,000 men under the command of General Kpama Baramoto. A close associate of Mobutu, the general expanded his role in clandestine trade after 1992, especially in Kivu where he ran gold and diamond mining operations [41]. This faction exploited ties with outsiders on its own, a feature central to the breakdown of state-centered patronage systems. By 1996, Baramoto was involved in a joint venture with U.S. owned Barrick Gold Corporation to mine in Bunia, Baramoto's base. Barrack also provided funds to refurbish a local airport, filling in for Baramoto's unwillingness to spend money on local infrastructure [42]. A local airport no doubt helped Baramoto, who needed transportation to keep close track of his diamond mining operations in Kasai and his stakes in air cargo companies. Bunia's airport also helped cement Mobutu's ties with outside allies when Sudan's regime, for example, used the airport to ship weapons to Ugandan insurgents [43].

Rather than threatening Mobutu's control, this situation gave him the capacity to interfere with the diamond trade in Tshisekedi's home base in Kasai and helped attract clandestine trade from UNITA-held areas in Angola into Baramoto's hands. Joint military-UNITA mining operations allegedly spread to Angola itself. In Kasai, Baramoto's soldiers protected LIZA, a diamond mining venture owned by Mobutu's son Manda. This syndicate operated several mining ventures where soldiers guarded alluvial miners who clandestinely gathered diamonds within *Miniére de Bakangwa* (MIBA) mine sites [44]. Since Mobutu's Kasai-based opposition now controlled MIBA, these operations deprived this political faction of resources.

Other units went into business. Mobutu's *Division Spéciale Présidentielle* (DSP) under Gen. Nzimbi Ngbale Kongo shipped cobalt from Shaba province to Zambia, in coordination with Kyungu wa Kumwanza, Mobutu's governor for the province [45]. Mobutu indirectly benefited from ties between Kyungu and another old crony from Shaba, Nguza Karl-I-Bond. Mobutu could not block this faction's separatist tendencies under their *Union des federalistes et republicains independants* (UFERI). Although unable to control their actions directly, he could use them to deny his rivals in Kinshasa and elsewhere of access to Shaba's resources. Kyungu reportedly enlisted South African militias, including Inkatha units to help protect and run mining operations on his own [46]. Kyungu and his allies also targeted immigrants who shared Tshisekedi's Luba-Kasai origins, seizing their property, distributing it to local supporters and sending perhaps a million into flight back to Kasai [47]. This undermined a united opposition or an alliance of separatists against Mobutu. Similar attacks by "local" people against immigrants of Rwandan origin occurred in north Kivu, with support from Mobutu and his associates [48].

This divide-and-rule strategy gave considerable leeway to military organizations to act as private armies. While unable to reward allies directly, Mobutu encouraged units to commit acts of violence against opponents to create a climate of distrust and instigate local conflict. Even the Kinshasa government got in on the loot in 1996, supporting a decree stripping Zairian citizenship from people of Rwandan-Tutsi ancestry and directing them to give up their property [49]. Like private armies in former Yugoslavia, loosely organized militaries used exemplary terror; for example, mutilated captives were sent back to their communities, to create fear of troops and promote flight.

This minimalist strategy fragmented political authority, "inviting" exit from the polity of those no longer useful to a ruler after stripping them of what assets they possessed [50]. Cheap and easy to employ, it created a stability based on balancing contending forces without the need for a bureaucratic military organization. It also shows how disorder in Zaire was not anarchy, but rather the result of deliberate strategy designed to preoccupy, destroy and disorganize rivals, rather than seize territory or control institutions, which Mobutu's regime would have been incapable of holding and administering in any case.

Mobutu remained in power and thus prevented Tshisekedi from establishing an independent authority to move against him, despite Tshisekedi's more populist character and his location in the capital. Meanwhile, Mobutu used what resources remained to him to buy off critics, pay off supporters and defectors from the *Union sacrée*, and entice some notable men to serve as ministers.

By June, 1994, the HCR compromised with Mobutu's old parliament, merging under Kengo wa Dondo, a former Mobutu ally. A technocrat, Kengo attracted backing from creditors and some foreign officials. This consolidation of Mobutu's position came just in time for Mobutu to exploit opportunities to further buttress his powers arising out of the Rwanda crisis in 1994 and the sudden expansion of new foreign mining firms into Africa. This new alliance made Mobutu's presence much more palatable to his former associates who now opposed him, since Kengo appeared much less hostile to Mobutu than had Tshisekedi and thus less likely to hold their former ties with Mobutu (and their ill-gotten wealth) against them.

