

PART

II

*Narratives of
State Deterioration*

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Life Support or Assisted Suicide? Dilemmas of U.S. Policy toward the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Although occasionally referred to as a failed state, the Democratic Republic of Congo (henceforth, Congo) has been surprisingly resilient in the face of its own structural weaknesses and extremely adverse international conditions.¹ Its avoidance of failure, in contrast to Somalia, for example, is in fact equally if not more remarkable than its dreadful performance as a state. Certainly Congo's institutions are dysfunctional, serving purposes diametrically different from those for which they were created, but they are not failed, as they do fulfill some functions and remain the object of a large social consensus. No doubt Congo is performing poorly, unable for the last five years to assert effective control over its own territory. But it is not failed, as neither rebel groups nor occupying foreign armies have promoted secessionist or irredentist aims, pledging instead their allegiance to the idea of Congo.² Unquestionably, the Congolese state has been incapable of preventing the salience and polarization of ethnicity among its populations, but it has not really failed at the nation-building exercise, as its citizens simultaneously continue to display rather fervent nationalist sentiments.³ Although Congo is a rather dubious member of the family of sovereign states, it can thus be better understood as a stunningly deviant case of the genre rather than a failed one.⁴

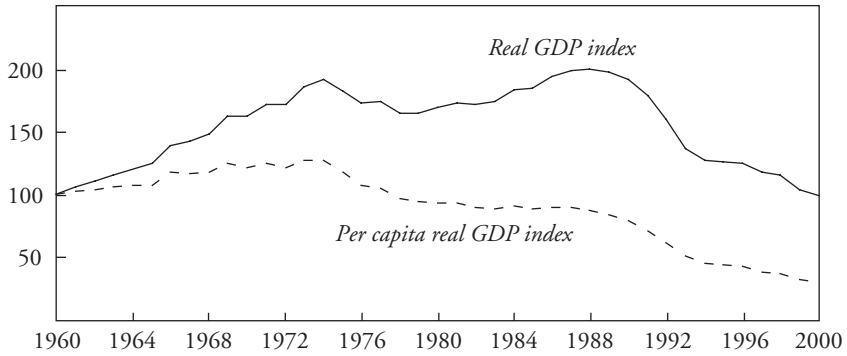
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This chapter begins by describing Congo's long-term trajectory, from its independence as a state in 1960 to its current condition of institutional and economic decrepitude. It then argues that the Congolese state may in fact be little more than a private enterprise of economic predation hiding behind a smokescreen of international sovereignty. While predation at the hands of the political elite bankrupts the state, the international recognition of its sovereignty (with its concurrent flows of aid and investments) has repeatedly saved it from complete failure and allows for its reproduction. Congo poses therefore a very serious policy conundrum for the United States and other Western donors. On the one hand, indefinitely maintaining Congo on life support in the interest of avoiding Afghanistan-like chaos postpones or eschews a more profound and much needed reconfiguration of its political structures. On the other hand, the dangers that a total failure of the state would represent, the country's potential for triggering regional conflicts, and its dire human rights record militate for continued involvement. For the United States as for the Congolese, the dilemma may lie between short-term equilibrium predatory underdevelopment and the deferred but uncertain promises of political reconfiguration.⁵ This chapter discusses these issues as well as alternative policy options for the United States.

A Poorly Performing Congo

Whichever way one looks at it, Congo is a basket case. Moreover, while conventional wisdom suggests that its crisis is a relatively recent creation of the post-cold war world, a look at historic trends offers a picture of long-term decline that started as early as the 1970s. Congo's developmental failure is even more stunning in view of its prodigious natural resources, including large quantities of copper, cobalt, gold, diamonds and other minerals, massive hydroelectric potential, oil, fertile lands, and dense forests. The contrast between its endowment and its performance suggests an acute case of the "resource curse."⁶

Figure 2-1 provides a damning snapshot of forty years of mismanagement and predation, showing real gross domestic product in 2000 slightly below its level in 1960 and per capita gross domestic product at about a third of its 1960 value. Only the 1960s and early 1970s provided an era of relative development, with GDP growth averaging 6.9 percent a year despite the tumult of the immediate postindependence era, thanks in part to favorable trends in commodity prices. Decline promptly set in, however, as annual growth averaged 0.2 percent in the 1970s, the equivalent of -1.8 percent in

Figure 2-1. *Democratic Republic of Congo, Real GDP Indexes, 1960–2000*

Source: International Monetary Fund, *International Financial Statistics* (Washington: various years); Economist Intelligence Unit, *Democratic Republic of Congo: Country Reports* (London: various years).

per capita terms. The years 1975 and 1976, which followed the “Zaireanization” episode in which the state seized the assets of foreigners to redistribute them to cronies of President Mobutu (who mostly plundered them for the benefit of their short-term consumption), show declines of 5 percent each. The 1980s failed to register any significant improvement, with continued negative per capita growth as population increased by 3.4 percent a year.⁷

Congo’s economic deterioration accelerated sharply from the late 1980s onward, under Mobutu’s still little contested stewardship and before Western donors stepped up their pressure for democratization. The economy eventually all but collapsed in the 1990s under the combined weight of army lootings, mining infrastructure deterioration, dried-up aid flows, and political chaos. Particularly stunning were the early 1990s, with real GDP contracting by, respectively, 12.3 percent, 10.4 percent, and 13.5 percent in 1991, 1992, and 1993. From 1990 to 1999 Congo lost no less than 44 percent of its productive capacity, and individual incomes, weak to begin with, fell by a combined 74 percent. Compounding this apparently endless contraction of the economy, monetary policy kicked into high gear (as the economic crisis and Mobutu’s international isolation deprived him of the usual means of his patronage policies), and inflation entered four-digit territories and beyond to reach an astounding 23,000 percent in 1993. Although it has since abated, no regime has yet since managed to reduce it below an annual doubling of prices.

Not surprisingly, Congo's long-term economic decline has been accompanied by a deep deterioration of its social sectors. After peaking in 1987 at fifty-one years, life expectancy diminished to about forty-six years in 2000. Child mortality rates increased throughout the 1990s to reach 162 per thousand live births in 2000. Gross primary school enrollment, having reached 98 percent on the eve of independence,⁸ maintained levels above 90 percent until the mid-1980s, before contracting and falling to less than 50 percent in the late 1990s. All these numbers compare very unfavorably to average figures for Africa and for low-income countries around the world.⁹

Congo's economic and social collapse of the 1990s is a story of catastrophic governance, as Mobutu's system of personal rule unraveled when the end of the cold war deflated his international currency with the West.¹⁰ According to the annual report of the Banque du Zaïre, 95 percent of the country's 1992 budget was earmarked for Mobutu's own discretionary spending, and the government failed to allocate any public monies to education or to pay teachers' salaries.¹¹ Over the same period, the perceived quality of the state and its institutions remained dismally low, averaging a score of 2 (on a scale of 0 to 10) on a compound index of good governance, which captures freedom from corruption, bureaucratic quality, extent of rule of law, risk of expropriation, and government's commitment to its contractual obligations.¹² Although this had been true for most of the Mobutu years, by the 1990s the state had become an open enterprise of domination and exploitation of the Congolese people, and political rights and civil liberties remained all but nonexistent despite Congo's official "transition" to democracy. According to the Freedom House Gastil Index of political and civil liberties, Congo was among the world's poorest performers, scoring 6.5 throughout the 1990s on a scale from 1 (perfectly free) to 7 (perfectly not free).

The Path of Political Decay

Congo's poor performance as a state has also been most visible recently in its failure to provide peace and security to its citizens and in its occasional propensity to be the cause of their insecurities. The power of the state no longer reaches much beyond Kinshasa. Despite the formal reunification of the country brought about by the Global and Inclusive Agreement of December 2002 among the government, the rebels, and the civilian opposition and the withdrawal of some foreign troops in the second half of that year, most of Congo's territory has remained either under de facto control of the two main rebel groups—the Mouvement de Libération du Congo

(MLC) and the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD-Goma)—and of their foreign backers, Uganda and Rwanda, or it has been run on behalf of the government by troops from Angola and Zimbabwe, particularly in the Kasai and Katanga provinces. The relative disengagement of foreign troops has actually coincided with an increase in local insecurity, as competing groups, including the infamous Mai-Mai militias in the east, have vied for political control of regional centers.¹³ Although all of them continue to embrace and promote the idea of their state, the Congolese have been at war with themselves since 1998.

