

A Return of Elephants Fighting in the Grass?
American Policy Paradigms and Implications in Africa from the Cold War to Today

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Chapter One

Introduction & Analytical Framework

A Return of Elephants Fighting in the Grass?

In outlining the strategic environment that confronts the United States' global standing, the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States asserts that “the central challenge to U.S. prosperity and security is the reemergence of long-term, strategic competition” with China and Russia.¹ Kroenig (2020) captures the historical familiarity of the phenomenon of great power competition, and despite acknowledging the increasing threat that a resurgent Russia poses to the United States in the third decade of the 21st century, asserts that China constitutes “the most serious challenge to U.S. global leadership since the end of the Cold War,” a period in which US interests and threats to them were framed through the lens of great power competition with the Soviet Union.² China's world's-largest population and soon largest economy are critical aspects of its continued success, both domestically and abroad. In the foreign policy sphere, China is able to put its economic might behind its military, political, and diplomatic initiatives, especially in the Global South, where opportunity for economic advancement and diplomatic influence is ripe.³ The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), “a transcontinental long-term policy and investment program which aims at infrastructure development and acceleration of the economic integration

¹ U.S. Department of Defense, “Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America,” 2.

² Matthew Kroenig, *The Return of Great Power Rivalry: Democracy Versus Autocracy from the Ancient World to the U.S. and China*, 170.

³ Matthew Kroenig, 170.

of countries along the route of the historic Silk Road” is Chinese President Xi Jinping’s signature foreign policy agenda, and exemplifies China’s recent engagement in the Global South.^{4 5}

In no other world region has 21st century Chinese engagement been so consequential than in Africa. While Beijing’s forays on the continent were initially economic and often stood to benefit African countries, especially in infrastructure development, its increasingly political nature and associated ramifications for American security and diplomatic concerns has caused Washington policymakers to place competition with China at the top of their Africa agenda. Great power competition in Africa, including the United States pursuing its relations with the continent primarily through such a lens, is not a new, 21st century-specific phenomenon. Almost immediately after African states began achieving independence in the late 1950s and beyond, the Cold War and its primary actors—the United States and the Soviet Union—featured prominently in the affairs of many independent African countries.

In a multitude of ways, Africa was one of the world regions most affected—predominantly negatively—by the Cold War and the superpowers’ related decision to primarily view their actions through a paradigm of great power competition.⁶ Many scholars have documented and investigated this extensive history of the Cold War in Africa, as demonstrated by Laïdi (1990)⁷, Reynolds (2015)⁸, and Marte (1994)⁹, all of which elucidate the primarily negative implications that the Cold War and the superpowers’ great power competition-obsessed foreign policies had on the political and economic development of nascent African states. Fred Marte’s book is especially explicit about its analytical framework and

⁴ Matthew Kroenig, *The Return of Great Power Rivalry: Democracy Versus Autocracy from the Ancient World to the U.S. and China*, 176.

⁵ Belt and Road Initiative, “Belt and Road Initiative.”

⁶ David F. Gordon, David C. Miller, Jr., and Howard Wolpe, *The United States and Africa: A Post-Cold War Perspective*, 16.

⁷ Zaki Laïdi, *The Superpowers and Africa: The Constraints of a Rivalry, 1960-1990*.

⁸ Jonathan T. Reynolds, *Sovereignty and Struggle: Africa and Africans in the Era of the Cold War, 1945-1994*.

⁹ Fred Marte, *Political Cycles in International Relations: The Cold War and Africa 1945-1990*.

investigative goal, as its preface begins by stating, “This study is primarily concerned with the Cold War and more specifically with the impact of the Cold War on the developing countries of Africa. It seeks to explain the ways in which the Cold War has effectively interfered with the political and economic development of African countries.”¹⁰

The primary focus of the extant literature on the Cold War in Africa can be summed up succinctly by a Swahili proverb that reads, “When the elephants fight in the grass, it is the grass that suffers.”¹¹ In other words, when the United States and the Soviet Union framed their foreign policies in Africa toward competition with each other and allowed such competition to play out across the continent, African citizens suffered the repercussions. However, as this thesis will demonstrate from the perspective of American foreign policy, it is not only the grass that suffers when an elephant decides to focus primarily on fighting another; by explicitly choosing competitive combat over other options, the elephant suffers as well. Since the independence of African states in the mid-20th century, one elephant has been ‘defeated’ and replaced with a new one¹², while the American elephant has remained... but at what cost? This thesis aims to address this reconfigured proverb by investigating two interrelated research questions that allow history to inform policymaking in the present day.

The first research question investigates the primary motivator and paradigm through which US policy toward Africa has been formulated in the post-independence history of Africa. This thesis identifies four eras characterized by broad US foreign policy paradigms applied to the continent. The first era, lasting from Ghana’s gaining of independence in 1957 to the end of the Cold War in 1991, was characterized by a zero-sum Cold War paradigm that sought above else to

¹⁰ Fred Marte, *Political Cycles in International Relations: The Cold War and Africa 1945-1990*, xiii.

¹¹ Michael Radu and Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, *The Dynamics of Soviet Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 123.

¹² While China in the Cold War era and Russia in the modern day both constitute major actors in Africa, they do not compare to the level of Soviet and modern Chinese engagement respectively. US policymakers certainly have and continue to take these actors into account, but they are not the primary concern in Washington.

counter Soviet influence on the continent. The second era, lasting from the end of the Cold War in 1991 to the September 11th terrorist attacks in 2001, was characterized by a paradigm of selective convenience, during which the United States' unipolar hegemony allowed it to involve itself where convenient while largely avoiding complicated conflagrations. The third era, lasting from the commencement of the War on Terror in 2001 to the inauguration of the Trump administration in 2017, was characterized by a War on Terror paradigm, during which countering terrorist threats became the primary focus through which Washington viewed all of Africa and consequently, policy. The fourth and most recent era, ushered in by the Trump administration but largely maintained by the Biden administration in the present day, is characterized by the return of a great power competition paradigm, this time primarily engendered by the rise of China in Africa and the world more broadly.

Once the dominant foreign policy motivator and paradigm is established in each era, the second research question is investigated, which asks how each paradigm and related policies impacted or could impact the interests of African citizens and the United States.¹³ This research question follows from the concept of mutual interests, whereby US foreign policy is ostensibly constructed to serve the interests of other states as well as its own. For decades, US policymakers have espoused such a principle, despite evidence to the contrary. Most recently, specifically with reference to their Africa policies, the Trump and Biden administrations have touted “mutually beneficial partnerships,” “shaping relations with Africa to the mutual advantage of the African countries on the one hand and the United States on the other,” “mutually beneficial economic growth,” and “mutual peace and security interests.”¹⁴ ¹⁵ If the mutual interests framework

¹³ For the purposes of this thesis, interests of African citizens will be defined by economic prosperity and opportunities, as well as freedom from human rights violations, while US interests will center on economic opportunities and favorable diplomatic alignment.

¹⁴ John Bolton, “A New Africa Strategy: Expanding Economic and Security Ties on the Basis of Mutual Respect,” 5.

¹⁵ Diana Putman, FY2022 Budget and U.S. - Africa Relations, 2.

remains the goal of US foreign policy in Africa, then investigating how past and present paradigms allow for its fruition constitutes an informative exercise, especially for future policymaking decisions.

Main Argument

This thesis argues that given Africa's continued relatively low foreign policy priority for the United States, Washington's assessment of and approach toward the continent derives from its broader foreign policy and geopolitical concerns, allowing the changing external environment globally to shape perceptions of African realities and consequently, policy. This thesis also argues that the United States' paradigmatically-driven policies in Africa affect the interests of African citizens and the United States through their impact on the development (or lack thereof) of capable and accountable domestic political institutions.¹⁶ Where capable and accountable domestic political institutions exist in African countries, the interests of African citizens and the United States are generally positive, and vice versa. However, understanding how and why capable and accountable institutions developed in some countries that were sites of Cold War rivalry but not in others with similar East-West competitive histories requires an analysis of how domestic factors combined with immediate post-Cold War US foreign policy. Investigating two

¹⁶ Bertelsmann Transformation Index, "BTI 2020: Codebook for Country Assessments."

To define these terms, I have selected a set of indicators from the Bertelsmann Transformation Index. Capable institutions constitute above average scores on the aggregate of the following indicators: monopoly on the use of force, basic administration, competition policy, banking system, monetary stability, fiscal stability, property rights, free enterprise, social safety nets, education policy/R&D, prioritization, implementation, policy learning, efficient use of assets, policy coordination, cleavage/conflict management, and effective use of international support. Accountable institutions include above average scores on the aggregate of the following indicators: free and fair elections, effective power for elected officials to govern, association/assembly rights, freedom of expression, separation of powers, independent judiciary, prosecution of office abuse, civil rights, performance of democratic institutions, commitment to democratic institutions, and anti-corruption. Definitions for these indicators can be found within the BTI Codebook. While these scores only date back to 2006, their detailed measurement of capable and accountable institutions provide a grounded way of thinking about these institutions throughout the entire time period within this thesis.

case study countries that possessed similar Cold War experiences yet diverging post-Cold War trajectories is instrumental in this process rooted in historical institutionalism.¹⁷

The Experiences of Ghana and the Democratic Republic of the Congo

An analysis of Ghana and the Democratic Republic of the Congo/Zaire is ideal given a variety of factors. Both countries had achieved independence by 1960 and featured prominently in the United States' Cold War paradigm. As non-aligned, Pan-Africanist leaders refused to uncompromisingly cater to the pro-Western camp, Washington perceived them to be Soviet pawns and therefore threats to American interests. The application of this paradigm and the paranoid, misguided assessment that followed, engendered American support for coups in both countries, undermining the nascent development of political institutions. In Ghana, the initial coup precipitated decades of political instability which caused Ghanaian and American interests to be undermined, while in the Congo, a series of coups resulted in entrenched autocratic and kleptocratic power for decades, to the detriment of mutual interests. Throughout the Cold War, the ramifications of these coups and continued application of America's anti-Soviet-obsessed foreign policy hindered the development of capable and accountable institutions in both countries.

When the Cold War ended, largely domestic factors in Ghana precipitated a process of building state capacity and accountable democracy. In contrast, the ramifications of the intensity of the Cold War paradigm in Zaire, in tandem with domestic factors such as elite reticence, doomed the democratic state-building project from taking hold, leading to decades of instability and conflict that persist today. Therefore, during the paradigmatic eras that followed the Cold

¹⁷ Kathleen Thelen, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics."

War, these disparities in political institutions, notably with respect to their capacity and accountability, engendered different experiences for the two countries and the United States. In Ghana, when favorable domestic factors combined with US policy aligning with—or being mitigated by—the existence of capable and accountable institutions, Ghanaian and American interests were largely served. In the present era of the great power competition paradigm, however, the United States risks undermining the existence of capable and accountable domestic political institutions in Ghana, which could witness a reversion to the negative impacts—for both Ghanaians and the United States—that were evident throughout the Cold War era.

In the DRC, outcomes for Congolese citizens and the United States have remained largely negative, as US policy paradigms have caused Washington to directly undermine or broadly fail to assist the development of capable and accountable institutions, even when some support was provided for such ends. The application of a great power competition paradigm to the DRC only risks further undermining the development of capable and accountable domestic political institutions in the DRC, and engendering the disastrous consequences for Congolese citizens and the United States, as experienced during the Cold War.

Using the Past to Inform the Present

Through exploring the determinants and impacts of US foreign policy toward post-independence Africa over the last 65 years, these findings provide useful insight for US policy toward Africa amid great power competition with China. First, the Cold War era demonstrates that a US foreign policy paradigm focused almost exclusively—or at least primarily—on countering a geopolitical rival undermines the potential existence of capable and accountable political institutions in African countries, which negatively impacts the interests of

African citizens and the United States. Second, the development of capable and accountable institutions in Ghana in the post-Cold War era highlights how such institutions positively serve mutual interests, offering a blueprint for US policy toward Africa moving forward, including in the current era of great power competition with China. Before outlining the progression of this thesis in subsequent chapters, which provide detailed evidence to these aforementioned claims, it is imperative to overview the extant literature and outline my analytical framework.

Reviewing the Current Literature on Great Power Competition in Africa

Existing scholarly literature offers useful analytical components for this study, yet the gaps perceived in these works motivate the construction of a new analytical framework especially to answer the second research question of how a US foreign policy driven primarily by reaction to changing geopolitical realities—which in the present day takes the form of great power competition—has impacted the interests of African citizens and the United States.

Brands (2022) seeks to utilize the history of the Cold War to offer insights about long-term rivalry and shed light on the United States' strengths and weaknesses in such a contest.¹⁸ The analytical framework employed in this thesis similarly utilizes the history and comparison of the Cold War era to shed light on how American foreign policy in the context of great power competition has led to strengths and weaknesses for the United States as well as African countries from the 1950s to the present. Brands notes some of the shortcomings of American Cold War foreign policy, especially in the 'Third World,' which he deems the site of "America's worst failings—moral and strategic" during this time period.¹⁹ However, despite describing America's support for bloody coups and brutal dictators, Brands does not specifically

¹⁸ Hal Brands, *The Twilight Struggle What the Cold War Teaches Us about Great-Power Rivalry Today*, 2.