Dividing internal opposition did not restore the old sources of wealth that Mobutu enjoyed in the 1970s and 1980s. For this, he would need outsiders to help exploit Zaire's natural resources, or provide pay-outs. By 1994, outside help was scarce. The French government backed away from the now isolated Tshisekedi early in 1994. The 1992 election of Clinton in the U.S. brought no new initiatives to punish Mobutu, but left him bereft of support in the White House. Meanwhile, Belgian officials still refused to deal directly with Mobutu [51]. This external political rejection served to cut off most aid and loans to Mobutu. Perhaps the divide-and-rule strategy would have become less relevant in Zaire as Mobutu's control over resources diminished further, but sudden developments in the region gave him more leeway to gain access to new, cross-border sources of wealth and alliances that preserved bonds between Mobutu associates and rivals alike.

CASHING IN ON DIPLOMACY

Mobutu's isolation eased as the Revolutionary Patriotic Front (RPF), an army of Rwandan exiles, advanced deep into Rwanda from Ugandan territory in October, 1993. French military forces flew 150 men stationed in the Central African Republic to Kigali, Rwanda's capital, to defend the incumbent regime. Belgian forces contributed 400 paratroopers to the intervention. Emphasizing coinciding interests with his old patrons, Mobutu sent several hundred troops from his DSP which had acted loyally on his behalf during Zairian army mutinies in 1991 and 1992. In contrast to the European troops, the DSP troops actually battled the RPF [52]. Unconcerned about domestic popular opinion opposing intervention, Mobutu offered political and military services to French politicians who would otherwise face political criticism at home for such direct action.

Mobutu provided French officials with a rear base for their troops who arrived to protect foreigners when Rwandan president Habyarimana's regime crumbled against the RPF onslaught. This helped reintegrate Mobutu back into Central African and global diplomatic circles. His support for French goals also pleased French officials concerned about the RPF's links to outsiders hostile to French clients in Africa. Some RPF leaders had fought with Ugandan president Museveni's guerrilla forces a decade earlier, helping him to come to power. From the perspective of some in the French government, Museveni appeared as an "anglo-saxon force of instability." France's Minister for Cooperation, Jacques Pelletier, seemed especially attached to the view that "Uganda is only a pawn of anglo-saxon imperialism and the RPF is simply a marionette of Kampala" [53].

French officials broke with Belgian rejection and American coolness toward Mobutu and met him at his home in Gbadolité in April, 1994 at the height of the Rwanda crisis. This meeting opened new diplomatic channels for Mobutu. Herman Cohen, former U.S. undersecretary for African Affairs under President Bush attended the meeting. As head of the private Global Coalition for Africa, Cohen received World Bank financing to help mediate political conflicts on the continent. Michel Aurillac, a former Minister of Cooperation and later an Africa advisor to President Chirac, attended, as did Jacques Foccart, a former advisor to DeGaulle and *eminence grise* of France's Africa policy [54].

Mobutu's foreign contacts expanded to include South Africa's secret service chief. He also attracted the interest of private U.S. political advisors. Barbara Hayward, a former Reagan and Bush advisor, and Cohen's business partner, James Woods, former Secretary of State for Defense for Africa, met with Mobutu in December, 1994 after Mobutu engaged Woods' and Cohen's public relations firm to represent him in the United States [55].

Mobutu gained considerable local political benefits from his reconciliation with French foreign policy officials. Eastern Zaire, especially the Kivu area, is culturally and economically tied to East Africa. Given the presence of a large population of Rwandan ancestry in the east with ethnic ties to the RPF, the RPF victory in Rwanda posed a threat of greater informal regional ties, weakening the hold of Mobutu and his associates over Kivu. This prompted Mobutu to instigate violence between refugees, the local population and potential separatist politicians in Kivu, as he had done earlier [56]. Mobutu also shared French suspicion of Uganda's president Museveni who backed (English speaking) Rwandan forces. Mobutu's reconciliation with foreign backers encouraged some of his domestic opponents to compromise, agreeing to a "conclave" to merge the rival legislatures, replacing Tshisekedi with Kengo. The choice of Kengo as Prime Minister also gave Mobutu more control over affairs in Kinshasa. With a Polish father and part-Rwandan mother, Kengo lacked ethnic connections that gave Tshisekedi an autonomous powerbase. Kengo's isolation increased further with violence in Kivu, since his mother comes from the disfavored "outsider" Rwandan-Tutsi group.

Mobutu's reconciliation with France paved the way for France's military *Opération Turquoise* intervention into Rwanda in late June, 1994, as the RPF captured the Rwandan capital. French politicians labeled this intervention, managed from Goma in Kivu province, a mission to stop remnants of the old government, still entrenched in western Rwanda, from continuing to massacre Tutsis. This operation helped establish Mobutu in the diplomatic world as a principle player in Central Africa and garnered him an invitation to the Franco-African summit in Biarritz in November, 1994 (from which the new Rwandan regime was excluded), thus ending Mobutu's diplomatic isolation from France.