For all the chaos and misery of recent years, political violence actually started in the early 1990s as Mobutu let his unpaid troops loose, and several regions experimented with autonomy from Kinshasa. These episodes were marked by a rise in ethnic-based violence (largely manipulated by Mobutu), particularly between populations from the Katanga and Kasai provinces and among different groups of alleged autochthonous and nonautochthonous populations in the Kivu and Orientale provinces. The unleashing of political violence in the 1990s marked in fact the *fin de règne* of the Mobutist state, the ultimate failure of a system that for thirty-two years had repressed the contradictions of Congolese society under the tight lid of personal rule.¹⁴

Mobutu Sese Seko seized power in November 1965, after five years of Congolese independence marked by sheer chaos.¹⁵ Only days after the country was emancipated from Belgian colonialism, in June 1960, large segments of its army mutinied, and the Katanga province announced its secession, followed in 1961 by the secession of the “Great Mining State of South Kasai.” Meanwhile, after a mere few weeks, the central government in Kinshasa disintegrated, with President Kasavubu and Prime Minister Lumumba dismissing each other before the latter was eventually arrested and assassinated in early 1961. Following Lumumba’s dismissal, his supporters organized a rival government based in Stanleyville, in the east of the country, from 1960 to 1962, while other radical opponents of the regime organized rebellions and revolutions throughout the eastern and central regions from 1963 onward. The secessions were eventually terminated under the influence of a UN intervention, while the numerous rebellions were put out with significant help from foreign powers, including Belgium, France, and the United States. The enduring deadlock among politicians in the capital, however, led to the Mobutu takeover of 1965, with considerable blessing from the United States.¹⁶

After a few years during which occasional violent political struggles continued for control of the state, Mobutu eventually pacified the entire country

and silenced virtually all expressions of its political, ethnic, and cultural pluralism, while building an absolutist state based on his own personal and arbitrary rule. In essence, Mobutu pacified Congo, which he would later rename Zaire, at the cost of its very plural nature. In saving the state from disintegration, he stifled all expressions of its social and political diversity. Political parties were banned, and all activities were regrouped under the banner of the single party, the *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR). The powers of customary chiefs were undermined, as were those of unions, student groups, and regional elites, who were arbitrarily relocated throughout the country. Opponents were treated with a mix of repression (including several high-profile executions in the regime's earlier years), isolation, and co-optation in the regime's structure of patronage.¹⁷ Private avenues for wealth accumulation were progressively obliterated as control of the economy by the state increased. As a result, all wealth soon became dependent upon access to the state, to political office, or to the good favors of the president; and what the latter gave he could take back.

Mobutu was able to maintain his system of economic and political domination—and the consequent integrity of Congo/Zaire—because of his access to the country's vast mineral wealth and to the financial flows of international patronage. He oversaw the nationalization of the country's main cobalt, copper, and diamond mining companies (*Gécamines* and *MIBA*) and transferred to himself vast agricultural and mining estates. Internationally, he successfully marketed his regime as a stalwart of anticommunism, a role deemed particularly important by the United States because of Congo's contiguity to Angola. This guaranteed Mobutu substantial aid flows and budgetary support as well as military interventions by his Western patrons against the occasional armed insurgencies, with little conditionality as to political behavior. Access to these resources allowed Mobutu to reproduce his rule while turning potential opponents into clients. Borrowing from Bayart's metaphor of the "politics of the belly," Mobutu fed Zaireans into submission.¹⁸ Mindful of the misery they had experienced from 1960 to 1965, most of them embraced his system.

Yet as successful as the Congolese experiment was with respect to Mobutu's power, it contained the seeds of its own destruction. The Mobutist state, weakened by the very corruption that kept its ruler in power, came crashing in 1989 as the collapse of the Soviet system all but annihilated the Western need for Mobutu. Deprived virtually overnight of the international flows of funds that contributed to his domestic networks of patronage and having failed to convince the West of his willingness to carry a good-faith

transition to democracy, Mobutu had to resort increasingly to the direct exploitation of diamonds and to giving his main clients and other regional elites their own access to the country's resources.¹⁹ This approach further weakened the state apparatus and unleashed violent instances of regional competition. The state itself was effectively privatized as Congolese elites simultaneously embarked on a formal exercise of "transition to democracy" and an informal race against time for stripping public assets. It is against this background of diluted political power and reversion to the chaos of the early 1960s that Laurent-Désiré Kabila started his rebellion in October 1996, which would take him to Kinshasa by May 1997, with considerable help from Rwanda and other regional powers.

With significantly less talent than his predecessor and with ideological choices that soon deprived him of important foreign sponsors, Kabila by and large attempted to replicate Mobutu's system of personal rule, albeit with an even greater dose of arbitrariness. He too personally appropriated assets of the state and let his cronies engage in similar behavior. He was unable, however, to maintain a truly integrative patrimonial state and faced a widespread insurgency-cum-invasion in August 1998 in which rebel groups in the east allied with Rwanda and Uganda in an attempt to overthrow his regime. This failed after Kabila called upon Zimbabwe and Angola to intervene militarily in his defense, which the latter did in exchange for significant strategic advantages and the former did for material incentives.²⁰ After three years of presiding over a country partitioned by rebel and foreign forces, Kabila was assassinated in January 2001, possibly on behalf of disgruntled diamond traders, disadvantaged domestic factions, or displeased neighbors. In a pattern not uncommon among personal rulers, he was promptly replaced by his son, Joseph Kabila. The latter has since demonstrated much greater acumen at regaining foreign supporters, has rebuilt the foundations of a reunified patrimonial Congo, and has negotiated the reinsertion of rebellious elites into the system of state spoils. In doing so, however, he appears to have also reproduced the very structure of authority based on plundering and sharing the country's resources that was responsible for its underdevelopment and poverty.²¹

Public Institutions for Private Predation

Since the maturation of the Mobutu system of power in the mid-1970s, the Congolese state has essentially been a structure of private predation hiding behind the façade of a public institution. From the Mobutu years to today,

the state has been held together by becoming itself a resource, access to which progressively became the main objective of political elites and their clients, in exchange for their political allegiance. The capacity to use the weak state as an instrument of predation is in fact the most crucial element behind the logic of its survival.

Predation begins with the head of state, for whom the exercise of political power calls for large amounts of resources. Mobutu's was well known.²² Laurent-Désiré Kabila relied on a similar system. He treated Congo as one vast resource available for plunder. His COMIEX company entered several commercial deals under the umbrella of the state after his takeover in 1997.²³ He was also involved in diamond smuggling, as suggested by the discovery of gems in his office upon his assassination. Although more discreet, Joseph Kabila and his entourage have followed the same approach: several of his associates were named in the 2002 UN report on the illegal exploitation of Congo's resources, and his budget for 2003 allocates more discretionary funds to the presidency than to agriculture, fisheries, mines, social affairs, urban affairs, environment, justice, reconstruction, and human rights combined.²⁴ But while the corruption of top elites is common across the region and many parts of the world, it is its widespread nature that defines the political system in Congo. Many people benefit from the elites' corrupt policies and provide the foundations for this system to function relatively unchallenged from within and for the state to remain unaffected by its *de facto* privatization in the hands of political elites.

All over the country, weak state institutions are being systematically hijacked for private gain, with the paradoxical effect that Congo's public institutions are both nonperforming and yet enduring. Ministries, state agencies, provincial administrations, and other bureaucratic appendages of the state are used by state elites, their employees, and citizens in general as sources of private benefits. People with parcels of state authority, however limited, can market them and extract resources from their fellow citizens, while others, not directly associated with the state, can also benefit from these practices. This is probably most obvious in the field of customs and border controls, where individual exactions are most visible, as well as in the multiplicity of state agencies in charge of security, which essentially extort payment from citizens by offering to reduce their harassment. Through some multiplier effect, these practices benefit a large number of intermediaries, who make a living as "facilitators": sellers of the ubiquitous stamps that make documents official, street-side vendors who photocopy the required paperwork, handlers who negotiate the many checkpoints at airports, and so forth.