¹⁹ Hal Brands, 100.

address the African context nor investigate how mutual interests—both during the Cold War and today—were impacted by way of a foreign policy driven by a great power competition paradigm.²⁰

Cohen (2020) addresses the period of the Cold War to the present in a specific African context, yet lacks an appreciation for the centrality of great power competition in framing the American approach toward the continent in both the Cold War and today.²¹ Cohen describes various Cold War-era American presidents as having opposed taking a great power competition approach to Africa, even though such an approach is quite evident in numerous instances, which I will demonstrate in this thesis. For example, Cohen argues that Eisenhower believed in “keep[ing] the Cold War out of Africa,” that Kennedy agreed with “preventing the Cold War from becoming significant in Africa,” that Nixon believed that Africa “be free of great power rivalry or conflict in any form, and that Ford, like “all of his predecessors since the end of World War II” emphasized that the United States “should make every effort to prevent the introduction into Africa of great power rivalries, especially the Cold War’s US-Soviet competition.” In addition to failing to address the relevancy of great power competition in Africa framing US foreign policy during the Cold War, Cohen is also remiss to address such framing in today’s US-China rivalry, including the impact on African and American interests.

French (2022) utilizes Cold War comparisons in the African context and additionally assesses the role of great powers on the continent using the barometer of reducing poverty in African states, one component of the African interests included in this thesis’ analytical framework.²² In his comparison of the Cold War and great power competition in present-day

²⁰ Hal Brands, *The Twilight Struggle What the Cold War Teaches Us about Great-Power Rivalry Today*, 243.

²¹ Herman J. Cohen, *US Policy Toward Africa*, 45, 54, 86, 99.

²² Howard W. French, “China’s Engagement With Africa Has a Cold War Parallel.”

Africa, French emphasizes a key aspect of my analytical framework: how great power competition has notably framed US foreign policy. French argues,

There is much about the takeoff of Soviet relations with the newly independent nations of the world—and especially with Africa, where the largest crop of such countries was located—that bears a resemblance to China’s expanding global engagement in recent years, starting with the near-hysteria that set in throughout the West about the geopolitical dividends that the Soviets would harvest from these advances.²³

Aside from the comparison in foreign policy framing, French offers a lens through which to assess the great power competition that has defined much of post-independence African history, writing, “There can be only one true criterion of success among Africa’s foreign partners, and that is their long-term impact on measurable economic development, and especially on reducing poverty. And so far, the jury is out on all of them.”²⁴ Though addressing one aspect of how great power competition in Africa and its related framing of foreign policy has impacted one form of African interests, the reduction of poverty, French’s article still lacks a framework that evaluates the institutional impact on mutual interests that this thesis seeks to investigate.

Magu (2018) offers an analytical framework that is the most analogous to that which is used in this thesis. Magu establishes that “countering foreign influence, during the Cold War and today” has been the primary determinant of US foreign policy toward the continent.²⁵ In addressing how the American obsession with great power competition during the Cold War negatively impacted African countries, Magu writes, “The overriding concern during the Cold War was containment of Soviet influence rather than concerns with economic development and democracy,” as evidenced by American support for autocratic leaders such as Mobutu Sese Zeko in Zaire.²⁶ In addition to addressing the impacts on African countries, Magu asserts that the

²³ Howard W. French, “China’s Engagement With Africa Has a Cold War Parallel.”

²⁴ Howard W. French.

²⁵ Stephen M. Magu, *Great Powers and US Foreign Policy Towards Africa*, 67.

²⁶ Stephen M. Magu, 69.

United States' great power competition approach during the Cold War impacted its own interests as well by critically maintaining, "The United States has largely applied a Cold War mentality to its interactions and relationship with most of the African continent, even where evidence suggests other approaches might be more valuable."²⁷

In the present day, Magu briefly propounds that the United States often ignores human rights abuses where it has national interests, yet does not elaborate on how great power competition manifests this reality nor indicate other institutional implications for African interests that are driven by the United States' great power competition-centric foreign policy.²⁸ Building off his analysis vis-à-vis how the Cold War approach negatively impacted American interests, Magu claims that in the present day a "non-zero-sum approach and constructive engagement may be the way forward for US foreign policy in Africa."²⁹ While Magu's book contains an analytical framework that is generally useful for investigating the research questions posed by this thesis, it lacks explicit discussion of how a great power competition-centric US foreign policy during the Cold War and today has affected the interests of African countries and the United States itself through the impact on domestic political institutions.

Providing a Roadmap

In order to elucidate and contextualize these findings and claims, and nuance the reality that US foreign policy played a significant yet not overly determinant role in driving impacts on the interests of African citizens and its own, the thesis will proceed as follows. Chapters Two through Five correspond to the four foreign policy paradigms that the United States has applied to Africa, including the case studies of Ghana and the DRC, since Ghana's independence in

²⁷ Stephen M. Magu, *Great Powers and US Foreign Policy Towards Africa*, 2.

²⁸ Stephen M. Magu, 73.

²⁹ Stephen M. Magu, 2.

1957. First, these chapters contextualize how each paradigm applied to Washington's Africa policy was shaped by broader geopolitical concerns. Following the discussion on US policy toward the continent at large, each case study is investigated. Throughout the case study sections, the application of each respective foreign policy paradigm is proven through corresponding US perspectives and policies toward each country. Next, the chapters investigate the impacts (or in the case of Chapter Five, the potential impacts) of Washington's paradigmatically-driven policies on the domestic political institutions in the case study countries, especially with respect to their capacity and accountability, and how these domestic institutions impacted domestic (i.e., the general population) and US interests. To outline how this structure will pertain to each chapter, outlines for each subsequent chapter are provided next.

Chapter Two establishes that during the Cold War, US foreign policy at large and in Africa was primarily driven by containing Soviet influence, including in Ghana and the Congo. Due to perceptions that Soviet influence was skyrocketing in both countries, the US backed coups to overthrow the supposedly Moscow-aligned leaders. These coups undermined the development of capable and accountable domestic political institutions in both countries, which was detrimental to the interests of Ghanaian and Congolese/Zairian citizens, but also the United States. In Ghana, the US-backed coup fostered decades of political instability and regime changes—often by overthrow—that hindered political institutional development and consequently fostered widespread human rights abuses and poor economic conditions, both of which tarnished the livelihoods of Ghanaians. The pervasiveness of weak and largely unaccountable domestic political institutions in Ghana also undermined US interests in the country. Political instability—both a cause and an effect of weak and unaccountable political institutions—constituted an opportunity cost for US investment in Ghana, while the continual

flip-flopping of Ghanaian leaders' geopolitical alignment undermined the precise diplomatic objectives that Washington sought to achieve when it decided to support Nkrumah's overthrow. In the Congo, the set of US-backed coups that entrenched Mobutu Sese Seko in power for the remainder of the Cold War fostered extremely weak, unaccountable, and notably kleptocratic domestic political institutions, over which Mobutu retained complete personal control. This domestic institutional reality—which the US upheld out of fear of Soviet incursion into the mineral-rich country—fostered economic disaster and widespread human rights abuses for Zairian citizens, while creating economic opportunity costs for American investors. From a diplomatic perspective, though Washington assured Mobutu's alignment, its support of Mobutu's rule over weak and unaccountable institutions undermined public perceptions of the United States among Congolese citizens and other African countries.

Chapter Three establishes that following the end of the Cold War and the United States' attainment of unipolar hegemonic status in world affairs, US policy toward Africa was framed by a paradigm of selective convenience. With the possibility of Soviet incursion out of the picture, the United States became far less involved in the domestic affairs of African countries. In the case study countries of Ghana and Zaire/DRC, the eradication of the Cold War paradigm meant that domestic factors became more pronounced in determining the nature of political institutions, which embarked on opposite trajectories in Ghana and Zaire/DRC beginning in the early 1990s. In Ghana, the United States supported the largely domestically-rooted development of capable and accountable (i.e., democratic) institutions, which positively affected Ghanaians by providing the potential for economic growth, civil liberties, and improved public goods provisioning. The development of capable and accountable institutions, which the United States assisted and notably did not undermine as in the Cold War, also generated positive impacts on American

interests in Ghana, such as investment opportunities and fruitful diplomatic relations. In Zaire, which was a political and economic nightmare by the 1990s, the United States remained largely aloof, preferring not to seriously engage given the lack of geopolitical priorities demanding such action. Mobutu's decision to exacerbate his kleptocratic and neopatrimonial rule rather than acceding to domestic pressures to democratize meant that weak and unaccountable political institutions—and their related implications—remained the norm in Zaire until his overthrow in 1997. Mobutu's successor, Laurent Kabila, maintained much of the weak and unaccountable institutions that had come to characterize the country he renamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo. With the United States preferring to remain on the sidelines given the unattractiveness of becoming involved in a regional quagmire, weak and unaccountable institutions persisted, along with the familiar impacts on Congolese interests, such as poor economic outcomes and human rights abuses. The United States also witnessed its interests remain undermined in the DRC, faced with investment opportunity costs, diplomatic inconsistency, and a backlash in public opinion.

Chapter Four discusses Washington's application of the 'War on Terror' foreign policy paradigm following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. In Ghana, the continued development of capable and accountable domestic political institutions contributed to a reduced risk of terrorism. Given the lack of a serious terrorist threat and the strength of Ghana's democratic political institutions, US counterterrorism policies in the country did not significantly undermine mutual interests. While the chapter acknowledges these trends as evidence that zero-sum paradigms can undermine the mutual interests framework, the fact that such a paradigm did not entirely upend the interests of Ghanaian citizens and the United States shines light on the importance of capable and accountable institutions in achieving mutually beneficial

ends. In the DRC, Washington began to view rampant instability as a breeding ground for terrorism and therefore increased its support for President Joseph Kabila. Quite ironically, Washington's external support and veil of legitimacy for Kabila allowed him to disregard attempts to develop capable and accountable domestic political institutions, and therefore the interests of Congolese citizens and the United States in the DRC continued to be undermined throughout this time period, especially as a result of pervasive government corruption.

Chapter Five analyzes the United States' application of a great power competition foreign policy paradigm amid China's rising influence and engagement throughout the world and in Africa especially. First, the chapter overviews Chinese engagement in Africa at large, Ghana, and the DRC over the past two decades, including its largely positive economic impact. Next, China's increasing security and political engagement on the continent, which in comparison to Soviet forays is far more extensive and lacks consideration for regime type, is discussed to highlight the potential that Washington's red-tinted glasses³⁰ could revert to Cold War era red-stained tunnel vision³¹, and suffer the related consequences, as outlined in Chapter Two. However, as demonstrated by Ghana's experience in Chapters Three and Four, US policymakers are able to understand the mutual benefits of maintaining capable and accountable domestic political institutions, which the red-stained tunnel vision would undermine. Therefore, analyzing policymaking amid great power competition with China in Africa today benefits from an understanding of the past: the Cold War era provides a warning of applying red-stained tunnel vision, whereas Ghana's post-Cold War experience, though heavily dependent on domestic factors, provides a blueprint for how US policy should support the development and maintenance

³⁰ Red-tinted glasses symbolize how a concern with China (red is used given the technically communist nature of its government as well as the color of its flag) filters the way that US policymakers view the world, including Africa.

³¹ Red-stained tunnel vision symbolizes the extreme of red-tinted glasses, as demonstrated by the obsessive concern with the Soviet Union (also technically communist and possessing a red flag) during the Cold War. Instead of just having a tinted view of the world, this term describes the point when US policymakers cannot view the world in any other way except for great power competition with the Soviet Union or potentially modern-day China.

of capable and accountable domestic political institutions in African countries. Additionally, this chapter overviews some of the benefits of capable and accountable institutions in both countries—though far more pronounced in Ghana—with respect to Chinese engagement, especially contracts. With more capable and accountable institutions, African governments are able to better and more transparently negotiate with Chinese entities, fostering better deals for African citizens and a more even playing field for American companies to compete.

Building off the example of negotiating contracts in Chapter Five, the conclusion provides three takeaways that the United States should consider when formulating policy vis-à-vis Africa amid great power competition with China. First, this thesis concludes that given the demonstrated mutual benefits associated with the existence of capable and accountable domestic political institutions in Africa, the United States should center its Africa policy on supporting African governments, civil society organizations, and citizens to foster such institutions. Further, given China's positive contribution to economic development in Africa, notably through infrastructure projects, the United States can play a role in assisting African countries to maximize their engagements with China by helping to build the capacity and accountability of African governments. As will be demonstrated in Chapter Five, doing so would benefit African citizens and the United States, including its corporations. In light of the potential for great power competition with China in Africa to foster quite the opposite effect, as demonstrated during the Cold War, it is critical that the lessons of the past be considered today.

Secondly, supporting the development and maintenance of capable and accountable domestic political institutions and their effectuation of mutual benefits actually helps the United States effectively compete with China in critical realms on the continent, including with respect to China's military footprint, the Chinese impact on governance and human rights norms, and

relative diplomatic perceptions. In other words, by not allowing an obsession with great power competition vis-à-vis China in Africa to hinder the promotion of policies that are truly mutually beneficial (i.e., developing and maintaining capable and accountable domestic political institutions), the United States is actually better off in its competition with China, much of which has a normative component. However, supporting the development and maintenance of capable and accountable domestic political institutions is not the only action the United States must take to achieve this objective, but rather a prerequisite; increased American economic engagement is also warranted.

The final conclusion stipulates that in contrast to the United States' prior support for egregious autocrats who wreaked political and economic havoc on their citizens, Washington's support for the development and maintenance of capable and accountable domestic political institutions in African countries aligns its strategic interests with its cherished, liberal democratic values, which a majority of Africans possess as well.