Mobutu even hosted his own "summit meeting" on the Rwanda issue in Gbadolité in late 1994. France gave Mobutu leeway now to play a domestic game without institutions or even new material patronage. He instead allowed allied anti-Tutsi ethnic extremists exiled from Rwanda to organize on Zairian territory. His willingness to allow humanitarian organizations to supply refugee camps also gave extremist groups access to resources that they used to feed their fighters and distribute to their supporters in camps. This prolonged the refugee crisis to Mobutu's benefit since extremists joined "original inhabitants" to attack "outsider" groups [57].

In August, 1995, Kengo's government moved to expel Rwandan refugees, some of whom armed themselves to fight the Rwandan regime and to intimidate local refugees and Zairians. At first, this appeared to threaten Mobutu's political balancing act. Reports allege that the wife and brother-in-law of the president of the defeated Rwandan regime, both now supporters of the extremists, accompanied Mobutu to China in November, 1994 to buy arms [58]. These ties, solidified during the earlier DSP intervention into Rwanda, reflected DSP links to Rwandan militias in exile in Zaire.

Even though expelling refugees would have helped defuse Mobutu's game of aggravating ethnic tensions, outsiders decided that changes in Mobutu's behavior, not Kengo's, would encourage Rwandan refugees from Zaire to return home. Kengo's and the HCR's hostility toward Rwandan refugees brought condemnation from aid agencies that feared another unorganized exodus. This translated into new promises of aid, which could then be used as political resources to destabilize political groups in Kivu.

At the same time, those anxious to protect the Rwandan RPF government had to deal with Mobutu to block destabilizing expulsions of refugees from Zaire. Mobutu used opposition to expulsions as a diplomatic weapon against the Rwandan government, to serve French patrons, and reinforce his own position as sovereign of Zaire in global eyes.

By 1996, Mobutu had completed his diplomatic rehabilitation, at least in French eyes. In April he met French president Jacques Chirac on French soil, a meeting arranged through the *Cellule Africaine*, a bureau in Chirac's office that manages relations with francophone African leaders [59]. The head of the *Cellule*, Michel Dupuch, was a protege of Foccart, one of Mobutu's strongest personal supporters in the French foreign policy establishment. The meeting dealt with Zairian arms sales to rebels in Burundi, the head of which had personal ties to Mobutu's Gbadolité entourage [60]. Mobutu used these ties and foreign concern about Hutu exiles from Burundi in the same way that he used Hutu refugees from Rwanda to manipulate internal and external actors for his personal benefit. The normalization of Mobutu's global status (despite arming Hutu militias) attracted bilateral aid. German officials later visited Gbadolité, offering an ECU 84 million aid package [61].

NEW PROFITS IN RELIGION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

While Mobutu used his ties to foreign governments to exploit concerns about possibile state collapse in Zaire and instability in Central Africa, he also used his status as globally recognized ruler of Zaire to attract foreigners who had little interest in maintaining global norms or advancing official policy. These foreigners included religious and business entrepreneurs, both of whom played important roles in helping Mobutu refashion his transition from a disintegrating patronage network as a basis of authority. Clients of a sort, they benefited from Mobutu's status as ruler of a sovereign state to pursue their activities that had much to do with personal profit. More significantly, ties with foreign religious organizations attracted to profitable opportunities in Zaire gave Mobutu new means to regulate domestic rivals in the spiritual, as well as the commercial world. Mobutu used these and other firms to help him secure acceptance among members of the increasingly fractious "Troika" (Belgium, France, and the USA).

Mobutu vainly sought further rehabilitation with a U.S. visa to attend the United Nation's fiftieth anniversary celebration in New York in late 1995. Along with Cohen & Woods, he engaged the lobbying firm of conservative activist Paul Erickson to procure a visa [62]. As former political director of Pat Buchanan's 1992 presidential campaign, Erickson had visibility in Washington. Jack Abramoff joined Erickson in this venture. Abramoff provided contacts of his own from his previous position as executive director of the conservative lobby group Citizens for America and national president of College Republicans [63]. Abramoff's contacts may have been broader yet. A South African truth commission report in 1996 alleged that (unknown to Abramoff) some of his political activities in the 1980s were financed by South African intelligence networks to promote right-wing American political activists' claims that the African National Congress was a communist front organization [64].