Consider the following examples.²⁵ Although most citizens suffer from the domination exerted upon them by the national intelligence agency, the Agence Nationale des Renseignements (ANR), a sufficiently large number of them benefit from its predation to prevent any significant challenge to its exactions. On a visit to Lubumbashi, this author had to deal with the ANR to obtain an arrival permit, a permit to travel to the neighboring city of Likasi, and a permit to depart Lubumbashi. At each occasion, the permit required several hours of transactions, payments, the photocopying of travel documents, the involvement of the protocol services of the University of Lubumbashi, and the intervention of a local facilitator hired for this purpose. In short, the demands of the ANR generated substantial economic activity although it did not perform any security function per se. Similarly, at Kinshasa's Ndjili airport, people frequently use the services of private "protocol" agents to negotiate the many layers of controls. These facilitators are de facto business partners with security personnel. They make a living from the potential arbitrariness of airport authorities.

The same logic applies across state agencies. Preserving an instrument of patronage is the main reason, for example, why the rebel movement RCD-Goma has maintained local administrations in the territories it controls.²⁶ With respect to the court system, "corrupt" judges and clerks decide cases based on the respective payments of plaintiffs and defendants. Parastatal companies are also used as instruments of individual accumulation. Although the production of the giant mining company Gécamines has come to a virtual standstill since the mid-1990s and its employees no longer get paid, politicians and businessmen (a tenuous distinction in Congo) continue to translate its legal existence into joint venture contracts with foreign companies, from which they accrue substantial income. There were recently about twenty-three such joint ventures.²⁷

While corrupt behavior weakens the state, the weakness of the state facilitates corrupt behavior, that is, the hijacking of public institutions for private ends. Public roads provide a physical illustration of this pattern. When driving between Congolese cities, one encounters numerous stretches of severely deteriorated roads. At the location of significant potholes or some other major obstacle, it is not uncommon to come across virtual roadblocks of local youth, armed with shovels and demanding payment for their "maintenance" of the road. In fact, far from repairing or providing maintenance work on the road, they symbolically throw a shovel of dirt into the hole as the car approaches, guaranteeing over the long run that the road remains in bad repair, as happens with other dimensions of Congo's decayed but enduring

statehood. Really fixing the road would deprive these local youth of this immediate revenue, a quasi-taxation of travelers. Hence the road with its pot-holes is a resource to them. It is the road's very weakness that allows them to turn it into a resource. From a longer-term perspective, they would probably benefit from fixing it and encouraging traffic, facilitating thereby their village's participation in local trade networks. But from a short-term, individual perspective, they find greater benefit in turning the decayed public road into a private resource. Note, however, that these young men are by no means part of Congo's elite. On the contrary, they are at the bottom of the social ladder. Yet whereas one would be tempted to see them as victims of Congo's failed development, their actions show them also to be predators, who use one effect of state incapacity—bad roads—as the instrument of their predation.

The complex relationship between Congo's poor governance and its poverty is thus structured around the phenomenon of predation by which individuals hijack public institutions in order to exploit them for private gains. Individual strategies for coping with state weakness, by transforming the state into a private resource, contribute to its maintenance and prevent collective institutional improvements. In Congo's climate of great scarcity, the economic returns to the preservation of weak and dysfunctional institutions are therefore sufficient to stifle efforts at improved governance. The fact that Congo is poorly performing is what benefits the current elites, who can hijack state institutions. As a result, it is in their interest to maintain Congo as a weak state so as to benefit from its failures. In essence, Congo and bad governance go hand in hand. Hence it is important to acknowledge the empirical fact that bad governance and state decline were already prevalent under Mobutu. As a result, it may be futile to try to promote better governance in Congo without changing the elites' incentive structure, as if the poor performance of current institutions were a temporary affliction of the system. For, in fact, it is the system.

The possibilities of predation afforded by the weak state are in large part what endears it to many Congolese, whether they be in pursuit of wealth or hoping to escape poverty.²⁸ To some extent, these economic opportunities account for the prevalence of nationalistic sentiments among the Congolese, which coexist with strong and polarized parochial identities. The transformation of the weak state into an instrument of predation would not be possible, however, if it were not for the state's sovereign status. First, the recognition of Congo's international sovereignty by outside powers confers on the state a certain capacity to impose itself upon its citizens without systematic recourse to violence.²⁹ State agents derive domestic power from the evidence of their

international legitimacy. This is in part why visits of African heads of state abroad and their meetings with other heads of state tend to receive disproportionate coverage in their national press. Second, international sovereignty shields weak governments from outside interference, as they can raise the principle of nonintervention in their domestic affairs against outside attempts to check their excesses. Only in the most outrageous cases of genocide and crimes against humanity is this principle bent in international law. There is, however, no international legal recourse for domestic populations when it comes to daily economic exploitation at the hands of a sovereign state. Third, international sovereignty allows governments to present predation as policy (as was the case with Zaireanization in the 1970s) or as law (as happened with the stripping of the minority Banyarwanda populations of their Congolese citizenship in 1981). As such, it confers the seal of legality to robbery and persecution. Fourth, international sovereignty entitles regimes to official development assistance, which fuels their networks of patronage and funds the transformation of the state into a resource. Fifth, and finally, international sovereignty facilitates foreign direct investments from which local elites benefit, as there is considerable straddling between political and business circles. These investments are often conditional upon guarantees of insurance and arbitration, access to which depends on the sovereign status of the recipient country.³⁰

The international recognition of Congo's sovereignty thus favors its remaining a nonperforming state. Foreign policies that promote governmental claims to sovereignty, such as budgetary assistance or support for its diplomatic initiatives and for the defense of its territorial integrity, maintain the incentives for the Congolese to reproduce their weak state and guarantee by and large that Congo will remain weak, even though the objectives of support may be to strengthen it. In the short run it may appear that bolstering the Congolese state improves its performance. Mobutu, for example, looked like a positive influence on Congo in 1965 after five years of civil war. In 2003 too the departure of foreign troops and international support for Congo's territorial integrity seem to augur more peaceful days ahead. Yet Mobutu hid Congo's weakness under the absolutism of his personal rule and did not fix it (arguably, he worsened it). As for the current promotion of national unity under Joseph Kabila, heavily sponsored by South African diplomacy, it is more likely to substitute Congolese oppressors for Rwandan or Ugandan ones than to provide the foundations for a lasting reconstruction of Congo as a nation-state. By providing a rationale for reopening the faucets of foreign aid, it may once more put Congo on life support and provide an

extension of its lease on life, while in fact only postponing the next serious crisis and any possibility of a cure.

Without international recognition of its sovereignty, the maintenance of the Congolese state as an instrument of predation would be considerably more difficult. Elites intent on maximizing their power and their access to resources would be forced to look elsewhere, to alternative political strategies. These could either yield a partition of Congo or force the establishment of a new Congolese social contract. At several times in Congo's history, political elites have chosen to play regional rather than national cards and have initiated or promoted secessionist movements. These include the secession of the Katanga province from 1960 to 1963, the creation of the Great Mining State of South Kasai from 1961 to 1962, as well as movements with secessionist overtones in Stanleyville in 1960–62 and 1964, in Kivu since independence, and among the Bakongo around 1960.³¹ A second wave of such movements hit in the early 1990s when Kasai Oriental all but broke away from the state and when Katanga politicians proclaimed their autonomy from the Tshisekedi government in Kinshasa.³² These two broad waves of regionalist impulse, in the early 1960s and early 1990s, coincided with periods of weak sovereignty for Congo/Zaire. In the first case, the chaos of Congo's accession to independence, the rapid mutiny of its army, the political deadlock between Kasavubu and Lumumba, and the aversion of Western powers to Lumumba promoted doubts among several politicians and their constituencies that Congo would survive and continue to be recognized as a sovereign entity and made regional gambles for independence worth their while.³³ In the second case, the displeasure of the West at Mobutu's recalcitrance to democratize led to a dramatic curtailment of foreign aid (from US\$1.4 billion in 1990 to US\$168 million in 1993) and a concurrent reduction in the economic returns to sovereignty, making local strategies of power relatively more appealing. These secession episodes are often dismissed as foreign ploys to balkanize Congo, and foreign influences have indeed contributed to their dynamics. But upon closer observation, the calculations of local elites in their quests for power and resources seem equally crucial in explaining them.