Chapter Two

The Cold War Paradigm

The Cold War Paradigm in Africa (1957-1991)

NSC 5719, the first National Security Council report on Africa since Ghana became the first sub-Saharan country to achieve independence, contains a section titled, “The Communist Threat,” and notes the following:

By and large, Communism has not been a major problem in Africa South of the Sahara up to the present, but its potential influence is a matter of growing concern. There is a discernible Communist influence in African and Indian political groups in the Union of South Africa and penetration of labor unions in West Africa. African students in Europe, furthermore, are assiduously cultivated by local Communists and many have been subverted. Soviet pretensions to being anti-colonial and non-European tend to be effective in Liberia and Ghana, and these governments are flattered by Soviet attempts to cultivate them.³²

For the next 34 years, the United States’ geopolitical rivalry with the Soviet Union sat atop the foreign policy agenda in Washington, including with respect to the decolonizing continent of Africa, where new governments were ripe for East-West power jockeying and influence.³³ From the perspective of policymakers in Washington, “Africa mattered because the region could be connected to the central concern of US foreign policy—containing Communist expansion in every corner of the globe,” and therefore nascent African countries were “viewed through the

³² National Security Council, “NSC 5719/1: Note by the Executive Secretary to the National Security Council on U.S. Policy Toward Africa South of the Sahara Prior to Calendar Year 1960.”

³³ David F. Gordon, David C. Miller, Jr., and Howard Wolpe, *The United States and Africa: A Post-Cold War Perspective*, 15.

prism of the Cold War,” meaning they were either ‘ours’ or ‘theirs.’³⁴ This zero-sum paradigm meant that “During the Cold War, US-Africa relations were more of a strategic, Soviet containment strategy rather than support for free, independent peoples running their own democratic countries.”³⁵ As the Cold War experiences of Ghana and the Congo/Zaire demonstrate, however, not only did this paradigm hinder support for domestic political institutions in Africa, but directly undermined them, to the detriment of African citizens and ironically, the United States.

The Cold War Paradigm in Ghana

Joyous celebration filled the streets of Accra on March 6, 1957 to usher in the independence of the first country in sub-Saharan Africa. Buoyed by its charismatic and ambitious Prime Minister, Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana set out to embody the ‘Black Star of Africa,’ a symbol that took centerstage on the nascent nation’s flag and represented the attained freedom of not only the Ghanaian people, but also its role in promoting the desired freedom of all Africans.^{36 37} Recognizing the importance and influence that Ghana would carry throughout Africa during decolonization, US Vice President Richard Nixon recommended in 1957 that the United States follow Ghana’s affairs closely.³⁸ Nixon demonstrated commitment to his own advice by attending the independence ceremonies himself, in contrast with the Soviets who sent a disgraced minister to represent them.³⁹

³⁴ David F. Gordon, David C. Miller, Jr., and Howard Wolpe, *The United States and Africa: A Post-Cold War Perspective*, 52, 78.

³⁵ Stephen M. Magu, *Great Powers and US Foreign Policy Towards Africa*, 57.

³⁶ Thomas F. Brady, “Negro Nation of Ghana Is Born in Africa: African Nation Gains Independence.”

³⁷ British Information Services, “The First Flag of Ghana Unfurled.”

³⁸ Herman J. Cohen, *US Policy Toward Africa*, 35.

³⁹ Zaki Laïdi, *The Superpowers and Africa: The Constraints of a Rivalry, 1960-1990*, 4.

Nixon's trip to Accra in 1957 constituted the impetus for a few years of amicable relations between the United States and Ghana. By 1958, the United States was well disposed toward Nkrumah and influential American figures sought to follow in Nixon's footsteps to meet with the promising new leader.⁴⁰ Over the next year, ties between the two countries expanded into other spheres, with US Ambassador Wilson Flake noting that trade relations, including access to raw materials, were solid, while political relations remained "friendly and fruitful."⁴¹ This budding US-Ghana partnership was a crucial aspect of Nkrumah's foreign policy, which was centered on engaging the world's powerful nations in order to achieve his goals of rapid industrialization and the eradication of poverty. However, Nkrumah's foreign agenda was predicated on engaging both West and East, a position that would in a few years time engender rocky relations with the United States after initial years of constructive partnership.⁴²

Susan Williams (2021) accentuates that "it appears that the years of finding freedom—between the independence of Ghana in 1957 and the CIA-backed overthrow of Nkrumah in 1966—were also the years of an intense and rapid infiltration into Africa by the CIA."⁴³ In just nine years, the American position toward Ghana shifted from one of high-level positive engagement to one of conniving regime change. The parallel developments of Africa's wave of independence and the heating up of the Cold War demonstrate that such a shift in views is no coincidence. After all, according to Zaki Laïdi (1990), "the 'big story' of anticommunist diplomacy for the United States in the early sixties was Ghana."⁴⁴

As this section will demonstrate, Washington's application of the Cold War paradigm in Ghana fostered its support of a coup in 1966, contributing to decades of political instability that

⁴⁰ Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, 18, 191.

⁴¹ Susan Williams, 191.

⁴² Howard W. French, "Africa's Economic Impasse Is the Central Challenge of the 21st Century."

⁴³ Susan Williams, 509.

⁴⁴ Zaki Laïdi, *The Superpowers and Africa: The Constraints of a Rivalry, 1960-1990*, 23.

largely undermined the development of capable and accountable political institutions in the country. As a result, Ghanaian citizens were often subject to state-sponsored human rights abuses and suffered the consequences of a continually struggling economy. In addition, by playing a role in subverting the capacity and accountability of Ghana's domestic political institutions, the United States largely undermined its own interests: economic opportunities were scant and diplomatic alignment—an initial impetus for the coup—was inconsistent.

The Gradual Deterioration of American Relations with Nkrumah

At the time of Ghana's independence, the US State Department echoed Vice President Nixon's belief in the importance of engaging with Ghana given its influence over the rapidly decolonizing continent of Africa.⁴⁵ Such views were developed and expressed in 1957, prior to the Soviet Union's establishment of diplomatic relations with the nascent nation, which occurred the following year.⁴⁶ It is thus evident that at least initially, US interest in and policy toward Ghana was not defined by Soviet engagement or Nkrumah's perceived Cold War stance.

Despite the commencement of Ghanaian-Soviet relations in 1958, US intercourse with Accra continued to flourish. It was not until the Congo Crisis in 1960—detailed in the next chapter—that Nkrumah's perception of the United States, and consequently the US stance toward the Ghanaian leader, began to sour. As previously noted, Nkrumah was rather indifferent to the dueling superpowers initially, believing that engagement from both of them was crucial to achieving his domestic development goals. However, the Belgian- and American-supported overthrow of Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, as well as his subsequent

⁴⁵ Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, 153.

⁴⁶ David E. Albright, *The USSR and Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s*, 12.

assassination, sowed the belief that the Westerners were neocolonizers in Africa and that rapprochement with the Soviet Union was the key to true national and Pan-African liberation.⁴⁷

On September 23, 1960, only a few weeks after the coup against Lumumba, Nkrumah delivered a scathing anti-imperialist speech at the United Nations General Assembly, denouncing Western involvement in the Congo Crisis.⁴⁸ Though Nkrumah did not chastise the United States by name, the State Department claimed that his speech represented his crossing to the Soviet side, and marked the first instance of the United States publicly attacking Nkrumah's supposed leanings.⁴⁹ Analyzing these events in hindsight, Susan Williams (2021) considers such an American reaction to be absurd given that Nkrumah was simply trying to protect the Congo from both superpowers, believing Cold War dynamics to be anathema to African interests.⁵⁰ In fact, Nkrumah even initially dissuaded Lumumba from seeking Soviet aid.⁵¹ Such realities and neutralities did not suffice for the United States; for them, new African nations were supposed to take a wholly American-aligned position amid the great power competition of the Cold War. In the eyes of American foreign policy officials, if Nkrumah was not with the United States, he was evidently against it; Nkrumah's Africanization (i.e., free from external influence) of the Congo Crisis was not an acceptable position.⁵² This egregiously zero-sum Cold War rhetoric emanating from US foreign policy circles did not translate into action immediately, but as Nkrumah's ties with the Soviet Union strengthened during the first few years of the 1960s, the Americans eventually backed up their grave rhetoric.

After a slew of harsh words from the United States, such as US Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Joseph Satterthwaite deeming Ghana to be the "chief despot of Soviet

⁴⁷ Zaki Laidi, *The Superpowers and Africa: The Constraints of a Rivalry, 1960-1990*, 11.

⁴⁸ Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, 274.

⁴⁹ Susan Williams, 275.

⁵⁰ Susan Williams, 274.

⁵¹ Susan Williams, 275.

⁵² Susan Williams, 274-275.

diplomatic, trade, and technical personnel,” US relations with Ghana proceeded fairly amicably, mostly because, despite Satterthwaite’s suggestion, Soviet involvement and influence in Ghana by 1960 was not significant at all—aside from a few agreements on trade, economic, and technical cooperation—and was dwarfed by that of the United States and the West more broadly.^{53 54}

Through the middle of 1961, Soviet relations with Ghana remained limited.⁵⁵ In the economic sphere, Soviet trade with and aid to Ghana paled in comparison to Western economic engagement. The West also continued to dominate in arms transfers to Accra, though more so from the United Kingdom (its former colonizer) than the United States.⁵⁶ Thus, despite the rhetorical tussles and disagreements over the Congo Crisis, the impacts through 1961 did not extend far beyond harsh words. Ghana remained closely tied to the West and the United States in particular. However, even while the United States (and the United Kingdom) continued to dominate in interaction with and influence in Ghana, US foreign policy officials seemed to continually seek proof that Ghana was becoming a Soviet client state. One incident saw the Americans citing Ghana Airways’ purchase of Soviet aircraft as damning evidence, notwithstanding the fact that Ghana Airways also purchased American and British aircraft for its fleet.⁵⁷

Toward the end of 1961, the Soviet Union increasingly saw Ghana under Nkrumah as an attractive opportunity to counter Western interests in Africa, embracing a Cold War paradigm of its own choosing.⁵⁸ Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev personally invited delegations from ostensibly leftist African states, including Ghana, to attend the 22nd Congress of the Communist

⁵³ Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, 275.

⁵⁴ Ebere Nwaubani, “Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis,” 605–6.

⁵⁵ Zaki Laidi, *The Superpowers and Africa: The Constraints of a Rivalry, 1960-1990*, 20.

⁵⁶ David E. Albright, *The USSR and Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s*, 12.

⁵⁷ Jonathan T. Reynolds, *Sovereignty and Struggle: Africa and Africans in the Era of the Cold War, 1945-1994*.

⁵⁸ Michael Radu and Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, *The Dynamics of Soviet Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 104.

Party of the Soviet Union.⁵⁹ In January 1962, First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, Anastas Mikoyan, traveled to Accra to publicly applaud Ghanaian leaders on their efforts to construct a socialist country, even though he privately griped to them that he did not consider the country to be sufficiently socialist.⁶⁰ A few months later Nkrumah was awarded the prestigious Lenin Peace Prize, an indication that the Soviets sought to increase their image and soft power vis-à-vis the Ghanaian leader.⁶¹ In addition to the visible diplomatic exchanges and spectacles between Ghana and the Soviet Union, the two countries also began to fortify their economic ties. The Soviets' offer in 1962 to buy Ghanaian cocoa comprised a major economic deal, though the reality was that the Soviets agreed to the arrangement in order to build influence and goodwill in the country, given that it did not need to import additional cocoa.⁶² Culturally and socially, Soviet citizens gained prestige and influence throughout Ghana, as teachers, doctors, and economic advisers.⁶³ Moreover, though Soviet military aid was not appreciable, Nkrumah began to rely heavily on Soviet assistance for his own protection.⁶⁴

As Ghana's foreign policy became increasingly defined by growing ties to the Soviet Union, Nkrumah also began accumulating and centralizing more power in the domestic political arena. Though there is no evidence to suggest that growing affinity for the authoritarian Soviet Union directly caused or translated into the increased authoritarianism of Nkrumah and his Convention People's Party, numerous Soviet intelligence specialists became involved in uncovering and suppressing domestic dissent in Ghana, thereby demonstrating Soviet facilitation of the closing political space.⁶⁵ Concurrent with these foreign and domestic trends was the severe

⁵⁹ Michael Radu and Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, *The Dynamics of Soviet Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 2.

⁶⁰ Zaki Laidi, *The Superpowers and Africa: The Constraints of a Rivalry, 1960-1990*, 20.

⁶¹ Michael Radu and Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, 2.

⁶² Michael Radu and Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, 22.

⁶³ David E. Albright, *The USSR and Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s*, 10-11.

⁶⁴ David E. Albright, 10.

⁶⁵ David E. Albright, 10.

deterioration of the United States-Ghana relationship commencing in 1963.⁶⁶ Speaking of the situation in Ghana, US Senator Thomas J. Dodd referred to the country as the ‘Cuba of Africa’ and deemed it to be the first Soviet satellite in Africa. While the State Department was quick to distance itself publicly from that view, many officials in Foggy Bottom privately agreed with the assessment.⁶⁷ Such a view soon influenced policy, demonstrated by Ghana’s falling from first in 1962 to eleventh in 1964 among beneficiaries of bilateral American aid to sub-Saharan Africa.⁶⁸

Nkrumah’s rhetoric and actions between 1964 and 1966 demonstrated his highest levels of affinity and linkage to the Soviet Union and consequently contributed to his downfall given that the United States increasingly viewed Ghana and sub-Saharan Africa through a Cold War lens that perceived any Soviet influence as a direct threat to American interests. David E. Albright (1983) asserts that “the zenith in Soviet ties with independent governments of sub-Saharan Africa in the 1960s came in Ghana in the mid-1960s,” a period in which the Soviets not only escalated their involvement, but also one in which Nkrumah showed his gratitude to Moscow in various ways.⁶⁹ On matters of international and strategic import for the Soviet Union, Nkrumah became a cheerleader. For example, he launched a vitriolic campaign against NATO’s proposed multilateral force and permitted Soviet personnel to construct facilities of particular benefit on Ghanaian soil, including a monitoring station and a sizable military airfield.⁷⁰

On the domestic front, Nkrumah’s declaration of a one-party state and slide into a personality cult dictatorship in 1964 constituted a further sign to the United States that Ghana had shifted to the communist camp.^{71 72} Though the United States government proved a few

⁶⁶ Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, 482.