Mobutu allies also included Henri Damas Ombga, a Cameroonian businessman accused of illegal drug and arms dealing [65]. Other contacts included a delegation of French businessmen who visited Gbadolité in 1996, and advanced Mobutu's cause among commercial networks recruited to the campaign to undermine diplomatic pressure on his regime [66].

Mobutu's relationship with 1988 U.S. presidential candidate and evangelist Pat Robertson revealed a more innovative private diplomacy that reached beyond conventional public relations firm or lobbyist efforts. Mobutu recruited Robertson to his quest to secure a U.S. visa. More importantly, Robertson brought to Zaire his African Development Company (ADC), active in diamond, timber, gold, and power generation businesses. This commercial venture operated alongside Robertson's Operation Blessing, billed as a humanitarian relief effort for

Rwandan refugees in eastern Zaire. Operation Blessing included more obviously commercial ventures as well, running a 50,000 acre farm near Kinshasa.

Robertson justified the profit-seeking nature of his religious venture as part of his efforts to generate cash for relief work [67]. He adopted the fashionable rhetoric of "sustainable development" to attract contributions and depict his business operation as a non-governmental organization (NGO) providing social services.

Mobutu also commercialized charity with the appointment of Tonga Boki, his old head of the old state-run labor union, to run an "NGO union" to coordinate "private" activity and solicit overseas support [68]. Foreign religious charities also were used to undermine home-grown religious-based political opposition groups in Zaire, some of which received inspiration from the leadership of Catholic Archbishop Monsengwo, who gained popular respect for his intransigent anti-Mobutu stance. To counter Monsengwo's popularity, Mobutu used 1990 measures liberalizing media to attract U.S. television ministries. Pat Robertson's fiery preaching appeared alongside that of fellow U.S. evangelist Jimmy Swaggart, suggesting that the downtrodden should accept their lot in this life and expect relief in the next.

The evangelizing-commercial spirit spread to Mobutu's entourage. Honore "The Terminator" Ngbanda, once Mobutu's intelligence service head, now "Brother Ngbanda," ran a Christian cafe and appeared on television giving Bible sermons [69]. Mobutu's visitors included Reverend Moon, Jehovah's Witnesses, and various American Baptist and Pentecostal groups [70]. Moon's interest extended to mass conversions in the military and in FLEC, a separatist movement in Angola's Cabinda enclave under Mobutu's patronage. Moon's organization also appears to have run a logging company [71].

FOREIGN FIRMS FILL IN FOR THE MISSING STATE

While Mobutu's regime fell into serious arrears on debts, he managed to maintain contacts with creditors so long as they looked favorably upon Kengo's austerity efforts. The HCR accepted plans to reduce state employment from 600,000 to 50,000 and trim the size of the army [72]. Kengo thus took political responsibility for unpopular and harsh austerity measures, while Mobutu benefited from tentative contacts with creditors anxious to receive payments. Meanwhile, Mobutu manipulated creditor prescriptions necessary to reach a comprehensive agreement with the IMF for the profit of his political network.

IMF officials made clear that future loans depended upon establishing a free market in Zairian currency. Accordingly, several ethnic Lebanese diamond dealers associated with Mobutu's entourage proposed that their Qualitoles Company set up exchange bureaus in cooperation with the Central Bank of Zaire. Qualitoles was to sell dollars below informal market rates, with the central bank paying the difference between Qualitoles' rate and the unofficial market rate. The plan was promoted as a way to lower unofficial exchange rates as private traders competed with Qualitoles to sell dollars.

Instead, Qualitoles sold "cheap" dollars to Promodiam, a mining company made up of ethnic Lebanese Zairian diamond dealers and an Israeli military trainer for Mobutu's DSP with close ties to DSP head, Gen. Nzimbi. Promodiam's directors used this cash to expand their activities in Zaire's artesianal diamond mining industry [73]. Together with *Guarde Civile* head

Baramoto's LIZA, these two controlled 35 percent of recorded 1996 diamond sales [74]. Promodiam also used its "cheap" dollars to buy imports to supply to local traders. This arrangement turned "reform" into a state subsidy of Promodiam's and Sozabanque's private trading and diamond mining businesses and helped finance greater Mobutu clique control over Zaire's illicit diamond business that accounts for 70-80 percent of the country's diamond industry [75].

Pointing to broader business dealings, United States Drug Enforcement Agency officials detected U.S. banknotes in Zaire suspected to have come from the Colombian drug trade [76]. Such illicit wealth could be recycled through Qualitoles and the central bank, later leaving the country as diamonds for sale abroad. For Mobutu, money laundering could promote control over the illicit diamond trade to support loyal traders, generate income to buy arms, and attract illicit diamond trading from neighboring states.