Secessions need not be the Congolese's only alternatives to their current situation, however. It could well be that confronted with deflated sovereignty and without the possibilities of predation, the Congolese would choose to remain a single people. For such an outcome to overcome the predatory legacy of Congo, however, it would require a new social contract, an exercise in which the Congolese have never had a chance to partake. The numerous occasions of national dialogue that have paved the country's history have

always taken place under the promise of state predation for those who could adroitly negotiate their insertion into the state system and have, therefore, always created a set of biases against the consideration of Congo's true pluralism and the means to acknowledge and build upon it. This was true when the Brussels Round Table of 1960 rejected federalism and pushed a tiny group of "modernized" elites to embrace the idea of Congo from which they would benefit in the forthcoming elections. Kasavubu, for example, rejected his autonomous pursuits for the Bakongo in exchange for the country's presidency. It was true again at the Lovanium conference of 1961, where representatives from the government, secessionist regions, and rebel movements reshuffled ministerial portfolios among themselves under UN auspices.³⁴

The co-option of opposition elites by the Mobutu government and the appetite of the delegates for the material advantages of their situation also led to the failure of the Sovereign National Conference of 1991–93. A similar logic prevailed over the so-called Inter-Congolese Dialogue undertaken in 1999 under the framework of the Lusaka Cease-Fire Agreement, which culminated in the Global and Inclusive Agreement of 2002. All these conferences have failed to generate a consensual societal project, consumed as they have been with the sharing of the spoils of the state by their delegates. On one occasion only, in 1964, did the Congolese come up with a new constitution of their own that reconciled the idea of Congo with the reality of its social pluralism, adopting a broadly decentralized system based on twenty-one autonomous provinces. Although widely approved by referendum in large segments of the country in June–July 1964, the Luluabourg Constitution of 1964 was suspended and revoked after Mobutu took power in 1965. The Congolese people have never again had a chance to make decisions about the nature of their state.

It is a matter of interpretation whether the historic failure of social contracting and self-determination in Congo derives from the biased incentives of its political elites or betrays an absence of desire or capability of the Congolese to live together. At any rate, from the Brussels Round Table of 1960 to the Sun City conference of 2002, Congolese political negotiations have demonstrated the lack of perceived common interests among Congo's constituent groups and their understanding of the state as a finite resource that they need to compete for rather than as the instrument of a joint political project. Congolese history testifies thereby to the lack of substantive significance of the nation. Moreover, Congo's dialectics of integration and polarization has revealed the crucial role of Western decisions of recognition and support in altering the incentive structure faced by Congolese elites in their

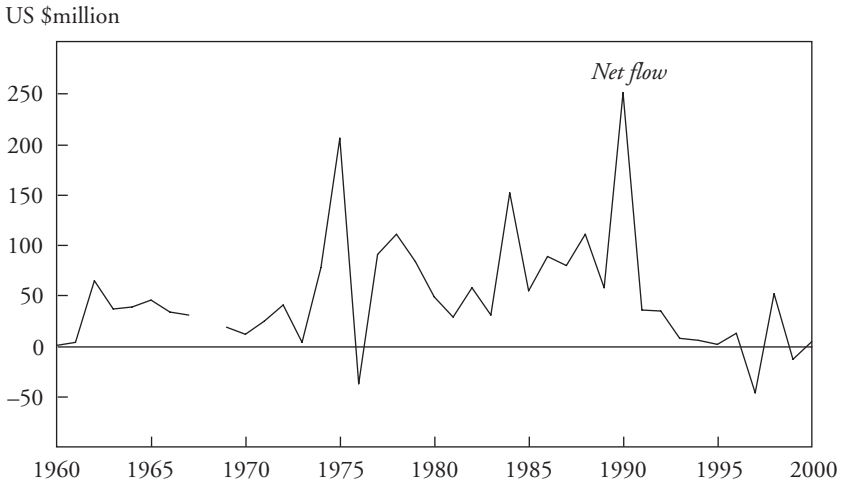
dealing with the state. The next section turns to the practical implications of this leverage for U.S. policy toward Congo.

Why Put Humpty Together Again?³⁵

The United States has played a significant role in Congo's history since 1960, albeit not as significant as—and more complex than—the majority of the Congolese seems to believe. The United States was instrumental in the death of Patrice Lumumba in 1961, the repression of several rebellions in the 1960s, the rise of Mobutu to power in 1965, and his thirty-two-year tenure.³⁶ The Congolese remember this well. They more easily forget that the United States also contributed to the UN intervention in the 1960s that preserved the national integrity of their country and was instrumental in Mobutu's downfall, suppressing aid to an insignificant trickle after 1991 and facilitating Laurent-Désiré Kabila's accession to power. This section begins therefore with a historical overview of U.S.-Congolese linkages, before moving on to current U.S. foreign policy issues vis-à-vis Congo.

The United States was relatively more involved in the decolonization of Congo than with other African countries, because of its strategic importance and fears that the administration of the first prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, would usher in a client state of the Soviet Union. The fear of “losing” Congo to the Soviets underlined the timid American support to the Katanga secession in June 1960, but the United States promptly reverted to a policy of support for Congolese territorial integrity after Lumumba's political and later physical elimination (in which it was indirectly involved, together with Belgium).³⁷ After struggling to make sense of the convoluted dynamics of Congolese politics, the United States encouraged the rise to power of Mobutu in November 1965 and thereafter often chose to ignore the increasingly repressive nature of his regime as the price for stability in the country. Mobutu visited the United States on several occasions and was the guest of Presidents Kennedy, Nixon, Reagan, and Bush, a relatively preferential treatment for an African head of state. While vice president in the Reagan administration, George Bush also visited Zaire, together with the U.S. ambassador to the UN, Jeane Kirkpatrick, in 1982.³⁸ Nevertheless, relations between the two countries were occasionally difficult and followed a see-saw pattern of collaboration and strain, especially after the mid-1970s. Both the Carter and Clinton administrations were in fact rather hostile to the Mobutu regime.

Financial flows between the United States and Congo provide a barometer of their bilateral relations. Net inflows of U.S. official development assistance

Figure 2-2. *U.S. Aid to Democratic Republic of Congo, 1960–2000*

Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows to Developing Countries* (Paris: various years).

to Congo hovered below US\$50 million a year in the 1960s before reaching both higher volume and much greater volatility in the 1970s and 1980s (see figure 2-2). For these two decades, variations in U.S. aid inflows seem to follow dramatic policy changes and political events in Congo with a lag of a few years. For example, the adoption by the Mobutu government in 1974 of Zaireanization policies that confiscated and redistributed the assets of foreigners was followed by a crash in aid to negative levels in 1976, down from more than US\$200 million in 1975. Ironically, the Zaireanization policies had been all but abandoned, amid complete failure, by 1976. This period also marked a low point in U.S.-Congoese diplomacy as Mobutu accused the Central Intelligence Agency of plotting to overthrow him in 1975. After marking a recovery that paralleled a warming of relations between the two countries, U.S. aid dried up again in the latter part of the Carter administration, which was very skeptical of the Mobutu regime although it did provide support in 1978 during the so-called Shaba II crisis for fear of Soviet expansionism, a theme that Mobutu consistently exploited in his relations with the United States. Nevertheless, by the end of the Carter years, U.S. aid flows had again sunk to below US\$50 million a year, while Congo was facing a massive financial crisis, accumulating debt arrears, and experiencing a

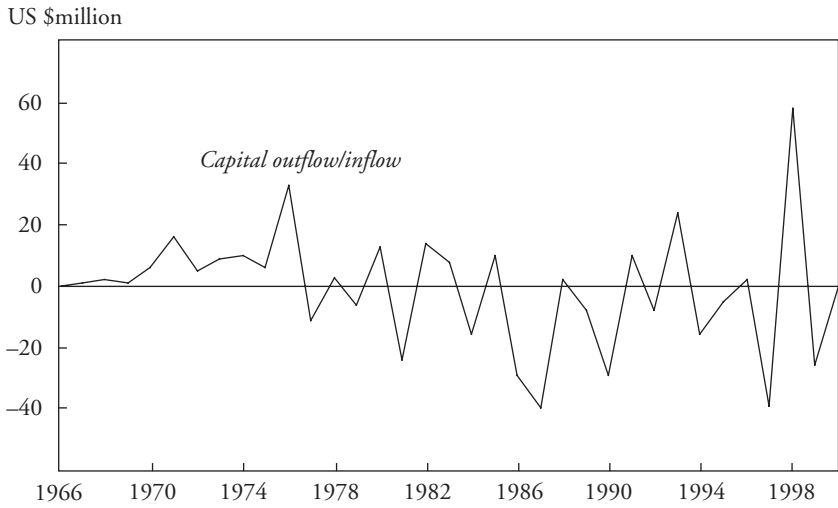
complete loss of economic credibility among donors and international private concerns.³⁹