⁶⁷ Susan Williams, 482–83.

⁶⁸ Zaki Laidi, *The Superpowers and Africa: The Constraints of a Rivalry, 1960-1990*, 24.

⁶⁹ David E. Albright, *The USSR and Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s*, 10–11.

⁷⁰ David E. Albright, 11.

⁷¹ Todd J. Moss and Danielle Resnick, *African Development: Making Sense of the Issues and Actors*, 47.

⁷² Susan Williams, 482.

years prior—by facilitating the overthrow of Lumumba and the ushering in of a brutal dictatorship in the Congo—that it did not mind authoritarian rule in Africa, this scenario was different given that the regime in power was not fully aligned with American interests. In her assessment of why the United States and the CIA in particular felt threatened by Nkrumah’s nascent dictatorial rule, Williams (2021) writes, “The CIA was concerned that a one-party state rendered Ghana more difficult to infiltrate with Western personnel and interests. The lack of an opposition reduced opportunities for intervention and influence and created barriers to attempts to foster division” while also noting a CIA report which “commented that barring a successful coup against Nkrumah’s government, it would be increasingly difficult for the West to maintain an effective presence in Ghana.”⁷³ The CIA consequently aimed to demonize Nkrumah, proposing efforts such as employing psychological warfare to diminish support for Nkrumah among Ghanaians and “nurtur[ing] the conviction among Ghanaian people that their country’s welfare and independence necessitate[d] his removal.”⁷⁴

United States-Ghana relations reached their lowest point in 1965 upon Nkrumah’s publication of *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*.⁷⁵ In the book, Nkrumah railed against American capitalism, portraying the United States as the primary neocolonial power in the world by way of its international financial monopoly.⁷⁶ In contrast to his previously stated preference for nonalignment, Nkrumah had by 1965 viewed the Western/capitalist bloc as culpable for extending imperialism and neocolonialism in Africa. Aside from denouncing the CIA—which is understandable given its role in overthrowing his friend Patrice Lumumba and dooming African liberation in the Congo—Nkrumah also railed against the United States

⁷³ Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, 482.

⁷⁴ Susan Williams, 489.

⁷⁵ Susan Williams, 492.

⁷⁶ Eric Quaidoo, “The United States and the Overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah,” 33.

Information Agency, the Peace Corps, and Hollywood, sources of American soft power and national pride.⁷⁷ These accusations prompted a State Department spokesman to deem them “completely unwarranted,” leading to his announcement that Ghana’s \$100 million request for Food for Peace aid was no longer under consideration—perhaps as a means of undermining Nkrumah’s government—demonstrating the limits of American toleration for political criticism amid the shadow of the Cold War.⁷⁸

In response to American government and public criticism of the book, the Ghanaian government sent an aide memoire to the State Department on November 18, 1965 in which it stated that it was “particularly unfortunate that the United States government should regard Dr. Nkrumah’s book as Anti-American in tone” since “The government of Ghana believes that it has by word and deed shown repeatedly over the years its desire to maintain friendly relations with the people and government of the United States” and that “its friendly relations with the government of the United States remain unchanged.”⁷⁹ This Ghanaian petition reveals the stark contrast in American and Ghanaian paradigms in the context of the Cold War; while the United States viewed Ghana’s stated neutral status and intercourse with the Soviet Union to be anathema and a threat to American interests, the Ghanaians saw no issue with building relations and accepting involvement from both of the superpowers, and even stated their preference for cooperating with the US government on “mutually acceptable projects.”⁸⁰ An interview with US State Department official Robert P. Smith a few decades after this incident confirmed that by 1965, the United States saw no potential for mutually acceptable projects with the Nkrumah government. Smith recollected that Nkrumah’s publishing of the aforementioned book was “the

⁷⁷ Eric Quaidoo, “The United States and the Overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah,” 34–35.

⁷⁸ Eric Quaidoo, 35.

⁷⁹ Eric Quaidoo, 39.

⁸⁰ Eric Quaidoo, 39.

straw that broke the camel's back" since it "accused the United States of every sin imaginable to man," and that "the publication of that book might also have contributed in a material way to his overthrow shortly thereafter."⁸¹ During his last few months in power prior to his overthrow, Nkrumah's connections to the Soviet Union were so strong that he listened to Soviet advice with respect to nearly all facets of his conduct of Ghanaian affairs, an advisory relationship depicted so jarringly by the fact that Georgi Rodionov, Moscow's ambassador in Accra, had easier access and superior influence over Nkrumah than did many of Nkrumah's own ministers.⁸²

On February 24, 1966, a group headed by former Ghanaian military officers and named the National Liberation Council, overthrew the Ghanaian government while Nkrumah was on a diplomatic trip to North Vietnam and China, an intriguing yet likely coincidental nod to the reasons (ties to the Eastern bloc) behind the coup's foreign—including American—backing.^{83 84} A National Security Council memorandum from nine months before the overthrow constitutes the most revealing declassified US government document with respect to American backing of the coup. Addressing McGeorge Bundy, the National Security Advisor, Robert Komer of the National Security Council Staff wrote,

FYI, we may have a pro-Western coup in Ghana soon. Certain key military and police figures have been planning one for some time, and Ghana's deteriorating economic condition may provide the spark.

The plotters are keeping us briefed, and State thinks we're more on the inside than the British. While we're not directly involved (I'm told), we and other Western countries (including France) have been helping to set up the situation by ignoring Nkrumah's pleas for economic aid. The new OCAM (Francophone) group's refusal to attend any OAU

⁸¹ Robert P. Smith, "Interview with Robert P. Smith."

⁸² David E. Albright, *The USSR and Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s*, 10.

⁸³ Jonathan T. Reynolds, *Sovereignty and Struggle: Africa and Africans in the Era of the Cold War, 1945-1994*, 60.

⁸⁴ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, "Ghana: A Country Study," 270.

meeting in Accra (because of Nkrumah's plotting) will further isolate him. All in all, looks good.⁸⁵

Unsurprisingly, the NLC justified its action primarily in genuine domestic issues, citing Nkrumah's repressive rule, corrupt governance, and misguided economic policies, which the coup leaders juxtaposed with the economy's relative stability and prosperity at the moment of independence.⁸⁶ However, it was the shift in Cold War orientation that most engendered Washington's interest in the coup and its outcome, despite the forthcoming reality of diplomatic inconsistency.⁸⁷

The Cold War Paradigm during the Ankrah Military Regime (1966-1969)

Speaking to President Lyndon B. Johnson just two weeks after the coup, National Security Council staffer Robert Komer opined that because "Nkrumah was doing more to undermine our interests than any other ... African," the recent military takeover could be characterized as a "fortuitous windfall," ushering in a military regime headed by Joseph Ankrah that was "almost pathetically pro-Western."⁸⁸ Though some scholars have since considered "moderate neutralism" to be a more fitting description of the Ankrah regime's foreign policy, the diplomatic path embarked upon immediately after taking over offers sufficient evidence that the budding friendship with the Soviet Union would be no more.⁸⁹ Military, political, and economic links between Accra and Moscow practically disappeared overnight following Nkrumah's overthrow; 1,100 Soviet personnel were expelled from Ghana and diplomatic relations with the

⁸⁵ Robert W. Komer, "253. Memorandum From Robert W. Komer of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy)."

⁸⁶ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, "Ghana: A Country Study," 131, 134, 270.

⁸⁷ Jonathan T. Reynolds, *Sovereignty and Struggle: Africa and Africans in the Era of the Cold War, 1945-1994*, 60-61.

⁸⁸ Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, 497.

⁸⁹ Olajide Aluko, "After Nkrumah: Continuity and Change in Ghana's Foreign Policy," 55.

Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, and Cuba were ceased and their embassies shuttered.^{90 91 92} In the following years, not only were Ghanaian-Soviet ties minimal, but also at times mildly hostile; in March 1967, the Ankrah regime seized two Soviet fishing vessels in Ghana's territorial waters and arrested the occupants, accusing them of smuggling arms into the country in order to restore Nkrumah to power.^{93 94 95}

The Ankrah regime's consistent denunciation of the Soviet Union was effective in strengthening United States-Ghana relations and attracting some Western financial resources.^{96 97} But, despite the privatization of state corporations and influx of foreign capital, the economy was quite stagnant throughout the Ankrah years. Foreign debt becoming less serviceable following a drop in cocoa prices, an overvalued currency (a vestige of the Nkrumah administration's import substitution policies), and smuggling were key drivers of the economic stagnation.^{98 99} Although the source of economic issues was varied (e.g., vestiges of the previous administration's policies and international commodity prices) it is evident that American support for the overthrow of Nkrumah and the consequent Ankrah regime undermined the domestic political institutions in Ghana, which certainly did not benefit the country's economy and consequent impact on its citizens' livelihoods.

Holding true to its promise upon seizing power in 1966 that it would restore democratic governance 'quickly,' the Ankrah regime legalized political parties in late 1968 in anticipation of

⁹⁰ David E. Albright, *The USSR and Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s*, 12.

⁹¹ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, "Ghana: A Country Study," 287.

⁹² Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, 496.

⁹³ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 287.

⁹⁴ Zaki Laidi, *The Superpowers and Africa: The Constraints of a Rivalry, 1960-1990*, 37.

⁹⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, "Central Intelligence Agency Report, Office of National Estimates Memorandum."

⁹⁶ Zaki Laidi, 36.

⁹⁷ Walt Rostow, "Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson."

⁹⁸ Susan Williams, 496.

⁹⁹ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, xxi.

elections scheduled for August 1969, the first competitive political contest since 1956.¹⁰⁰ The liberal Progress Party, comprised of many former opponents of Nkrumah's political party, won 59% of the popular vote and 74% of the parliamentary seats with some support from nearly all ethnic groups in the country. The Progress Party's leader, Kofi Busia, took office as prime minister on October 1, 1969.¹⁰¹

The Cold War Paradigm during the Second Republic/Busia Administration (1969-1972)

Even more so than during the Ankrah years, under the Busia government Ghana became "extremely pro-West" and "virulently anticommunist," becoming almost entirely dependent on the West to suit its economic and military needs. Stronger economic ties with the West are quantified by the 'communist share' of Ghana's trade falling from 23% in 1966 to roughly 17% in 1970, whereas diplomatic alignment became evident via Ghana's towing the Western line in crucial votes at the United Nations.¹⁰²

The period of explicitly pro-Western foreign policy in Ghana would prove to be only a brief honeymoon for the United States. Despite the Busia government's foreign connections and initial popular support, it succumbed to a bloodless military coup on January 13, 1972, only 27 months into office.¹⁰³ The new government, dubbed the National Redemption Council, listed economic and military issues as the reasons behind their seizure of power. The NRC specifically cited the need to remove the ill effects of currency devaluation in order to improve living conditions, an ironic contrast with the economic demands of the 1966 coup that lambasted currency *over*valuation as the roadblock to economic prosperity. In addition, the NRC criticized

¹⁰⁰ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, "Ghana: A Country Study," 37.

¹⁰¹ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 37-38.

¹⁰² Olajide Aluko, "After Nkrumah: Continuity and Change in Ghana's Foreign Policy," 57.

¹⁰³ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 40-41.

the continued existence of high foreign debt payments, which were certainly not aided by the collapse of cocoa prices in the early 1970s.¹⁰⁴ On the military front, which personally affected the perpetrators of the coup, the NRC was perturbed by the reduction in defense spending, ethnic favoritism in officer promotions, and the tasking of the military with nonmilitary functions, such as supporting anti-cholera programs.¹⁰⁵

The 1972 coup, occurring notwithstanding the existence of a democratic system to express political grievances, exemplifies the domino effect of coups, as elucidated by Belkin and Schofer (2003).¹⁰⁶ As outlined with respect to the economic issues that characterized the Ankrah regime, the sources of these economic issues were varied and similar, of which only some can be indirectly traced to the United States given its role in precipitating the fall of the first coup domino. However, it is difficult to dispute that the political instability and weak political institutions that had thus far and would continue to characterize Cold War-era Ghana, was not playing a positive role in developing the domestic economy and improving the livelihoods of Ghanaians.

The Cold War Paradigm during the NRC/Acheampong Regime (1972-1975)

In contrast with the previous military government, the NRC did not outline any plan to restore democratic rule, and instead sought to create a truly military regime.¹⁰⁷ Describing himself in nationalist rather than liberal terms, the new head of state, Ignatius Acheampong, restored diplomatic relations with China and Cuba, and sought to expand the range of cooperation with communist countries on economic, technical, and cultural matters.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, "Ghana: A Country Study," 40, 42.

¹⁰⁵ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 270.

¹⁰⁶ Belkin and Schofer, "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk."

¹⁰⁷ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 43.

¹⁰⁸ Olajide Aluko, "After Nkrumah: Continuity and Change in Ghana's Foreign Policy," 57, 61.