Zairian and French reports point to the success that Mobutu associates found in redirecting the diamond trade from Angola's UNITA rebel group during the 1990s into Zaire [77]. This helped finance Mobutu's arming of extremists among Rwandan refugees, influence rival and loyal commercial networks, and consolidate ties to associated foreign commercial networks. Interlocking air cargo routes and the companies that fly them traced these transactions, and are thus a more accurate indicator of the business of politics in Zaire than are formal reform programs or pronouncements from Kinshasa or Gbadolité [78]. These and other natural resource trade networks would become a focus of struggle when rebels challenged Mobutu in 1996-97.

Greater payoffs with foreign investment and normalized relations with creditors required a new, innovative strategy. Creditors demanded radical privatization, along with promotion of foreign investment to boost production and revenues to pay debts. This coincided with Mobutu's need for alliances with larger, better financed foreign firms with greater capacity to negotiate with outsiders on behalf of his failing state bureaucracy, and eventually, seize resources directly as organizations like the state-run mining conglomerate, Gécamines, collapsed. Creditors smoothed this tansition when they argued that privatization would remove mineral resources from Mobutu's political control and harness the country's main source of foreign exchange for economic reform. Instead, Mobutu used commercial ties to new foreign investors to monopolize resources and exploit the presence of firms to marginalize rivals.

Mobutu's chance to both satisfy creditors and advance his political control over rivals came with the Swiss Procurement Company's, (SWIPCO) proposal to privatize Gécamines (copper and cobalt), Miba (diamonds), Kilomoto (gold), and telecommunications to a consortium of South African, French, Canadian and American firms in mid-1995 in one fell-swoop. The unprecedented offer to privatize all of Zaire's large-scale mining ventures promised that foreign investors would revitalize production (with Mobutu and his associates as business partners). The SWIPCO proposal also revealed the extent to which Kengo associates appeared in deals alongside Mobutu's allies. SWIPCO's director, for example, earlier provided Kengo with a private jet. SWIPCO also had ties to SICPA, a company that appeared in the Qualitoles deal with Mobutu's associates and had printed currency that Mobutu privately commissioned when Tshisekedi threatened to eliminate presidential control over central bank operations [79].

SWIPCO proposed to pay Zaire's $475 million arrears to the African Development Bank to release $600 million in new credits to upgrade enterprises targeted for privatization. The deal was designed to recruit African Development Bank (ADB) support (Zaire held half of all arrears to ADB in 1995). SWIPCO would take over state assets, which they would refurbish with capital provided by state guaranteed loans, with SWIPCO and Zairian officials to receive a commission for procuring the new loans [80].

IMF officials disapproved of the deal, however, since it treated the ADB as a privileged creditor. IMF practice is to see its own loans paid off before approving new credits or reform policies needed to attract other creditors and investors. In spite of this, the IMF sent a consultation mission to Kinshasa in December, 1995, which reported "very encouraging" findings and a token $3 million debt payment from the Kengo government [81].

After SWIPCO, privatizing state-run enterprises occurred in a piecemeal fashion. A U.S. mining firm, for example, bid to take over OKIMO (state-run diamond mining firm) operations. It promised to rebuild a local airport in Kasai, currying favor with officials there. At the same time, the foreign firm negotiated with Mobutu associates to make a longer-term deal. Meanwhile, a Polish firm used Kengo associates to negotiate with Kasai officials to refurbish an OKIMO power station, in exchange for payment in coffee [82].

The state-run Gécamines copper mines attracted the greatest foreign attention. Once generating $900 million and 10 percent of the globe's copper production, Gécamines operations had fallen into decrepitude. Kipushi mines, located in Shaba, became a useful tool for Mobutu to influence local political struggles. The Kipushi project, intending to make Zaire into a major zinc producer, involved American Mineral Fields (AMF). Mobutu associate Pay Pay wa Kasige brokered the deal between South African and American investors who acquired Kipushi project rights as part of a larger consortium [83].

AMF also participates in a joint venture with South Africans to mine diamonds in Angola's Cuango River area [84]. If AMF's Sierra Leone and Angola operations set the pattern for Mobutu's business in Zaire, this firm's association with the security firm International Defense and Security (IDAS) seemed able to provide its own security. That is, the profitable mineral venture provided corporate alliances and financing for its own private protection. In this deal, AMF was able to edge out the more established Anglo American corporation. Local beneficiaries of the proposed venture included separatist-minded strongmen who now behaved more loyally toward their president who negotiated deals with foreigners. This permitted Mobutu to come to an accommodation with politicians like Nyungu in Shaba, who found that association with a ruler of a sovereign state still translated into personal gain.