Aid recovered throughout the 1980s, however, under Republican administrations, to reach a record US\$250 million in 1990 under President Bush. Mobutu recovered much of his perceived usefulness as cold war dynamics regained the ascendancy in Washington under the Reagan and Bush administrations. By the time the cold war came to an end, however, so did Mobutu's utility to the United States, and U.S. aid flows came crashing down to US\$35 million in 1991. From that period onward, the United States, like other Western donors, made foreign aid conditional on democratic reforms. Paradoxically, although Zaire had by then turned to a multiparty system, was enjoying greater civil rights, and saw the convening of a Sovereign National Conference to draw a new constitution, U.S. aid remained all but insignificant from 1991 onward. The reason for this reduction in aid at a time of democratic reforms was to punish Mobutu for his Machiavellian manipulations of the democratic transition and pressure him to surrender power. The first year of the Kabila regime then saw some apparent optimism from the United States, with aid inflows returning to US\$50 million 1998, but the outbreak of civil war yet again that year brought development assistance to a new standstill.

Despite Congo's considerable natural resources, U.S. direct foreign investments have been much more limited over time than usually perceived, in large part because of the considerable political risks that Congo represents and because of state control over the main mineral sectors for long periods of time.⁴⁰ Capital outflows from the United States have in fact been insignificant, at least from a U.S. point of view, averaging US\$1.0 million annually from 1966 to 1969, US\$7.1 million in the 1970s, -US\$7 million in the 1980s and -US\$2.9 million in the 1990s (see figure 2-3). U.S. investments started climbing after Congo adopted a new investment code in 1969 but collapsed after the erratic economic policies of the mid-1970s, never to recover. The frequent negative figures, suggesting net flows from Congo to the United States, could equally represent U.S. investors pulling assets out of Congo or Congolese elites investing in the United States. The arrival to power of Kabila in 1997 brought new optimism among U.S. investors, who brought US\$58 million to the country in 1998, only to run for cover the next year.

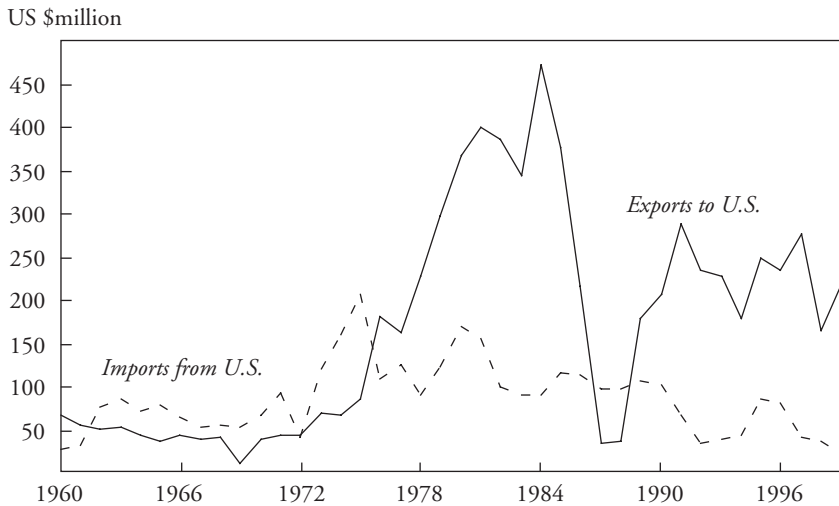
Trade relations between the United States and Congo remained quite marginal to both countries until Congo began exploiting its offshore crude oil in the early 1970s (see figure 2-4). Since then, the United States has

Figure 2-3. U.S. Direct Investment in Zaire-Congo, 1966–2000



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis (www/bea/doc/gov).

Figure 2-4. U.S.-Congo Trade, 1960–99



Source: International Monetary Fund, *Direction of Trade Statistics* (Washington: various years).

recorded an almost systematic trade deficit with Congo, importing on average about US\$250 million worth of goods, mostly composed of crude petroleum, refined copper cathode, and some gems, while exporting manufactured goods and some foodstuffs to the tune of about US\$100 million a year. Although U.S. imports, broadly unaffected by conditions in Congo because of the offshore status of its oil wells, continued to average more than US\$200 million a year in the 1990s, its exports to Congo have been severely curtailed by the country's impoverishment and foreign exchange shortages, averaging less than US\$50 million a year for the last decade. The United States and Congo are thus not essential trade partners, although the relative importance of the United States to Congo (representing about a fifth of its exports) is greater than Congo's to Washington (Congo is the sixth most important African supplier of oil to the United States).

Under the second Clinton administration, the United States switched from a policy of involvement with Mobutu to one of facilitation of the transition from his regime to the next. Its rationale of pursuing regional stability and promoting Congo's territorial integrity may have stayed the same, however. The main difference was that, by 1996, a dying Mobutu and his regime were greater liabilities than assets for the region. Fearful of a dismemberment of the country as the AFDL (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo) rebellion began, the United States did caution Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi against direct involvement in the fighting in early 1997, but its preferences for the rebel coalition soon became clear.⁴¹ On May 4, as Kinshasa was about to fall, the United States managed to set up a meeting between Mobutu and Kabila, with South African assistance, to ease the transition and avoid violence in Kinshasa, but the meeting failed. The U.S. ambassador to Congo, Daniel Simpson, then urged the Congolese government to surrender and let AFDL troops enter Kinshasa. After the AFDL takeover on May 17, the United States was briefly seen as the closest Western sponsor of Kabila, and a mission from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) visited Congo barely two weeks into the new regime to discuss the resumption of foreign aid.⁴² Kabila's ideological rigidities and his own erratic nature prevented the establishment of a sustained positive relationship, however, and the 1998 invasion/rebellion against Kabila, initiated by Rwanda, led to a further deterioration, given Washington's sympathy for the Kigali regime.

From the point of view of the policy interests of the United States after September 11, 2001, the perceived closeness between Washington and Kigali represents a liability to the extent that it has encouraged anti-American

Table 2-1. *Congolese Public Opinion toward Other Countries and the United Nations, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2001*

<i>Date of survey</i>			
<i>December 1996^a</i>	<i>May 1998^b</i>	<i>October 2000^c</i>	<i>December 2001^d</i>
<i>Positive public opinion (three top answers)</i>			
Belgium (43%)	South Africa (60%)	Libya (71%)	Belgium (26%)
France (32%)	United Nations (30%)	Angola (68%)	Angola (15%)
United States (26%)	Belgium (30%)	Zimbabwe (68%)	Zimbabwe (12%)
<i>Negative public opinion (three top answers)</i>			
Rwanda (74%)	France (68%)	Rwanda (87%)	Rwanda (33%)
Burundi (69%)	Rwanda (58%)	Burundi (85%)	United States (28%)
United States (53%)	United States (54%)	United States (56%)	France (10%)

Source: Bureau d'Etudes et de Recherches Consulting International, various years.

a. In December 1996, the question asked for respondent's opinion on these countries "with respect to the events that have taken place in the east," namely the Rwandan/AFDL invasion.

b. In May 1998, the only options were South Africa, the United Nations, Belgium, Rwanda, France, and the United States.

c. In October 2000, the question was, "What opinion do you have of the following countries?" The percentages here reflect the top three answers for "good" and for "bad" among Kinshasa respondents.

d. In December 2001, the question was, "What is the foreign country whose actions toward our country you most (least) appreciate?" Answers were open ended.

sentiments.⁴³ The United States is believed to share responsibility for the Rwandan invasion of 1998 and for the war that has since divided Congo. The Congolese are certain that tiny Rwanda could not have invaded and occupied them so decisively without U.S. political and military support.⁴⁴ In addition, there is widespread conviction among Congolese that the United States is promoting a partition of Congo (to benefit Rwanda), a claim for which there is apparently no historical or contemporary evidence.⁴⁵ Since 1996, Rwanda and the United States systematically appear together in the top three least popular countries among the Congolese public, while Belgium, the former colonial overlord, is often in the most popular group (see table 2-1).