Simultaneously, the NRC government became upset with the lack of sympathy from the West for its newfound power, including the continued praise for the Busia government and cutting off of aid by the United States government.¹⁰⁹ Such an American position was to be expected given the Cold War paradigm it applied to its relations with Ghana and the world. According to the United States, if Acheampong sought cordial relations with communist countries, he would not receive favorable treatment from Washington.¹¹⁰ However, the NRC's foreign policy, at least by 1974, was not firmly in line with the Eastern camp. In January 1974 the NRC government expelled a Soviet diplomat for interfering with the internal affairs of Ghana, which perhaps not coincidentally was followed two months later by the first disbursement of American aid to the new Ghanaian government. By 1975, though the NRC was far less aligned with the Western bloc than the previous two governments, the bulk of Ghana's economic links remained Western.¹¹¹

Throughout this period, thanks to rising cocoa prices and policies such as import restrictions and drastic reductions in government expenditures, the Ghanaian economy grew, though the spoils were unevenly distributed across the population due to favoritism toward certain groups and regions in the allocation of investment funds, a key feature of weak and unaccountable institutions.^{112 113} Had political instability and its negative impact on domestic political institutions been avoided, however, economic growth likely would have surpassed the levels achieved during this period, to the benefit of Ghanaians and American economic interests.

¹⁰⁹ Olajide Aluko, "After Nkrumah: Continuity and Change in Ghana's Foreign Policy," 57, 60.

¹¹⁰ Olajide Aluko, 57.

¹¹¹ Olajide Aluko, 57, 60.

¹¹² Olajide Aluko, 59.

¹¹³ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, "Ghana: A Country Study," 42.

The Cold War Paradigm during the SMC I/Acheampong Regime (1975-1978)

In October 1975, the National Redemption Council government reorganized into the Supreme Military Council. The reorganization entailed the restriction of leadership to a few senior military officers and was prompted by the executive desire to consolidate power and decision making, as well as address suspicions with other members of the armed forces. Under the new political arrangement, little input from civilians was allowed and the SMC sought to stifle opposition to its rule by formally forbidding ‘rumorous’ criticism and banning many independent journalists and newspapers.¹¹⁴ After years of growing opposition to the highly centralized rule, including student demonstrations that were forcefully dispersed by the military, a referendum in March 1978 offered voters the choice between a union government (combined military and civilian) and a military government, despite widespread desire amongst the population to restore full civilian constitutional rule. The choice for union government succeeded in the referendum, yet the regime banned organizations and jailed citizens responsible for protesting the lack of true political choice.¹¹⁵

Contrary to the original plan, in July 1978 other SMC military officers forced Acheampong to resign and replaced him with Lieutenant General Frederick Akuffo, acting in response to continued pressure to solve the country’s economic challenges. In contrast to the mild economic success of the early 1970s, the repeated fall of cocoa prices contributed to decreased agricultural production, manufacturing output, per capita income, and a shortage of basic commodities, while inflation hovered around 300%.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, “Ghana: A Country Study,” 43–44.

¹¹⁵ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 44–45.

¹¹⁶ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, xxxii, 45.”

The Cold War Paradigm during the SMC II/Akuffo Regime (1978-1979)

Despite its autocratic nature, the SMC II government under Akuffo quickly liberalized in the face of continued protests over economic and political issues. The Akuffo government granted amnesty to many previously jailed political dissidents and legalized the formation of political parties by January 1979, ahead of elections scheduled for July 1979.¹¹⁷ Regardless of the attempt in 1979 to change course politically, after seven years of rule under the SMC, economic and political institutions in Ghana had deteriorated. For most Ghanaians, the state had become a “largely irrelevant construct that had ceased to provide economic benefits or opportunities for meaningful political participations” and simply an avenue for the corrupt personal enrichment of those with access to power.¹¹⁸ Such cynicism on the state of Ghanaian politics in 1979 constituted the impetus behind the latest military coup to occur in the country in June, only a month before elections were scheduled to restore civilian and constitutional rule.¹¹⁹

The Cold War Paradigm during the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council/First Rawlings Regime (1979)

Rather than pursuing political change through the upcoming elections, which was favored by the majority of the civilian population, the junior military officers—led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings—who formed the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council argued, quite ironically, that a coup was necessary to restore the stability of national politics, as well as address the issues critical to the image of the military. The AFRC purged the military of senior officers accused of corruption and summarily executed high-profile SMC figures, including both Acheampong and

¹¹⁷ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, “Ghana: A Country Study,” 45.

¹¹⁸ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, xxxii.

¹¹⁹ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 46.

Akuffo, violence which the United States and other Western countries condemned.^{120 121} The American condemnation, perceived as “interference with Ghanaian affairs,” was followed by anti-American protests, primarily by students, which included their pulling down the American flag from the US embassy in Accra.¹²² However, even amid the coup and subsequent executions, the 1979 elections generally proceeded as planned.¹²³

The Cold War Paradigm during the Third Republic/Limann Administration (1979-1981)

In the second round of voting on July 9, 1979, Hilla Limann of the People’s National Party was elected President of Ghana, and his inauguration followed a few months later on September 24, restoring democratic civilian rule.¹²⁴ The uncharismatic Limann concocted an administration of conflicting ideological orientations, putting the task of solving some of the country’s toughest challenges—such as the continually deteriorating economy—into question.¹²⁵ A point of agreement was the restoration of freedom in political life, such as freedom of association, press, and speech after years of illiberal repression.¹²⁶ The Carter administration, which had emphasized democracy and human rights in its foreign policy from the beginning, was delighted with these developments, causing Ghana to be praised in a 1980 speech by Secretary of State Edmund Muskie, entitled, “Human Freedom: America’s Vision.”¹²⁷

On the economic front, however, conditions were not much brighter than they had been throughout the military rule of the majority of the 1970s, largely because despite witnessing a

¹²⁰ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 46.

¹²¹ The Washington Post, “2 Former Heads of State Are Executed in Ghana.”

¹²² The Washington Post, “Anti-U.S. Protest in Ghana.”

¹²³ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, “Ghana: A Country Study,” 46.

¹²⁴ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 47.

¹²⁵ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 48.

¹²⁶ Jon Kraus, “Ghana’s Radical Populist Regime,” 165.

¹²⁷ Edmund Muskie, “Address by Secretary of State Muskie.”

return of accountable political institutions, they were far from capable. By the early 1980s, Ghana's economy was in an advanced state of collapse.¹²⁸ Inflation made foodstuffs unaffordable for many workers, leading to massive strikes, which in turn lowered productivity and therefore national income, putting a further dent into the economy. Limann's threats to fire striking public sector workers led to a rapid erosion of his public support, paving the way for another round of political instability—part of a domino effect tangentially set in motion by the United States—that was at least partially responsible for the trap that Ghanaians continually found themselves in throughout the Cold War.¹²⁹

Dismayed by the Limann government's engagement in corruption and failure to ameliorate the country's economic disaster, Rawlings again launched a military coup, seizing power on December 31, 1981.¹³⁰ The eighth government to assume the political reins in the 15 years since the fall of Nkrumah, the Provisional National Defence Council would prove to outlast its predecessors, a feature that would ensure autocratic military rule in Ghana for the rest of the Cold War era.¹³¹

The Cold War Paradigm during the PNDC/Second Rawlings Regime (1981-1991)

Five days after the coup, Jerry Rawlings took to the radio waves to explain what had necessitated the removal of the Limann administration. Rawlings deemed the civilian government period as one of national regression, driven in part by political parties that aimed to divide Ghanaians in order to rule them. The new head of state thus characterized his seizure of power not as a coup, but as a holy war to “restore human dignity to Ghanaians” by transforming

¹²⁸ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, “Ghana: A Country Study,” 135.

¹²⁹ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 48.

¹³⁰ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 48, 273.

¹³¹ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 48.

the socioeconomic structure of Ghanaian society.¹³² Albeit a military regime, the PNDC appointed 15 civilians to cabinet positions and promised that civilians would have a say in political decisions. The latter promise turned out to be solely rhetoric given that PNDC authorities fiercely resisted opposition to the regime's agenda and prevented the emergence of pro-democracy groups.¹³³ Political intimidation and human rights abuses perpetrated by the PNDC ensured the press and activists were sentenced to a culture of silence.¹³⁴

For the first time in 15 years, Ghanaian-Soviet ties expanded dramatically, primarily in the economic and technical spheres. Some, but not all, of the Soviet economic projects abandoned in 1966 with the American-backed overthrow of Nkrumah were reactivated by 1982. New deals were also forged; in 1984 the Soviets agreed to finance the Kibi bauxite project.^{135 136}
^{137 138} In spite of the rekindled relationship with the Soviet Union, the PNDC's foreign policy was more so a return to true non-alignment.¹³⁹ With economic restoration being a key impetus behind its decision to seize power, the PNDC sought to establish friendly relations and cooperation with all countries regardless of their ideological orientation in order to seek the maximum number of markets for Ghanaian products and sources of investment for the domestic economy.¹⁴⁰
 Militarily, the PNDC demonstrated non-alignment as well, accepting military assistance from countries such as the United States, Italy, the Soviet Union, and Libya.¹⁴¹ The PNDC's resumption of diplomatic and economic ties with Libya in the early 1980s particularly became a

¹³² Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, "Ghana: A Country Study," 49.

¹³³ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 49, 261.

¹³⁴ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 49.

¹³⁵ David E. Albright, *The USSR and Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s*, 32.

¹³⁶ Zaki Laïdi, *The Superpowers and Africa: The Constraints of a Rivalry, 1960-1990*, 178.

¹³⁷ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 287.

¹³⁸ Michael Radu and Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, *The Dynamics of Soviet Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 21.

¹³⁹ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 236.

¹⁴⁰ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 248.

¹⁴¹ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 247, 257.

flashpoint for the United States under the Reagan administration.¹⁴² ¹⁴³ For Rawlings, his mild antipathy for the United States was less grounded in a Cold War framework than a populist message upon which he sought to build his regime. The new Ghanaian leader accused the CIA of backing coup attempts against him throughout the beginning of the decade, purportedly to whip up anti-American sentiment at home for nationalistic purposes and to distract from the poor job he was doing in managing the country's affairs thus far.¹⁴⁴

A few years into the PNDC's tenure, the government realized that the nation's economic problems were multiexculpatory, and not simply the result of previous administrations' corruption, though that certainly played a role.¹⁴⁵ In order to address the continued high rates of unemployment and negative per capita economic growth, Rawlings also identified policy ineptitude—though not the weak institutions and political instability that numerous changes of government by force engendered—as a source of economic underperformance.¹⁴⁶ Rawlings thus decided in 1983 to embark upon an International Monetary Fund-backed Economic Recovery Program, a form of the then recently devised structural adjustment programs.¹⁴⁷ Recognizing that austerity measures would bring hardship to the population due to increased consumer prices and reduced services, the PNDC created Workers' Defence Committees to ensure citizen participation in decision-making processes, much to the chagrin of corporate managers who sought to recoup the national economy.¹⁴⁸ By the end of 1984, the WDCs were abandoned and replaced with the more open yet far less effective Committees for the Defence of the Revolution,

¹⁴² Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, "Ghana: A Country Study," 247.

¹⁴³ Scott Kraft, "Missteps, Miscues and Misunderstandings Mark U.S.-Ghana Relations."

¹⁴⁴ Scott Kraft.

¹⁴⁵ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 136.

¹⁴⁶ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 51, 53, 136.

¹⁴⁷ "GDP per Capita Growth (Annual %) - Ghana | Data."

¹⁴⁸ Jonathan T. Reynolds, *Sovereignty and Struggle: Africa and Africans in the Era of the Cold War, 1945-1994*, 47.

highlighting the tradeoff between political participation and collective labor organizing on one hand and macroeconomic recovery on the other after years of coup-driven political instability.¹⁴⁹

Following a rocky start, United States-Ghana relations were further strained by a series of diplomatic incidents in the middle of the decade.¹⁵⁰ In July 1985 a distant relative of Rawlings was arrested in the United States and charged with espionage; both countries expelled diplomats in response. Seven months later, eight Americans were convicted of trying to smuggle six tons of ammunition to rebels in Ghana, which prompted Rawlings to accuse the American government of supporting a coup attempt.¹⁵¹ ¹⁵² By April 1986, when Rawlings declared a day off work to promote protests against the American bombing campaign in Libya outside the US embassy in Accra, United States-Ghana relations had come to resemble a “stormy marriage.”¹⁵³ Ghana’s anti-US rhetoric and Libyan ties resulted in the United States’ 39% lower aid disbursement than promised in 1986, which one American analyst characterized as “the price Ghana paid for kicking us in the shins and spitting on us.”¹⁵⁴ However, Ghana’s 1986 signing of an agreement with the Soviet Union for military training did not receive the same American backlash.¹⁵⁵ Was this a sign that the United States was doing away with its rigid Cold War paradigm to African affairs given Mikhail Gorbachev’s domestic reforms and slow easing of East-West tensions?

With the Cold War obsession nearly put to rest by the end of the decade, United States-Ghana relations improved markedly. Former President Jimmy Carter was warmly welcomed to Ghana by the PNDC in 1986 and 1988 while he touted the Carter Center’s Global 2000 agricultural program, a popular initiative with Ghanaian farmers.¹⁵⁶ Meanwhile, and despite

¹⁴⁹ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, “Ghana: A Country Study,” 50, 53, 203.

¹⁵⁰ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 248.

¹⁵¹ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 248.

¹⁵² Scott Kraft, “Missteps, Miscues and Misunderstandings Mark U.S.-Ghana Relations.”

¹⁵³ Scott Kraft.

¹⁵⁴ Scott Kraft.

¹⁵⁵ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 287–88.