Shaba's Tenke-Fungurume mine also attracted foreign investors. A Canadian firm met with Kengo to discuss their interest in the site. It faced a formidable alliance of Australian and South African firms that proposed to invest up to $1.5 billion to bring production of copper to over 100,000 tons per year [85]. The Canadian firm signed an agreement, proposing a 55 percent joint venture with Gécamines, thereby positioning itself to take control of a part of Gécamines that Mobutu no longer had the capacity to personally control.

CHANGING USES OF SOVEREIGNTY

These deals left Mobutu more freedom to divide and rule his enemies and rivals in a manner similar to strategies seen among private Bosnian Serb armies. In Zaire, battles between forces organized by Mobutu (and Kengo) allies in Kivu mobilized people to attack Zairians of Rwandan Tutsi origin. This eased Mobutu's task of recruiting local supporters and Hutu refugees who fled Rwanda in 1994. Mobutu even proposed to allow these pro-Mobutu "insider" outsiders to vote in elections scheduled for May, 1997 [86]. Like Mobutu, Bosnian Serb strongman Radovan Karadzic harnessed aspirations of local strongmen as central authority collapsed. Weapons and tacit support went to looting operations that targeted victims on the basis of ethnicity. Instigators of conflict operated with little formal organization and could plausibly deny responsibility. Inhabitants evacuated communities, leaving behind assets, becoming easy targets for extortion as they fled [87]. Yet, with international support, rulers of recognized states retained the benefits of sovereignty, even as some used tacit alliances with strongmen and their private armies to keep rivals at bay and protect outsiders. Yugoslavia and Zaire also provide examples of local struggles over resources that reinforce ethnic divisions and break down multiethnic alliances, undercutting moderates who challenge rulers as people seek protection in revived or newly discovered communal ties. Those who threaten the ruler directly are more easily isolated, co-opted or eliminated [88].

As in Yugoslavia, this method of control in Zaire was compatible with the rise of enterprising ethnic strongmen who pioneered a *de facto* stealthy secession as a consequence of their new-found autonomy. Like Bosnia's ethnic politicians, informal, low-key separation made no demand for global recognition of the extinction or birth of a sovereign entity. Zaire's sovereignty remained as a political asset for Mobutu in this fashion, despite the nearly total collapse of bureaucratic capacity and then of patrimonial control.

Global recognition of Zaire's sovereignty still left incentives for Zairian rivals to acknowledge a state within its old colonial boundaries. Arguably, some local authorities in Zaire (and in Bosnia) possess capabilities to create separate states by virtue of *de facto* control. Yet the current attraction of existing sovereignty as a political resource gives strongmen in both places strong incentives not to challenge the sovereignty of recognized states, even if the reality on the ground is quite different.

Uncontested sovereignty adds to their local capacity by leaving in place a framework that gives those associated with it the capability to enter into a full range of international agreements. Non-state actors, including foreign firms, hide partnerships with strongmen behind the shield of recognized state sovereignty. State sovereignty also simplifies questions concerning legitimacy of contracts, insurance, and adherence to laws in the firm's home country. In Zaire, this meant access to deals that firms negotiated with Mobutu's regime. Unchallenged formal state sovereignty also leaves in place an interlocutor who acknowledges debts and provides a point of contact between foreign state officials and strongmen without raising politically disturbing questions of recognition.

One saw this dynamic in the stealthy secession of Zaire's provincial authorities. Ethnic Rwandan rebels in Kivu, along Zaire's border with Rwanda, voiced no irredentist or secessionist desire outside of occasional utterances of field commanders who reflected on their *de facto* control on the field of battle. Shaba's and Kasai's authorities refrained from declarations of independence, despite extensive cross border alliances and hostility to authorities in Kinshasa.

Sovereignty sustained through coincidence of these mutual interests now remains as one of the few resources left to a very weak Kinshasa regime under Kabila's control. Both parties have no incentive to disrupt tacit agreements with strongmen in the provinces. This extensive decentralization of authority effectively reduced the Mobutu clique, and now, Kabila, to warlords, since they too must scramble to control rivals through primarily commercial, almost entirely non-bureaucratic means, bolstered with whatever resources and alliances their status as rulers of a sovereign state give them. This balance based on the foundation of state sovereignty also permits fluidity in local alliances. Regional strongmen did business with Mobutu associates, for example, as they fought other members of that clique on a different front. Officials of foreign states were relieved to still encounter a recognizable state in which one day rulers might have the will and capacity to fulfill international obligations. With Mobutu's replacement by Kabila, they remain anxious that the regime in Kinshasa serve as an interlocutor.