Despite the marginality of Islamic minorities in Congo, Libya is also a popular country among the Congolese, for it is seen as standing up to the United States. There is even anecdotal evidence that the al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden draws symbolic support among the mostly Christian eastern Congolese, who have lived under de facto Rwandan occupation since 1998.⁴⁶

The combination of negative public opinion vis-à-vis the United States and weak state capabilities may provide a fertile environment for the coalescence of anti-U.S. interests. The relative political clout of the Lebanese community

in Kinshasa, believed by some to have been associated with Kabila's assassination (and violently repressed for it), may well add another dimension of concern to U.S. security interests. Furthermore, Congo's uranium resources—the very ones that fueled the Hiroshima and Nagasaki explosions of 1945—represent a serious challenge to the nuclear nonproliferation agenda of the United States. Not only is uranium present in significant quantities in Katanga, but in addition the University of Kinshasa actually hosts a working nuclear reactor—which, however old and weak, is capable of enriching uranium (albeit not to weapons grade). Two uranium rods went missing from this reactor in 1997, in the waning days of the Mobutu regime. One was later found in Rome as it was about to be sold to the mafia, but the other one is allegedly still missing. In a testimony to dysfunctional institutions, the current director of the reactor believes the rods may have been stolen “when his predecessor lent out his keys.”⁴⁷ Not surprisingly, Congo was believed in 2002 to be a target of alleged Iraqi efforts to procure nuclear material.⁴⁸

The lack of effective territorial control by either the Kinshasa government or the numerous rebel groups, compounded by the country's sheer vastness, may also facilitate the recruitment and the organization of militias or similar groups with anti-Western agendas. Although Congolese populations are mostly Christian or profess syncretic beliefs derived from Christianity and local religious practices (limiting thereby the potential for fundamentalist Islamic movements to take root), the forbidding nature of local geographical features and the density of forests in peripheral regions such as the Haut-Congo, Equator, or even Kivu provinces make the establishment of camps or remote communities a relatively easy matter. Bear in mind, after all, that Laurent-Désiré Kabila ruled over a ministate in the Hewa Bora region of South Kivu from 1967 to the late 1980s, out of reach of Mobutu's forces, living off the land, smuggling across the Tanzanian border, exploiting local peasants, and occasionally taking Western hostages for ransom. If this was possible at a time when Kinshasa was deemed in control of its territory, it is certainly possible today. Trade linkages with the Horn of Africa (where Islamic fundamentalism has a significant presence) and beyond, favored by the occupation of Ugandan forces in the Ituri region, have also opened up significant parts of Congo to the Middle East, as illustrated by the prevalence of dubais, taxi vans imported from the Arabian peninsula.

The fragility of Congo also matters well beyond the idiosyncratic security concerns of the United States in the post-9/11 world. Given its central location in Africa (bordering on nine countries), its resource wealth, and the overlapping distribution of its populations with neighboring states, events in

Congo predictably affect the entire region. The very collapse of the Mobutu regime and the bankruptcy by the mid-1990s of his system of plunder facilitated the takeover of Rwandan refugee camps in Kivu by extremist Hutu militiamen and brought about the first Rwandan invasion of 1996. In addition, the very incapacity of the state to rule without polarizing its populations and to defend itself led to the Rwandan/Ugandan/Burundian invasion of 1998 together with the progovernment interventions of Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. For when Congo folds, it sucks in neighboring states that use its territory either to address their own political unrest (Angola, Rwanda, Burundi) or to supplement their incomes (Uganda and Zimbabwe). Preserving Congo as a functioning state therefore permits the containment of violent conflicts from other countries of the region.

Aside from such realist preoccupations, a poorly performing Congo also matters in terms of its toll on human lives and human rights. Political predation and conflict make for nasty living conditions. It has been estimated that more than three million Congolese have died since 1998 as a direct or indirect consequence of warfare. In fact, according to the International Rescue Committee, Congo's has been "the most deadly war ever documented in Africa, indeed the highest war death toll documented anywhere in the world during the past half-century."⁴⁹ The lives of the surviving Congolese have been miserable since the early 1990s. Corruption, poverty, lack of education, army and rebel lootings, dictatorial leadership, privatized public institutions, harassment of opponents, and intimidation of citizens deny security and dignity to the majority of Congolese. This desolation breeds individual and communal disengagement from state structures, further weakening the country's social fabric and its institutional capacity.⁵⁰ There is therefore a normative case, if not a moral imperative, for restoring some level of bona fide law, order, and accountability to Congo.

While a poorly performing Congo constitutes a U.S. foreign policy concern for rather intuitive reasons, what the United States can do about it is another matter altogether. On the one hand, Congo's mix of institutional weakness, predation, and anti-American sentiment seems to suggest the need for reconstruction and assistance. It is true indeed that recent pacification efforts have significantly reduced violent mortality throughout the country and especially in the east, except for a few pockets in Ituri and the Kivus.⁵¹ Promoting peace, the reunification of political elites, institutional reconstruction, and territorial integrity has been the conventional U.S. foreign policy response to Congo's conundrum, including in the present crisis. The USAID, for example, currently has a democracy and institutions strengthening

program in Congo (other Western donors, including the European Union, the World Bank, France, and Canada, also have government capacity building programs).⁵² U.S. diplomacy has also supported the efforts, since 2002, of South African president Thabo Mbeki to find a political settlement among the main Congolese factions. President Bush headed a special session of the UN Security Council on Congo on September 13, 2002, in the presence of President Kabila and eight other African heads of state. The next day he also presided over a meeting between Kabila and Rwanda's president Kagame. He met again with Kabila during the latter's visit to the UN in September 2003. The United States sent strong signals, after the semifailure of the Sun City Inter-Congolese Dialogue among government, rebels, and civil society in April 2002, that it would support a peace process that would not challenge the leadership of President Kabila during the transition phase. In doing so, it created additional incentives for rebel leaders to negotiate with Kabila about sharing the spoils of the state, as opposed to pursuing other strategies of self-determination, and facilitated the Global and Inclusive Agreement of December 2002, in which most factions came together.

Attempts by elites at reconstructing the Congolese state have also been handsomely rewarded by the West. Although the United States has not so far resumed significant aid flows, it has sponsored the resumption of aid to Congo by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which started immediately after the announcement in April 2002 of a power-sharing alliance between the government and the MLC rebels (which later proved stillborn). The IMF agreed to a US\$700 million, three-year, multisector emergency program, while the World Bank, which had suspended operations since 1993, came back en force in May 2002 with a US\$450 million package as partial funding for the three-year "multisector emergency rehabilitation and reconstruction program," most of which was earmarked for infrastructure. The Bank also agreed to a US\$45 million budgetary aid to the government.⁵³ As a member of the Paris Club of official bilateral creditors, the United States also agreed in early September 2002 to forgive Congo 80 percent of its bilateral debt, or US\$8.49 billion in principal arrears, interest arrears, and interest on these arrears, and US\$490 million of principal and interests coming due between July 2002 and June 2005.⁵⁴ In August 2003, the IMF and the World Bank also agreed to grant Congo HIPC ("heavily indebted poor country") status, which qualifies it for about US\$10 billion in debt relief, despite a still precarious macroeconomic performance.⁵⁵ As the *Financial Times* notes, "the [Congolese] government is now winning widespread backing from abroad" in return for putting together national institutions.⁵⁶

Yet if the maintenance and reproduction of Congo indeed guarantees its very weakness and its very incapacity to function as a state, then these policies of life support and encouragement to national reunification may not be optimal. To some extent, the United States has tried to strengthen the Congolese state ever since the early 1960s and has little to show for it. Despite Congolese misperceptions, U.S. policy has indeed almost always supported Congolese territorial integrity. Yet Congo has been in a state of perpetual crisis and on a steady path of decline maybe because of its very nature as a state. There is no reason to believe that policies that promote good governance, civil society, and democratic transitions within the framework of the Congolese state will yield better results now than before in Congo's history. As discussed, bad governance may well be an intrinsic dimension of Congolese politics. In addition, the U.S. preference for civil society organizations in state formation and democratic transition processes contrasts with the relative absence of civil society standing up to the state in the Tocquevillian sense. In Congo as in many other African states, much of civil society is the self-labeled waiting area of sidelined or future political elites. As for democratic transition, it has been used by Congolese elites as a legitimating discourse vis-à-vis the Western world since the early 1990s, but it has rarely corresponded to genuine local dynamics. The contradiction of further sponsoring unreformed Congolese statehood is well captured by Jeffrey Herbst's comment on Western opposition to the redesign of some African states: "The international community acts like creditors who, having seen their investment lost by a company without a viable business, seek to reinvest in the same company after bankruptcy has been reached but without demanding a restructuring that would protect their investment."⁵⁷