¹⁵⁶ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 248.

the seven new coup attempts since 1985, the PNDC government was beginning to succeed with its economic reform program; inflation had dropped and economic growth was significantly positive for multiple years in a row, which allowed the government to pay off previously-issued international loans.¹⁵⁷ ¹⁵⁸ On the political side, Rawlings moved toward more decentralization and citizen participation, announcing in January 1987 that elections for District Assemblies would take place the following year.¹⁵⁹ As a sign of improving relations and support for the PNDC's political and economic reforms, in 1989 the United States forgave \$114 million of Ghana's foreign debt, even as Ghana continued to send military personnel to the Soviet Union for training.¹⁶⁰ In a departure from US policy just a few years prior, ties with the Soviet Union did not appear to matter; it was political and economic liberalization that did, a sign of how the United States would approach Ghana, Africa, and the world in the post-Cold War unipolar moment of the 1990s.

Mutual Implications of the US Cold War Paradigm in Ghana

Following the US-backed overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah in 1966, Ghana experienced continued weak and often unaccountable political institutions which fostered political instability for much of the Cold War period. As a result of the first coup, others followed, despite brief periods of democratic rule in between. Weak and often unaccountable domestic political institutions undermined Ghanaian interests in numerous ways. First, political instability begot economic instability and consequently negative impacts on citizens' livelihoods, a causal relationship whose validity has been empirically proven.¹⁶¹ Relatedly, since poor economic

¹⁵⁷ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, "Ghana: A Country Study," 52, 274.

¹⁵⁸ "GDP Growth (Annual %) - Ghana | Data."

¹⁵⁹ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 206–9.

¹⁶⁰ Laverle Bennette Berry and Library of Congress, 288.

¹⁶¹ Ari Aisen and Francisco Jose Veiga, "How Does Political Instability Affect Economic Growth?"

performance was oft-cited as a motivation for coups, political instability and economic instability fostered unaccountable regimes, which oversaw widespread attacks on human and civil rights, and prevented improvements in equally-distributed development. By allowing the red-stained tunnel vision to engender its support for overthrowing Nkrumah, the United States negatively impacted the interests and lives of Ghanaian citizens. Yet such domestic ramifications also translated into Washington's undermining its own interests as well.

In addition to contradicting its supposed embrace of liberal democratic values, the United States undermined its own economic and diplomatic interests by lending support for Nkrumah's overthrow and its negative impact on domestic political institutions. Weak and often unaccountable political institutions, in tandem with political instability, created an opportunity cost for US investment opportunities in Ghana; not only did the instability deter potential US investment, but it also negatively impacted the profitability of foreign direct investment that did flow into the country.¹⁶² Diplomatically, the United States experienced flip-flopping political alignment, a consequence of fickle authoritarian regimes, an ironic reality juxtaposed with Washington's reasoning for supporting Nkrumah's overthrow. If the goal in ridding Ghana of Nkrumah's political rule was to install a government that inarguably aligned with the United States, then Washington only witnessed brief success, followed by a notably rocky relationship.

The Cold War Paradigm in the Congo/Zaire

When the Belgian Congo was holding elections in May 1960 to decide the leaders of the country in advance of the subsequent month's granting of independence, US policy toward the budding nation was to secure the election of a pro-Western and pro-American government, while

¹⁶² Robert Tignor, "Ghana: Lessons from Nkrumah's Fallout with His Economic Adviser."

isolating and excluding groups oriented toward the Soviet bloc.¹⁶³ The CIA disbursed bribes in an attempt to influence elections, but not to their avail, as the Mouvement national Congolais won the parliamentary elections, elevating its young and charismatic leader Patrice Lumumba to the position of prime minister when independence day arrived on June 30, 1960.¹⁶⁴ ¹⁶⁵ To the chagrin of the United States, Lumumba, a close associate of Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, espoused the ideals of Pan-Africanism and nonalignment, and only a week into the nascent country's existence, the United States-Congo relationship would be seriously tested.¹⁶⁶ ¹⁶⁷

As this section will demonstrate, Washington's Cold War paradigm would engender its support for a set of coups in the Congo, ensuring the entrenchment of a personalized autocracy characterized by weak, unaccountable, and notably kleptocratic institutions. Similar to the impact on mutual interests in Ghana, the negative impact on domestic political institutions would contribute to poor economic conditions and human rights abuses for Congolese citizens, while inhibiting the prospects for American investment and public support.

Lumumba Falls Victim to Washington's Red-Stained Tunnel Vision

Amid the escalating Cold War, American interests in the Congo were primarily conceived through a great power competition paradigm that viewed chaos as a "harbinger of communism," and the Force Publique mutinies that commenced on July 5, 1960 were the spark of such chaos that would define the Congo in the latter half of the twentieth century.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, 161.

¹⁶⁴ Susan Williams, 161.

¹⁶⁵ Sandra W. Meditz, Tim Merrill, and Library of Congress, "Zaire: A Country Study," 27–28.

¹⁶⁶ Susan Williams, 67.

¹⁶⁷ Jonathan T. Reynolds, *Sovereignty and Struggle: Africa and Africans in the Era of the Cold War, 1945-1994*, 21.

¹⁶⁸ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 11, 20.

Despite attaining independence and replacing the national government with Congolese officials, the armed forces, le Force Publique, retained an all-white Belgian officer corps, an arrangement which Lieutenant General Émile Janssens avowed would remain in place. Angered by the resistance to Africanizing the officer corps, Congolese soldiers mutinied against the white officers, a movement that quickly escalated and spread across the country. Responding to the wishes of his soldiers and personally desiring a full break with the country's former colonizer, Lumumba dismissed Janssens and Africanized the officer corps the next day. The Belgians, who viewed control over the military as a maintenance of neocolonial control over the Congo and its primarily mineral-based economic value, deployed forces in response to Lumumba's decision and to protect Belgian citizens who had come under attack in the country.¹⁶⁹ Fearing their continued control over their former colony was slipping, a few days later Belgium's government and mining companies backed the secession of Katanga, a mineral-rich region in the south of the Congo, whose public leader was Moïse Tshombe.^{170 171}

Lumumba, who at the time positively characterized his relationship with the United States given the mutuality of the US requiring Congolese resources and the Congo requiring American finished products, was disillusioned by the lack of American support for ending the Belgian intrusion and the Katanga secession.¹⁷² In 1960, the United States imported three-quarters of its cobalt and one-half of its tantalum-two minerals—both of which were crucial for the budding aerospace industry—from Katanga.¹⁷³ In addition, Katanga contained significant deposits of copper and diamonds, which were considered vital to the American economy.¹⁷⁴ Aside from the economically critical minerals, Katanga possessed vast and rich

¹⁶⁹ Sandra W. Meditz, Tim Merrill, and Library of Congress, "Zaire: A Country Study," 30.

¹⁷⁰ Stephen R. Weissman, "What Really Happened in Congo."

¹⁷¹ Sandra W. Meditz, Tim Merrill, and Library of Congress, 30.

¹⁷² Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, 209–11.

¹⁷³ Stephen M. Magu, *Great Powers and US Foreign Policy Towards Africa*, 58.

¹⁷⁴ Susan Williams, 31.

deposits of a mineral that was paramount to America's national security: uranium. Katanga's Shinkolobwe mine, unbeknownst to the public at the time, was the source of uranium for the Manhattan Project. This uranium was far richer than any other sources in the world, which prompted the United States to protect its export and keep it out of Soviet hands amid the intensifying nuclear arms race.¹⁷⁵ Whether the United States believed maintaining such export access was best achieved by supporting Congolese sovereignty or the Katanga breakaway state, it invariably sought to maintain access given the Cold War foreign policy paradigm.

By the time Lumumba appealed to the United States for assistance with respect to removing Belgian troops from the Congo and quashing the Katangan secession on July 12, 1960, Washington's policy makers already viewed him as a Soviet pawn.¹⁷⁶ Partially out of fear that Lumumba's apparent Soviet ties would jeopardize American interests—including uranium exports—in the country, the United States tacitly supported the Katangan secession and thus ignored Lumumba's request. Soviet diplomats were quick to seize upon America's reticence and flocked to the support of Lumumba throughout July and August. For President Dwight Eisenhower, the Soviet diplomatic initiative worked to confirm what he already assumed: Lumumba was facilitating Soviet ingress and influence into the Congo.¹⁷⁷ In an August 18 National Security Council meeting, US Undersecretary of State C. Douglas Dillon asserted that Lumumba was serving the Soviets and Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles conjectured that the Soviets were paying Lumumba. On the same day, CIA station chief in the Congo Larry Devlin sent a cable to Washington which declared that the Congo was experiencing a "classic communist takeover," despite lacking evidence to support the claim. By this point, a clear Washington consensus had emerged: the Soviet-backed Lumumba was a threat to American

¹⁷⁵ Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, 30, 32.

¹⁷⁶ Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, 27, 34.

¹⁷⁷ Herman J. Cohen, *US Policy Toward Africa*, 43.

interests and therefore demanded removal.¹⁷⁸ Publicly, Eisenhower blamed the Congo Crisis on Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's attempts at subversion with an eye to communist takeover, and resolved to work through the United Nations to avoid a neocolonial appearance of America's making.¹⁷⁹ However, in reality, "there was no doubt as to the fact that the United Nations had become a simple instrument of US policy in the Congo."¹⁸⁰

Contrary to the opinions of policymakers in Washington, Lumumba had not yet been the driving factor behind Soviet forays into the crisis, which up to mid-August had remained diplomatic.¹⁸¹ However, because of American and UN reluctance to forcefully end the Katanga rebellion—an appeal which demonstrated Lumumba's confidence in their support for decolonization and democracy up to that point—Lumumba turned to the Soviet Union for assistance on August 21.^{182 183} The CIA's interception of Lumumba's telegram to the Soviets followed by the arrival of Soviet aircraft and trucks in the Congolese capital, Leopoldville, served as evidence which combined with the "rigorously Manichean cold war-inspired logic of the times" to convince Washington that "Lumumba had opted for a Soviet alliance," and ultimately broke the camel's back.^{184 185 186}

Early in the Congo Crisis, the United States identified Congolese Colonel Joseph-Désiré Mobutu as an emerging political actor who was susceptible to American influence.¹⁸⁷ In a potential showdown with Lumumba—which was appearing ever more likely given the

¹⁷⁸ Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, 235–36.

¹⁷⁹ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 14–15.

¹⁸⁰ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*, 116.

¹⁸¹ Susan Williams, 240.

¹⁸² Susan Williams, 196, 239.

¹⁸³ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, 116–17.

¹⁸⁴ Robert Harms, *Africa in Global History with Sources*, 592.

¹⁸⁵ Michael G. Schatzberg, 17.

¹⁸⁶ Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, 106.

¹⁸⁷ Susan Williams, 86, 132.

Americans' own machinations—Dulles believed Mobutu could be a dependable opponent.¹⁸⁸ US officials, many of who viewed the Congo as a “pawn on the global chessboard” and a “prize to be won in the competition between the Soviet Union and the United States,” viewed Mobutu as the lesser of evils between a Soviet-backed ruler or even a Belgian mining-supported crony.¹⁸⁹ Recognizing that Mobutu was imperfect, the American foreign policy consensus was that his leadership would be preferable to a Soviet-aligned Lumumba government. To the pleasure of the United States, Congolese President Joseph Kasavubu dismissed Lumumba as prime minister on September 5, 1960 and tapped Joseph Ileo to succeed him and form a new government. Lumumba, who retained the majority support of parliament and even the military, refused to accept this political maneuver.¹⁹⁰ As a result, Parliament refused to confirm the dismissal and pushed for peaceful political reconciliation. Meanwhile, UN troops secretly backed Kasavubu by securing exclusive access to Leopoldville's airport and radio station.¹⁹¹ Using covert US and UN backing to his advantage, Mobutu resolved the political impasse by forcefully seizing power on September 14 and announcing that the government would temporarily be administered by a college of commissioners, composed of recent university graduates.¹⁹²

The September 1960 coup, which was materially and appreciably supported by the CIA, reduced any semblance of Soviet influence in the Congo.¹⁹³ ¹⁹⁴ ¹⁹⁵ Mobutu granted Soviet and Czechoslovak diplomats 48 hours to depart the country after closing their embassies, shuttered the Ghanaian embassy after describing it as a center of communist subversion, and placed the

¹⁸⁸ Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, 239.

¹⁸⁹ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 3–4.

¹⁹⁰ Michael G. Schatzberg, 13.

¹⁹¹ Ebere Nwaubani, “Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis,” 609.

¹⁹² Michael G. Schatzberg, 13–14.

¹⁹³ Susan Williams, 249.

¹⁹⁴ Michael G. Schatzberg, 21.

¹⁹⁵ David E. Albright, *The USSR and Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s*, 5.

rest of the communist countries' embassies under guard.^{196 197 198} In a country where policy was driven primarily by the fear of Soviet expansion, such developments were welcomed by Washington.¹⁹⁹ Reflecting on this coup a few years later, President John F. Kennedy told Mobutu, "General, if it hadn't been for you, the whole thing would have collapsed and the Communists would have taken over."²⁰⁰ On the other hand, the Soviet Union and Lumumba did not respond too kindly. In a September 23 speech at the United Nations General Assembly, Khrushchev stated, "We have stood, we stand, and always will stand, for the right of the peoples of Africa, just as those of other continents, on attaining their freedom from colonial oppression" and "against any interference by imperialists in the domestic affairs of countries which are emancipating themselves from colonial dependence," portraying American involvement in the Congo as driven by the desire for raw materials and cheap labor.²⁰¹ The next month, in a speech at a Leopoldville restaurant, Lumumba lambasted the United States for purportedly supporting the Katanga secession to prevent the Soviets from accessing Shinkolobwe's uranium.²⁰²

Although Lumumba had been removed from power and Soviet influence consequently plummeted, Lumumba's anti-American tirades were reason for Dulles to believe that the deposed prime minister still posed a threat, perhaps in the form of a rebellion against the newly-formed government.²⁰³ These fears prompted the CIA to disburse sizable funds to Mobutu in October 1960; arms and ammunition followed in November.²⁰⁴ In December, with Lumumba under house arrest, a pro-Lumumba breakaway regime formed in the eastern city of Stanleyville, which was

¹⁹⁶ Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, 51.