Paradoxically, Zaire's *de facto* dissolution shows that state formation is still very much a matter of law, not of *de facto* capacity. Sovereignty in even a very weak state proves to be not only very important, but also unexpectedly divisible internally. The key to this arrangement lies in the absolute status of Zaire in international law, short of total dissolution or some new configuration which would have to be arranged against the short-term interests of many outsiders who prefer the post-independence framework of Africa's sovereign states, weak though they may be.

Zaire's continuing sovereign status contributes to the simultaneous fulfillment of material and political interests of different groups. The structure and nature of Zaire's politics also belies expectations of anarchy or a major reordering of states as a consequence of bureaucratic and patrimonial collapse.

Herbst predicts that weak state rulers in Africa will refrain from inter-state war as a solution to perpetual weakness, portending prolonged stagnation [89]. He correctly points out that barriers remain to changing frontiers (which he decries), but this view glosses over the considerable cross-border connections and informal regionalization that exists within the current context of formal sovereignty. Furthermore, this takes place under the umbrella of, and with resources derived from, sovereign status that many thought would forestall major change. This reinforces the notion that sovereignty is contextual and that this condition promotes (as it masks) a wider range of differently constituted units in the global state system. It shows that in Zaire, changing uses of sovereignty, not Mobutu alone, preserved Zaire from dissolution [90].

RESOURCES AND INSURGENCY

Despite Mobutu's status as head of a sovereign state, some foreign investors found his informal demands and incapacity to control associates to be a fundamental obstacle to doing business with him [91]. The frustration of some investors coincided with that of rulers in neighboring states who faced the cross-border effects of Mobutu's alliances with clandestine networks. For example, Mobutu's partnership with extremist Hutu exiles from 1994 posed a security threat to the Rwandan regime. Mobutu associates' diamond dealing with UNITA rebels helped finance UNITA's war against the Angolan government. Ugandan rebels received supplies from Sudan via the airport at Bunia that serviced gold mining there [92].

This created a conjunction of interests such that when Kabila emerged as head of his *Alliance des Forces Democratique pour la Libération* (AFDL), he had little trouble finding foreign anti-Mobutu allies. Kabila's strategies, however, show remarkable continuity with Mobutu's, with an even greater emphasis on external partners in lieu of a domestic patronage network grafted onto a state administration. Kabila recieved help from Angolan and Rwandan troops and Ugandan weapons [93]. Salim Saleh, the Ugandan anti-insurgent leader and brother of the president, for example, expanded his business reach to include a gold mine in Kisangani after the AFDL capture of the area [94]. These arrangements also showed the reluctance of neighboring rulers or internal insurgents to dissolve Zaire, instead resorting to regional networks to achieve their aims.

Once he appeared successful, Kabila became an attractive alternative commercial partner to Mobutu. The increasingly competitive nature of the mining business in Africa, with many new firms adapted to doing business in tough places, generated a broader range of potential partners for the rebel war leader. Kabila recognized the centrality of resource exploitation to his war effort, and welcomed foreign firms, provided they paid a "war tax" of 15 percent of projected investment [95]. Kabila appointed his brother (Florent Kambale Kabila) as "Mining Minister" to collect fees. He appointed another brother, Gaetanka Kakudji, as governor of the mineral-rich Shaba province. Kabila developed some commercial expertise of his own as a rebel leader since the 1960s. Well before his successful campaign in 1996-97, he presided over the Compagnie Mixte d'Import-Export (COMIEX), a venture with private merchants and Kabila's pre-AFDL *Parti de la Revolution Populaire*. This firm tapped into cross-border trade in coffee and gold to Uganda and other neighbors to the east before the rebel war began [96].

Larger cash injections to Kabila's war effort came from outsiders. The AMF signed a new billion dollar deal with Kabila in April, 1997, providing a cash payment and a jet to transport the rebel leader's associates [97]. This was a calculated risk on AMF's part. The renegotiated deal excluded the more established former partner Anglo-American, which could not take the risk of dealing with rebels for fear of unsettling rulers of other weak states where it has investments. AMF garnered additional benefits in the form of rights to buy diamonds in Kisangani, a $100,000 daily trade after rebels captured the city [98]. The state-run MIBA reportedly provided Kabila with an additional $3.5 million in April, 1997, after rebels carried off the head of the firm to the eastern part of the country after capturing him in Mbuji Maye [99].

These and other deals were critical for encouraging additional investors to do business with Kabila and establish his credibility in outsiders' eyes, turning him into a person who could engage in commerce and assume the sovereign state's fiscal responsibilities. The apparent stability that followed from acknowledgement of external obligations of the state and willingness to participate in global markets encouraged creditors and officials in other states to view Kabila as an alternative to anarchy. These relations continue the focus on the outward aspects of the state, not the changes of politics within it. Specifically, anti-Mobutu social action within is ignored and aspects of warlord politics are accepted, so long as they accord with external interests.