It could arguably make more sense for the United States to consider Congolese sovereignty for what it truly is—an instrument for the domination of the mass of the Congolese by a small group among them—and facilitate a deeper reconfiguration of the state based on a genuine process of social contracting among the Congolese people, and not only its elites, though it is unclear how this latter exercise would be managed. A decentralized, bottom-up process of popular consultation may be part of the answer. Jeffrey Herbst's idea of "decertification" of nonperforming states—akin to a removal of their sovereign status—should also be given consideration in the Congolese context.⁵⁸ Another important option, also mentioned by Herbst, is the recognition of new states. Although no part of Congo is currently fighting for international state status, recognition of Somaliland, for example, would transform the incentives of Congolese regional politicians to play the game of

national politics and may unleash the voicing of regional political preferences.⁵⁹ The West was keen on recognizing new states in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Its resistance to such a policy in the African context suggests a preoccupying distinction between its responses to the consequences of Soviet and Western imperialisms. There are no guarantees, of course, that hypothetical new states, born from the ashes of Congo, would perform any better than Congo. After all, state formation through the ages has often taken place at the cost of corruption, domination, and violence. Yet if such deviances are inevitable to state formation, they may stand a better chance of producing results in states endowed with manageable geographical, historical, and demographic features.

These comments should not be construed as suggesting that the United States must actively promote changes in Congo's territorial definition. They do support the idea, however, that the United States should make it possible for the Congolese to do so if they wish, opening up the realm of the possible and breaking the cycle of the politics of the belly, in which political and identity aspirations are sacrificed on the altar of the state-as-resource.⁶⁰ Lest this seems unduly bold and insurmountable, one should consider how Leopold II of Belgium single-handedly carved Congo out of Central Africa in the 1880s.⁶¹ Certainly such a political project would have appeared to face insurmountable obstacles back in the 1870s.

Bearing in mind, however, that such radical options are unlikely to be implemented in the short run, what are the remaining policy instruments available to the United States to prevent the reproduction of a weak Congolese state? A different type of policy conditionality for foreign aid might provide one alternative. Following the logic of the Bush administration's Millennium Challenge Account, the United States (and other donors) should attach more substantial conditions to development assistance than mere political reunification and promises of democratic transition. Foreign aid could be made conditional upon demonstrably improved institutional effectiveness, rather than postcolonial territorial continuity irrespective of where the unification of the state stands at the time. By substituting a norm of institutional effectiveness to the prevailing norm of political reconciliation, donors could shift the incentives for Congolese elites away from maintaining the state without regard for its capacity and toward building institutions with less regard for predation.

The crux of such an approach, however, lies in the donor's willingness to support a wide range of local actors, as long as they develop accountable and effective institutions, be they the government or rebels, public agencies or

nongovernmental organizations, traditional authorities or church groups. Taking their rationality for granted, Congolese elites would choose the type of political action that maximizes the development of institutional capacity to the extent that these actions would also maximize their access to the rents of foreign aid. Although elites might still pursue their access to these rents for their private benefit, they would be forced to do so in a context that neutralizes the advantages of sovereignty associated with state weakness and makes personal interest compatible with aggregate welfare. The fear that such signals from donors might result in territorial partition should not be exaggerated, given the high costs for politicians of mobilizing people away from the state in view of the uncertainty of such new political dynamics. It is more likely that these new aid incentives would lead to cooperative strategies among successful local efforts, in order to benefit from economies of scale, leading in time to a mosaic of local institutional successes, which may well provide lasting foundations for effective state building.

Short of challenging the institutional status quo, the United States and other donors still have the option of containing some excesses among the Congolese leadership. As discussed earlier, Congo's political system encourages ethnic polarization. The resulting prevalence of racism in Congolese politics and its propensity for violence and pogroms manipulated by political elites can be curbed by the threat of sanctions. There is a contradiction in the international prosecution of political leaders like Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic and Rwanda's génocidaires while Congolese elites who regularly stir hatred of certain minorities (like the Tutsi of eastern Congo, or Kasaians in Katanga) and among ethnic groups (like Hema and Lendu in the Ituri region) are rewarded with recognition and aid. In 1998, for example, after the second invasion of Congo by Rwanda, foreign minister Abdoulaye Yerodia called upon the Congolese to attack people of Tutsi ethnicity, calling them a "pest to be exterminated" on national radio. Today, Yerodia is one of four vice presidents in Congo's transition government. If the United States is serious about promoting human rights, it should demand that such politicians be removed from power and prosecuted. Human rights violations based on racism also contribute to maintaining Congo as a weak state by diluting the meaning and value of citizenship for the majority of Congolese. Given this fact, penalizing it would no doubt contribute to strengthening public institutions.

In conclusion, there is a range of possible policy options for the United States. This chapter argues that the default policy of constructive engagement with current authorities and within current political structures, while providing short-term benefits, contributes to maintaining the problem to the extent

that the trouble with Congo may be Congo itself. When considering the merits of yet another round of national reconciliation, it should be borne in mind that Humpty was sitting on a wall to begin with—hardly a stable position to build upon—and that, in the end, all the king’s horses and all the king’s men couldn’t put him together again. One radical option is to deflate the benefits of national sovereignty for Congolese elites by withholding recognition or making it conditional on effectiveness, in order to encourage them to pursue potentially more robust local strategies of power. Short of this, the sovereignty of Congo may be preserved while foreign aid is conditioned upon institutional effectiveness rather than national reconciliation. In the short run, the United States can at least improve the daily lives of Congolese citizens and promote Congo’s societal cohesion by penalizing the frequent recourse to racism and ethnic polarization among Congolese politicians.

Note

1. Jack A. Goldstone and others, *State Failure Task Force Report: Phase III Findings* (McLean, Va.: Science Applications International Corporation [SAIC], 2000); Robert Rotberg, ed., *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror* (Cambridge, Mass.: World Peace Foundation, 2003).

2. Congolese rebel groups, which have waged war against the central government since 1998, have always made explicit their demands for participation in power and have never developed secessionist, separatist, or revolutionary agendas. As for the foreign armies, in relative retreat since the latter half of 2002, their governments pledged to maintain the territorial integrity of Congo in the Lusaka Cease Fire Agreement of 1999. Occasional accusations of Rwandan irredentism are mostly the work of Congolese government propaganda and do not stand the test of Rwanda’s policies in Congo’s eastern region, especially its repression of segments of the population of Rwandan origin.

3. For evidence of Congolese nationalism, see the opinion polls of the Kinshasa-based Bureau d’Etudes et de Recherches Consulting International (BERCI), November 1998, according to which 89 percent of the Congolese oppose the idea of partition of their country.

4. As Rotberg, *State Failure and State Weakness*, argues, state failure implies not only a lack of institutional functionality but also an absence of popular legitimacy and the rise of alternative political allegiance among significant segments of their populations. On this account, Rotberg is mistaken in listing the DRC among failed states, in contrast to Sudan or Somalia.

5. On the idea of, and potential for, reconfiguration of the African state, see Richard Joseph, ed., *State, Conflict, and Democracy in Africa* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1999); and Leonardo Villalon and Philip Huxtable, *The African State at a Critical Juncture: Between Disintegration and Reconfiguration* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1998), particularly Catherine Boone’s chapter. On the possible leverage of foreign powers in matters of African state reconfiguration, see Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton University Press, 2000), chap. 9.

6. See Michael Ross, "The Political Economy of the Resource Curse," *World Politics* 51 (January 1999): 297–322.

7. International Monetary Fund, *International Financial Statistics Yearbook 1997* (Washington: 1997), p. 312.

8. James S. Coleman and Ndolamb Ngokwey, "Zaire: The State and the University," in *Nationalism and Development in Africa: Selected Essays*, edited by Richard Sklar (University of California Press, 1994), p. 309.