¹⁹⁷ Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, 265.

¹⁹⁸ Ebere Nwaubani, 610.

¹⁹⁹ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 14.

²⁰⁰ The White House, "Memorandum of Conversation: Retraining of Congolese National Army."

²⁰¹ Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, 276.

²⁰² Susan Williams, 294.

²⁰³ Susan Williams, 253.

²⁰⁴ Eric Quaidoo, "The United States and the Overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah," 43.

headed by Antoine Gizenga and supported by the Eastern bloc.²⁰⁵ By January 1961, fears that a coup or rebellion would undermine the recently-installed American puppet government cemented a desire in Washington to assassinate Lumumba, of which a plan was already underway.²⁰⁶

The American plot to assassinate Lumumba directly never panned out, as Lumumba was murdered by Katangan secessionists in January 1961, but “the elaborate plot to kill [him] showed just how much Cold War politics had intruded into African affairs.”²⁰⁷ ²⁰⁸ Lumumba’s death, at least for the time being, was the nail in the coffin for Soviet influence in the Congo, though over the ensuing years Moscow repeatedly attempted to gain any foothold it could muster.²⁰⁹

Paranoid About Soviet Influence, Washington Selects Its Congolese Clients

Following Lumumba’s death, Mobutu formally receded from the political scene and Kasavubu, who had officially remained president throughout this period, tapped Joseph Ileo to become prime minister for a second time.²¹⁰ Under pressure from the United Nations in August 1961, the Congo was tasked with forming a new government, headed by a prime minister who was acceptable to both the Ileo and Gizenga factions.²¹¹ ²¹² Cyrille Adoula publicly fit this mold and consequently became prime minister, though his candidacy was backed by CIA bribes.²¹³ The new power-sharing deal government contained some Lumumbists, but was primarily composed of pro-American members.²¹⁴ By November, Adoula had become a staunch US ally

²⁰⁵ Sean Kelly, *America’s Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, 68.

²⁰⁶ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*, 110.

²⁰⁷ Sandra W. Meditz, Tim Merrill, and Library of Congress, “Zaire: A Country Study”, xxxix.

²⁰⁸ Robert Harms, *Africa in Global History with Sources*, 594.

²⁰⁹ David E. Albright, *The USSR and Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s*, 72.

²¹⁰ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 26.

²¹¹ Stephen R. Weissman, “What Really Happened in Congo.”

²¹² Michael G. Schatzberg, 26.

²¹³ Michael G. Schatzberg, 26.

²¹⁴ Stephen R. Weissman.

and was backed by CIA funds that aimed to build popular support for his regime, especially among youth and labor groups. The CIA simultaneously provided Mobutu and his followers with money and arms since rebellions, especially the Gizenga one based in Stanleyville, contributed to an insecure political environment.²¹⁵ The Stanleyville regime ultimately collapsed in January 1962, engendering a shift in policy within the Kennedy administration.²¹⁶ The United States began to push for a coalition government in Leopoldville and denounced the Katangan rebels.²¹⁷ By December, Kennedy gave UN troops the approval to forcefully end the rebellion since maintaining the unity of the Congo—rather than the “instability that the secession would perpetuate”—had become preferable to Washington given the pro-American government in Leopoldville.²¹⁸ The Katanga regime fell the next month.²¹⁹

As a result of the UN-mandated political reconciliation in 1961, pro-Lumumba elements remained in the Adoula government as of the beginning of 1963. By October, however, pro-Lumumba ministers had been removed from the government following efforts undertaken by the Binza Group, a clique of pro-American political elites that included Mobutu.²²⁰ These political moves ensured that by 1963, the United States had significant control over public and political life in the Congo, which according to its Cold War paradigm and stated goals in a 1963 USAID document, was a demonstrable success.²²¹ ²²² However, as is intrinsic to the political instability that was engendered by the United States, such ‘success’ would not last. After the

²¹⁵ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 27.

²¹⁶ David E. Albright, *The USSR and Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s*, 5.

²¹⁷ Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, 79.

²¹⁸ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*, 115.

²¹⁹ Michael G. Schatzberg, 27.

²²⁰ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, 125.

²²¹ Michael G. Schatzberg, 5.

Two main goals: “Establishment of a unified, independent state and development of institutions capable of maintaining political stability and initiating a program of economic and social development” and “prevention of Soviet penetration and extension of the cold war”

²²² Zaki Laïdi, *The Superpowers and Africa: The Constraints of a Rivalry, 1960-1990*, 16.

pro-Lumumba ministers were dismissed from the Adoula government, they returned to their home provinces and launched a new movement known as the Simba Rebellion, one which would quickly attract Soviet support.²²³ Because UN troops were departing in 1964, the United States could no longer rely on the multilateral force to carry out its preferred security operations, hence the commencement of a major CIA paramilitary campaign that included logistical support and anti-Castro Cubans flying American aircraft to drop napalm on rebels.^{224 225}

Even with marked American backing, the Adoula government failed to perform. Corrupt government officials looted the state treasury, soldiers resorted to living off the land, and rising inflation impacted the livelihoods of Congolese citizens.²²⁶ Becoming exhausted and dispirited with the poor state of affairs, Adoula resigned in July 1964.²²⁷ Given the repeated defeat of the Congolese army by Soviet-backed Simba rebels, the Binza Group and Kasavubu decided to fill the position with someone who could handle the rebellion effectively, for which they selected former Katangan leader Moïse Tshombe.²²⁸ The CIA acceded to the decision and added Tshombe and his tribal supporters to the payroll.²²⁹

With Tshombe in power, the United States continued its support to ending the Simba rebellion. American aircraft were deployed to drop Belgian airborne troops on the rebel capital of Stanleyville, an action that exemplified the continued foreign policy position of the United States vis-à-vis the Congo: “never let a friendly, anti-Soviet, Zairian government be consumed in the flames of its own domestic unpopularity.”²³⁰ The subsequent demise of the Simba rebellion in 1965 swelled Tshombe’s national popularity, posing a perceived threat to Kasavubu’s plans to

²²³ Stephen R. Weissman, “What Really Happened in Congo.”

²²⁴ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*, 136-137.

²²⁵ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 28.

²²⁶ Stephen R. Weissman.

²²⁷ Michael G. Schatzberg, 28.

²²⁸ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, 135–36.

²²⁹ Stephen R. Weissman.

²³⁰ Michael G. Schatzberg, 29, 62.

run for reelection as president the following year.²³¹ A political rift ensued between the two, culminating in Kasavubu's dismissal of Tshombe as prime minister in October. Shortly thereafter, Kasavubu traveled to Accra and met with Kwame Nkrumah and other nationalist African leaders at the OAU summit, a move which angered Mobutu and above all, the United States, whose own relations with Nkrumah by 1965 had reached a Cold War paradigm-driven tipping point.²³² Kasavubu's promise at the summit to swiftly repatriate foreign mercenaries operating in the Congo alarmed Washington, which perceived a leftward drift in Kasavubu's foreign policy continuing into the month following his return from Ghana.^{233 234} Having perceptively stepped outside of the United States' overton window of Cold War alignment, Tshombe fell out of favor with the CIA, at which point the Agency turned to its old friend Mobutu, who had remained in the political background since 1961 despite being a major force behind political decisions in Leopoldville.^{235 236}

Washington (and Langley) Ensure Mobutu's Entrenched Autocratic and Kleptocratic Rule

To keep the Congo securely in the American camp, both the CIA station chief in Leopoldville, Larry Devlin, and US Ambassador to the Congo, G. McMurtrie Godley, urged Mobutu to launch a second coup in November 1965.²³⁷ Two days after the United States increased financing to Mobutu and his supportive officers, Mobutu seized power on November 24.^{238 239} Devlin met with Mobutu shortly after the coup and with his Cold War blinders on,

²³¹ Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, 161.

²³² Sean Kelly, 166.

²³³ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*, 146.

²³⁴ Sean Kelly, 167.

²³⁵ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 85.

²³⁶ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, 144-45.

²³⁷ Sean Kelly, 167.

²³⁸ Stephen R. Weissman, "What Really Happened in Congo."

²³⁹ Michael G. Schatzberg, 31.

deemed the action “a best possible solution,” though as this chapter will demonstrate, was solely the case for Mobutu and his cronies, and not the vast majority of Congolese citizens nor the United States.^{240 241}

At the time of the coup, Congolese citizens in nearly all sectors of the population welcomed the change in power and the promises of stability it offered after the previous five years of civil tumult.²⁴² Even amid his popular mandate for the time being, the CIA continued to send cash to Mobutu so that he would remain in the American camp and to maintain the support of Congolese military officers, political leaders, and tribal chiefs, which was critical to staving off regime change efforts.²⁴³ Mobutu pledged continued close relations with the United States and asserted that communism had no place in the Congo, in addition to rebuffing Nkrumah’s encouragement that he adopt a nonalignment policy.^{244 245} Mobutu’s firm footing in the Western camp would turn out to be the determining factor between his regime’s survival and Nkrumah’s downfall, who was overthrown in an American-backed coup the next year.

By the end of his first year in power, Mobutu had consolidated firm control over politics in the Congo.²⁴⁶ His grip strengthened further as he refashioned the country’s institutions under his personal control. Parliament became nothing more than a rubber stamp. Provincial legislatures were eliminated and their ethno-regional political barons neutralized, while police forces became entirely nationalized, all to construct a highly centralized state in contrast to the federal arrangement attempted since independence.²⁴⁷ CIA support for Mobutu continued in spite of the gradual slide into tyrannical rule, evidenced most sharply by the early warning network set

²⁴⁰ Sean Kelly, *America’s Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, 169.

²⁴¹ Stephen R. Weissman, “What Really Happened in Congo.”

²⁴² Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*, 145.

²⁴³ Stephen R. Weissman.

²⁴⁴ Herman J. Cohen, *US Policy Toward Africa*, 75.

²⁴⁵ Sean Kelly, 174.

²⁴⁶ Sean Kelly, 180.

²⁴⁷ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 32.

up to prevent coups, which uncovered a number of major plots and led to the public hangings of alleged conspirators. Mobutu was not too keen to return the good graces to the Americans, however, and dismissed the American ambassador in October 1966 for allegedly “failing to show enough respect for his newly elevated status.”²⁴⁸ Continuing down the path of centralized rule, Mobutu founded his own political party in 1967, le Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution, fashioning the Congo into a single party state.²⁴⁹

Covert American support for Mobutu’s regime began to wane in 1968. The Agency ended its paramilitary program given the lack of substantial armed threats to the regime, but temporarily increased its financing to the burgeoning kleptocrat.²⁵⁰ By the end of the decade, CIA payments to Mobutu ceased; Mobutu no longer needed them as he became able to loot the national treasury for his personal benefit.²⁵¹ On the diplomatic front, the Soviet Union was able to send a new ambassador to Kinshasa²⁵² in June 1968 after lacking diplomatic relations for some years. But, throughout the late 1960s, Mobutu’s Congo was politically, economically, and militarily dependent on the United States, and therefore remained to a satisfying extent in the American camp.²⁵³ Apparently not drawing any negative perceptions from Mobutu’s dismissal of the American ambassador in 1966, the new ambassador who arrived in Kinshasa in 1969, Sheldon Vance, went so far as to forbid any negative analyses of the Mobutu regime in classified cables from the embassy to Washington, a policy that lasted until Vance’s departure in 1974.²⁵⁴

The 1970s started off well for Mobutu and his confidants, whose personal enrichments were facilitated by the economic growth between 1968 and 1973, the only period of real

²⁴⁸ Stephen R. Weissman, “What Really Happened in Congo.”

²⁴⁹ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 33.

²⁵⁰ Stephen R. Weissman.

²⁵¹ Sean Kelly, *America’s Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, 198.

²⁵² Leopoldville was renamed Kinshasa in 1966.

²⁵³ Michael G. Schatzberg, 63–64.

²⁵⁴ Sean Kelly, 200.

economic growth during the Mobutu era. Relative political stability (compared to the years of numerous Congolese governments), currency devaluation, and Vietnam War demand-driven high copper prices made the economic recovery possible.²⁵⁵ However, by the end of 1973, things began to fall apart for Mobutu and the Zairian²⁵⁶ economy, owing to his economic policies and accompanying kleptocracy.²⁵⁷

Mobutu undertook a policy dubbed “Zairianization” in November 1973 in which the Zairian government seized foreign-owned stores and plantations to redistribute them to individual Zairians, primarily to the benefit of favored politicians and senior civil servants. The immediate disruption of commercial supply and distribution networks wreaked havoc on the domestic economy and the newly-acquired firms were ravaged for quick personal enrichment.²⁵⁸ Furthermore, because these predominantly corrupt new beneficiaries were less likely to pay taxes, Kinshasa was losing revenue amid a global drop in copper prices—due to falling Vietnam War demand—that was similarly impacting revenue collection. On the supply side, copper production costs were higher because the Angolan War of Independence shut down a railway Zaire used to export its copper. Rising fuel costs resulting from the 1973 Yom Kippur War only compounded the supply side problems.²⁶⁰ Therefore, Zairianization, while potentially an effective method of patronage, had a severe negative impact on the Zairian economy at large and the government’s revenue collection. A year after Zairianizing commerce, Mobutu pushed for nationalization of larger ventures. The poor, corrupt management of these newly state-controlled firms resulted in food shortages and high inflation, prompting the government to retrocede ownership to the original owners a few years later, but only after their assets were seized by

²⁵⁵ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*, 148.