Other places in Zaire, however, present an alternative to this strategy of finding weak state stability in a reworking of the politics of Mobutu's successor. Eastern Kasai, and especially the city of Mbuji-Maye, is a center of autonomous development efforts and separatist tendencies. The city has its own university, established in 1990 with funds from local operations of MIBA, the state-run mining company. The city government works with the Catholic Church to run the university, which set up a geology faculty with help from the Belgian firm Sibeka, owner of 20 percent of MIBA. Among the city's feats is a plan to expand the capacity of the near-by Lubilanji hydro station to generate electricity that government authorities fail to provide. Local officials and businesses took steps to institutionalize autonomous development, creating CODEKOR, or the Conference for the Development of Eastern Kasai [100].

Closer examination of Mbuji-Maye's economy reveals considerable ties to commercial networks that knitted together Mobutu and Kengo political associates, as well as a local struggle to keep these networks at arms length. MIBA head Mukamba Kadiata Nzemba billed himself as a "friend" of Mobutu's even though MIBA helped underwrite the local university. Local MIBA operations included joint ventures with foreign firms that operated in areas under more solid Mobutu control, but also exclusive ventures with foreign firms to increase local autonomy to exploit resources. Swanepoel, a South African engineering firm, demonstrated the political-private commercial nature of Kasai separatism, with its infrastructure projects benefiting Kasai. In return, Swanepoel appointed a member from its firm to the board of CODEKOR. Infrastructure development in this more purely autonomous manner threatened the Mobutu faction's hold on illicit diamond mining, since local miners and Angolan dealers had easier access to Mbuji-Maye. Kasai autonomy also changed regional strategic calculations. Kasai authorities were more interested in peace in Angola to protect independent access to Angola's ports and railways, versus Mobutu's interest in strengthening UNITA's diamond trade.

But ominously, Kabila's selective moves against firms appeared to target and rein in this regional autonomy. Otherwise quite open to deals with foreign firms, Kabila moved in May 1997 to disrupt the South African railroad deal, as he did the locally run diamond mining business (mentioned above). These actions do not interfere with Kabila's overall "free market" (actually, controlled, but private and profitable market) approach as a whole. This does not bode well for Zairians expecting local autonomy. Instead, it continues the politics of control through manipulating access to accumulation with help from private foreign firms in lieu of a state bureaucracy.

In the process, Kabila squeezes Kasai strongmen who try to stand as popularly accountable actors, insofar as they competed to control commerce, but seemingly for broader popular benefit. Since local strongmen identify popular legitimacy and provision of social services as valued goals, they are forced to build their authority in more conventional ways, striving to create efficient internal revenue and development bureaucracies. Why this is so bears closer examination of internal Kasai politics that is beyond the scope of this article.

Prospects for the survival of this experiment do not look promising, as outsiders help Kabila establish control over the territory of Zaire (Congo). The problem for Kasai is not the larger country of which they are a part. It is instead that the reassertation of control and its manner of application is not decided by those who live under it. Kabila deserves some blame for political choices that limit the possibilities of people in his country. But outsiders -- foreign firms, creditors, officials in other states -- share responsibility when they act with unorthodox internal methods to preserve the outer form of a sovereign state.

Notes

1. For clarity's sake and my emphasis on the Mobutu era, I refer to the country as Zaire, though it was renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo in May 1997.
2. A point derived from Joel Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States, Princeton: Princeton University, 1988.
3. Thomas Callaghy, The State-Society Struggle: Zaire in Comparative Perspective, New York: Columbia University, 1984, 141-232.
4. Robert Jackson, Quasi-states: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World, New York: Cambridge University, 1984, 141-232.
5. Callaghy, State-Society, 3-137; Jean-Claude Willame, governance et Pouvoir: Essai sur trois trajectoires africaines,Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994, 46-91.
6. Crawford Young & Thomas Turner, The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1985, 387.
7. Sennen Andriamirado, "Les nabobs," Jeune Afrique,7 Feb 1996, 25-78.
8. International Monetary Fund, International Financial Statistical yearbook, Washington, D.C. IMF, 1990.
9. World Bank, 1992 World Development Report, New York: Oxford, 1992, 256.
10. Colette Braeckman, Le dinosaure: Le Zaire de Mobutu, Paris: Fayard, 1992, 73.
11. Edward Pound, "IMF, World Bank Aide Has Dealings Hinting at Conflict of Interest," Wall Street Journal, 28 Dec 1990. See also Erwin Blumenthal, "Zaire: rapport sur sa credibilité
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