9. Unless otherwise indicated, figures are from World Bank, "World Development Indicators CD-Rom and Country Data Profile" (<http://devdata.worldbank.org/external/CPPProfile.asp?CCODE=ZAR&PTYPE=CP> [January 2003]).

10. On Mobutu's system, see Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairean State* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Thomas Callaghy, *The State-Society Struggle: Zaire in Comparative Perspective* (Columbia University Press, 1984); and Michael Schatzberg, *The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire* (Indiana University Press, 1988).

11. See William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1998), p. 153.

12. Calculated from *Political Risk Service, Inter-Country Risk Guide Data Set* (East Syracuse, N.Y.: 2000).

13. "Leaving the Quagmire," *Africa Confidential* 43, no. 19 (2002): 3–5.

14. Crawford Young, "Zaire: Anatomy of a Failed State," in *History of Central Africa: The Contemporary Years since 1960*, edited by David Birmingham and Phyllis M. Martin (London: Longman, 1998).

15. For a factually detailed summary of Congo's history, see Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History* (London: Zed Books, 2002).

16. At the time of his takeover and for some years thereafter, Mobutu received payments from the CIA.

17. Particularly interesting is the case of Nguza Karl-i-Bond, a Lunda politician from Katanga, who served as foreign minister before seeking exile in the United States, where he testified against the regime before Congress. He returned to Washington a few years later, however, this time as Mobutu's ambassador, before serving as prime minister and eventually establishing his own party in the 1990s.

18. Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (London: Longman, 1993).

19. Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, pp. 159–62.

20. See John F. Clark, ed., *The African Stakes of the Congo War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

21. According to the United Nations, members of Kabila's administration illegally transferred an estimated US\$5 billion worth of state assets to themselves and their foreign partners between 1998 and 2002. See United Nations Security Council, *Final Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of Congo*, S/2002/1146, October 16 (New York: United Nations, 2002).

22. See Michela Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in the Congo* (London: Fourth Estate, 2000).

23. See, for example, *Africa Research Bulletin: Economic, Financial and Technical Series* 138, no. 9: 14928.

24. Digital Congo, "Budget 2003 réaménagé: J. Kabila et les vice-présidents trop gourmands" (www.digitalcongo.net [September 18, 2003]).

25. These remarks are based on fieldwork in Congo in July 2001, October–November 2001, and April 2002.

26. Denis Tull, "A Reconfiguration of Political Order? The State of the State in North Kivu (DR Congo)," *African Affairs* 102, no. 408 (2003): 429–46.

27. Digital Congo (www.digitalcongo.net [May 3, 2002]).

28. For grassroots Congolese, who may fall out of the networks of predation and find themselves systematically on the preyed side of history, the state also remains a resource to the extent that it offers a minimum level of certainty about public life, the opportunity to form relatively stable expectations about where power and resources lie, and a modicum of reduction of transaction costs as they go about their lives. Political uncertainty, warlords, insurgencies, and the like, on the other hand, blur the cards of politics for common people and complicate, if not endanger, their daily lives. State stability is therefore an intrinsic resource in the lives of people who have to struggle for survival, as it represents an anchor in their volatile and vulnerable life. This helps account for the widespread attachment of the Congolese to their state, despite its predation and dysfunctionality.

29. Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg, "Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Juridical in Statehood," *World Politics* 35, no. 1 (1982): 1–25.

30. This discussion on the benefits of sovereignty for a weak state like Congo draws upon Pierre Englebert, "Why Congo Persists: Sovereignty, Globalization, and the Violent Reproduction of a Weak State," Queen Elizabeth House Working Paper 95 (Oxford University, February 2003).

31. Bruce Baker, *Escape from Domination in Africa: Political Disengagement and Its Consequences* (London: James Currey, 2000).

32. On Kasai, see "Zaire: A Provincial Gem," *Economist*, April 27, 1996; and Howard French, "A Neglected Region Loosens Ties to Zaire," *New York Times*, September 18, 1996, p. A1. On Katanga, see miscellaneous issues of Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Zaire/Zambia*, from 1992 to 1994.

33. See J. Gérard-Libois, *La sécession katangaise* (Brussels: CRISP, 1963).

34. See Isidore Ndaywel È Nziem, *Histoire Générale du Congo* (Paris: Duculot, 1998), p. 593.

35. See John Prendergast and David Smock, "Putting Humpty Dumpty Together: Reconstructing Peace in the Congo," special report (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, August 1999); and I. William Zartman, "Putting Humpty-Dumpty Together Again," in *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation*, edited by David Lake and Donald Rothchild (Princeton University Press, 1998). Zartman's allusion to Humpty Dumpty refers to solutions to ethnic conflict in general, not to the DRC per se.

36. See Stephen R. Weissman, "The CIA and U.S. Policy in Zaire and Angola," in *American Policy in Southern Africa: The Stakes and the Stance*, edited by René Lemarchand (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1978); Elise F. Pachter, "Our Man in Kinshasa: U.S. Relations with Mobutu, 1970–1983; Patron Client Relations in the International Sphere," Ph.D. dissertation, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 1987.

37. On the United States and the Katanga secession, see Gérard-Libois, *La sécession katangaise*. On the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, see Ludo De Witte, *L'assassinat de Lumumba* (Paris: Karthala, 2000).

38. Michael Schatzberg, *Zaire: Mobutu or Chaos? The United States and Zaire, 1960–1990* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1991), p. 69.

39. For details on this period, see Young and Turner, *Rise and Decline of the Zairean State*, pp. 378–95.

40. The Congolese frequently argue, however, that their poverty is due to the exploitive nature of international investments.

41. Economist Intelligence Unit, *Zaire Country Report*, 2d quarter, 1997, p. 27.

42. Economist Intelligence Unit, *Zaire Country Report*, 3d quarter, 1997, p. 27.

43. Few in Congo seem to appreciate how U.S. support for Rwanda has considerably eroded since Rwanda and Uganda engaged each other in fighting inside the Congolese city of Kisangani in 2000. For example, the United States abstained in 2002 from an International Monetary Fund board vote on a poverty reduction loan to Rwanda (“Leaving the Quagmire”).

44. See, for example, Digital Congo (www.digitalcongo.net [September 27, 2002]), according to which “Congo’s aggressors do not have the means to wage war. The Pentagon used them to balkanize the subcontinent and better exploit it” (author’s translation). (“Actualité: Bill Clinton revient sur le lieu du crime après avoir endeuillé la République Démocratique du Congo.”)

45. As mentioned earlier, U.S. support for the Katanga secession in 1960 was extremely short-lived and represented its aversion for Lumumba rather than a preference for an independent Katanga. From 1961 onward, the United States was the main engineer of the UN intervention and of the preservation of Congolese territorial integrity.

46. Author’s fieldwork observations.

47. Jane Flanagan and David Wastell, “War-Torn Congo Is Target in Baghdad’s Hunt for Uranium,” *Daily Telegraph*, September 29, 2002.

48. Ibid.; Colette Braeckman, “Irak: Dans quel pays Bagdad a-t-il tenté de faire son shopping?” *Le Soir*, September 30, 2002; “Leaving the Quagmire.” The apparent fallacy of similar claims about Niger undermines such allegations, however.

49. International Rescue Committee, *Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Results from a Nationwide Survey* (New York: April 2003), p. i.

50. Baker, *Escape from Domination in Africa*.

51. International Rescue Committee, *Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo*.

52. U.S. Agency for International Development, Congo, “Congressional Budget Justification 2003” (www.usaid.gov/cg/program.html [January 2003]).

53. Déo Mulima Kapuku, “La Référence Plus” (www.digitalcongo.net [May 6, 2002]).

54. Digital Congo, “Le Club de Paris annule 4,64 milliards de dette de la Rd Congo” (www.digitalcongo.net [September 13, 2002]).

55. For details of the decision, see Africa Research Bulletin: Economic, Financial, and Technical Series 40, no. 7 (2003): 15741–43.

56. William Wallis, “Kabila Resolves to Overcome ‘Shadows’ Looming over Congo,” *Financial Times*, September 23, 2003, p. 4.

57. Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*, p. 258.

58. Ibid., pp. 264–65.

59. Somaliland, which seceded from Somalia in 1991, has been peaceful and relatively well managed yet has failed so far to be recognized by any foreign country.

60. See Bayart, *The State in Africa*.

61. See Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).