²⁵⁶ Mobutu renamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Zaire in 1971, as part of his authenticity initiative.

²⁵⁷ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, 166.

²⁵⁸ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 36.

²⁵⁹ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, 149.

²⁶⁰ Sean Kelly, *America’s Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, 201.

Mobutu and his cronies for personal gain, which inflicted immense damage on their sustainability.^{261 262 263} Zairianization and nationalization served to “transfer and extend insecurity from the political realm, where it had been common, to the economic one, where it had been rare,” evidencing the culpability of Mobutu—as well as the American government that put him in power and sustained his regime—in engendering political and economic instability, to the detriment of the Zairian people.²⁶⁴

As a result of the staggering decline of the Zairian economy in the mid-1970s, “whatever bonds of trust had once existed between government and people ... dissolved quickly, never to be reconstituted.”²⁶⁵ The complete destruction of the social contract necessitated Mobutu’s increased political control and repression, regarding which the United States was willing to turn a blind eye given its perception of the red Soviet menace. In 1974, the ruling party, MPR, became the sole political *institution* in the country, an additional step toward Mobutu’s “extraordinary personalization of political rule.” Because Mobutu controlled the sole political institution, he had all of the power and made all of the decisions, which thereby increased the import of receiving patronage from the brutal tyrant.²⁶⁶

In response to Mobutu’s disastrous economic policies, but not his political tendencies—likely because only the former impacted perceived American interests—US ambassador Deane Hinton began to criticize the Zairian regime. Mobutu responded by launching a tirade vis-à-vis US policy in Africa, specifically citing the meager help the Americans provided to oppose colonialism and apartheid, and expelled Hinton.^{267 268} Because the United States was

²⁶¹ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 37.

²⁶² Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*, 166.

²⁶³ Sean Kelly, *America’s Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, 200–201.

²⁶⁴ Michael G. Schatzberg, 37–38.

²⁶⁵ Michael G. Schatzberg, 38.

²⁶⁶ Michael G. Schatzberg, 33–34.

²⁶⁷ Sean Kelly, 201, 204.

²⁶⁸ Michael G. Schatzberg, 65.

by this point only providing minimal levels of aid and military assistance, it had little leverage to respond, raising the question of who constituted patron and client in the diplomatic relationship.²⁶⁹ Mobutu defended his action by comically stating—given the Cold War paradigm dictating American support for his rule—that the Americans were plotting a coup against him. The Hinton fiasco became the second major diplomatic spat between the United States and Zaire in three years, following Mobutu’s unilateral severing of diplomatic relations with Israel without providing prior notice to Washington.^{270 271} In peak Cold War-paradigm fashion, however, the United States and Zaire were again working closely together the next month to covertly intervene in the Angola Civil War in 1975, a proxy conflict that pitted the Eastern bloc against the United States and apartheid South Africa.²⁷² Though Mobutu evidently assisted American aims by using his territory and manpower to send aid to the Western-backed UNITA rebels, he siphoned off much of the funds for personal enrichment.^{273 274}

The Carter administration, which entered the White House in January 1977, sought to upend previous decades of American foreign policy by placing a new emphasis on democracy and human rights, and Zaire would be no exception.²⁷⁵ Just two months into his administration, however, Carter was faced with a Soviet-backed rebellion in the Shaba (formerly Katanga) Province, which threatened to bring the Cold War lens to United States-Zaire relations back into focus.²⁷⁶ Diverging from the readily available assistance offered by previous administrations, Carter was reluctant to assist with the 1977 Shaba rebellion—dubbed ‘Shaba I’ due to the subsequent rebellion in 1978—given his human rights position, but eventually agreed to provide

²⁶⁹ Sean Kelly, *America’s Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, 204-205.

²⁷⁰ Sean Kelly, 205.

²⁷¹ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 64–65.

²⁷² Sean Kelly, 206.

²⁷³ Sean Kelly, 65–66.

²⁷⁴ Sean Kelly, 236.

²⁷⁵ Hal Brands, *The Twilight Struggle: What the Cold War Teaches Us About Great-Power Rivalry Today*, 93.

²⁷⁶ David E. Albright, *The USSR and Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s*, 72.

the Kinshasa government with nonlethal aid and logistics support.^{277 278} Recognizing that the Cold War paradigm could not be completely ignored, even with a progressive force now occupying the Oval Office, Mobutu played the ‘red card,’ emphasizing the Soviet-backed nature of the rebellion in order to receive desired assistance.²⁷⁹ Maintaining the Mobutist tradition of kleptocracy, Zairian generals diverted nonlethal aid, including military helmets, to local markets for profit.²⁸⁰

Shaba I, quashed after only two months, was followed by Shaba II in May 1978. In addition to Carter having now “been made aware of Zaire’s place on the global chessboard,” the threat to Mobutu’s rule was also far more critical, and the United States accordingly responded more rapidly and substantially.²⁸¹ It appeared that regardless of who sat behind the Resolute desk, the Cold War paradigm could not be tucked away and ignored, especially when Soviet-backed rebels threatened a pro-American ally, albeit kleptocratic and tyrannical. Reflecting in 2020 on Carter’s Shaba II position, former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs under the George H. W. Bush administration, Herman J. Cohen, wrote,

It is interesting to note that the Carter decision to support President Mobutu in 1978 was in direct continuity with the Nixon-Ford Africa policy. In view of Carter’s more ‘leftist liberal’ political orientation, he might well have abandoned corrupt human rights violator Mobutu to his fate. Mobutu’s army was refusing to fight. But in geopolitics, Mobutu was America’s loyal ally in the defense of independent Africa against Soviet-Cuban predators. This was the key element of continuity in US policy in Africa at that moment in history.²⁸²

The source of failure for the two Shaba rebellions lay squarely in the United States’ Cold War-driven support for the Mobutu regime. But, not only was such substantial and visible

²⁷⁷ Sean Kelly, *America’s Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, 238.

²⁷⁸ Zaki Laïdi, *The Superpowers and Africa: The Constraints of a Rivalry, 1960-1990*, 156.

²⁷⁹ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 56.

²⁸⁰ Michael G. Schatzberg, 67.

²⁸¹ Michael G. Schatzberg, 57, 67.

²⁸² Herman J. Cohen, *US Policy Toward Africa*, 120.

American backing responsible for preventing Soviet-backed armed rebellions against Mobutu, but also in suppressing any peaceful opposition to Mobutu's repression.²⁸³ Following the eradication of Shaba II, Carter again pushed Mobutu to reform on human rights. With his back against the wall, Mobutu complied for some time, but then retrenched politically immediately when he felt secure.²⁸⁴

As the 1970s were coming to a close, Mobutu's (neo)patrimonial system of rule was in full swing. In a completely personalized autocratic regime, government officials' continued tenure were subject to the whims of Mobutu's fickle behavior. Such job and wealth insecurity among Zairian government officials contributed to a top-down chain reaction of kleptocratic behavior; not only was Mobutu looting billions of dollars at the top, but anyone in public office "felt impelled to extract whatever they could, however they could, as quickly as they could" for personal gain, not knowing how long they would keep their positions.²⁸⁵ Schatzberg (1991) maintains that "insecurity and scarcity fed on each other as the mighty extracted resources from those below them," a vicious chain of extraction that meant "When generals stole their salaries, soldiers raided villages. When teachers went unpaid, they charged students. When nurses could not make ends meet at the end of the month, they exacted payment from the sick."²⁸⁶

The economic effects of misguided policies and pervasive corruption on the Zairian population were deleterious. Under Mobutu, Zaire's "long-term economic recovery was jeopardized by the prestige-seeking policies associated with the ideology of authenticity, the costly and unproductive construction projects to which they gave rise, and the corruption involved."²⁸⁷ Such projects included the construction of an international airport in Gbadolite,

²⁸³ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 58.

²⁸⁴ Michael G. Schatzberg, 67-68.

²⁸⁵ Michael G. Schatzberg, 42.

²⁸⁶ Michael G. Schatzberg, 42.

²⁸⁷ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*, 149.

Mobutu's home village site of his presidential palace, an extravagant powerline in Inga-Shaba that was constructed to quell dissent in the rebellious region but never used above 10 percent of its capacity, and the under-utilized Maluku steel plant.²⁸⁸ The extravagant borrowing required to finance these grandiose projects—and the kleptocratic cost-overflow kickbacks involved—led to practically insurmountable external debt.^{289 290} Foreign aid was similarly victim to corruption; rice donated through the American-funded Food for Peace program, designed to furnish affordable food to the poor, was expropriated by Zairian political elites and sold for profit.²⁹¹ The combination of the Mobutu regime's unsound policies and rampant kleptocracy contributed to a severe impoverishment of the majority of the Zairian population by the late 1970s.²⁹² Real wages had severely declined from independence in 1960 to 1978, food production continually diminished, economic growth was inconsistent and unequally distributed, and inflation was unbridled, all the while Mobutu and his cronies amassed considerable wealth.^{293 294}

To maintain the extreme state-backed kleptocratic economic equality from engendering a mass political uprising against his regime, Mobutu intensified political repression. Police forces were deployed and acted with impunity to coerce and control the Zairian population through intimidation and fear. Extortion, arbitrary arrest, detention without trial, extrajudicial executions and assassinations, massacres of unarmed civilians, and banishment to remote penal colonies became the norm in Mobutu's (American-supported) Zaire.^{295 296} As the world ushered in a new

²⁸⁸ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*, 149.

²⁸⁹ David E. Albright, *The USSR and Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s*, 75.

²⁹⁰ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, 149.

²⁹¹ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 89.

²⁹² David E. Albright, 73.

²⁹³ Michael G. Schatzberg, 38–39.

²⁹⁴ David E. Albright, 73–74.

²⁹⁵ Michael G. Schatzberg, 44–46.

²⁹⁶ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, 141.

decade, “the interactions of scarcity and insecurity [in Zaire] had created a dialectic of oppression.”²⁹⁷

November 4, 1980 was election day in America, and Mobutu Sese Seko stayed up all night to hear the results come in. The news of Ronald Reagan’s victory in the presidential election delighted the Zairian dictator, who promptly celebrated with champagne.²⁹⁸ After four years of the Carter administration, whose promotion of human rights and criticisms of his rule did not please Mobutu, the election of Ronald Reagan ensured that a sense of ‘normalcy’—meaning the full throated manifestation of the Cold War paradigm that had been active in Zaire since at least the Eisenhower administration—would return to US policy toward the Central African nation. Despite Reagan’s clear desire to spread democracy—which would be demonstrated in his 1982 Westminster speech that consequently led to the creation of the National Endowment of Democracy the following year—he saw in Mobutu above all else a “principled stance against Soviet expansionism.”²⁹⁹ ³⁰⁰ ³⁰¹ In his first month of office, January 1981, the Reagan administration acted as anticipated; it was radio silence from Washington after the latest round of mass political arrests in Kinshasa, including some parliamentarians.³⁰²

Bill Burden, United States Ambassador to Belgium during the Congo Crisis and the first American official to recommend Lumumba’s overthrow, penned in his 1982 memoir, “When Lumumba was murdered by his Congolese enemies, the sky began to clear” and that “today under President Mobutu, Zaire is one of the most secure of the new nations in Africa.” But such an assessment of Zaire in 1982 could not have been further from the truth.³⁰³ Under Mobutu’s

²⁹⁷ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 42.

²⁹⁸ Sean Kelly, *America’s Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, 243.

²⁹⁹ Ronald Reagan, “Text of President Ronald Reagan’s Westminster Address.”

³⁰⁰ Michael G. Schatzberg, 68–69.

³⁰¹ David Lowe, “National Endowment for Democracy: History.”

³⁰² Sean Kelly, 243.

³⁰³ Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, 203, 400.

decades of plunder, repression, and divide and conquer tactics, Zaire had become one of the most *unstable* African nations by the early 1980s.³⁰⁴ At the same time that Zaire was the source of oscillating instability, deteriorating economic conditions, and political repression, Soviet influence in the country was close to nil.³⁰⁵

Toward the late 1980s, partially as a result of Gorbachev's political reforms and the weakening status that necessitated them, Soviet influence and the 'red threat' was even more so diminished. Yet when George H. W. Bush took office in 1989, he generally followed in his predecessor's footsteps on the approach to Mobutu and Zaire. Mobutu became the first African head of state to make an official visit to the Bush White House, and though Bush mildly chastised Mobutu on human rights in private, it never left the room.³⁰⁶

The Zairian economy did not fare much better in the 1980s than it had in the 1970s, and understandably so given the continuation of the American-backed personal rule kleptocracy. The average annual inflation rate was 53.5 percent between 1980 and 1987, and by the end of the decade, Zaire was one of the poorest countries in the world.³⁰⁷ The widespread impoverishment affected all sectors of Zairian society, but nutrition and health especially suffered; 44% of Zairians experienced malnutrition and many were dying of easily preventable and curable diseases by the end of the decade.³⁰⁸

Zaire's party-state system ended in 1990, meaning the "system of absolute power, dictatorship, and personal rule" that had defined Zaire since the mid-1960s had faded away, despite Mobutu's remaining in office.³⁰⁹ The following year, even though any Soviet or local Marxist threat in Zaire was nonexistent, the 'Mobutu or chaos' argument was still dominant at

³⁰⁴ David E. Albright, *The USSR and Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s*, 72-73.

³⁰⁵ David E. Albright, 72.

³⁰⁶ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 69-70.

³⁰⁷ Michael G. Schatzberg, 39.

³⁰⁸ Michael G. Schatzberg, 40-41.

³⁰⁹ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*, 142.

the State Department.³¹⁰ This argument posited that if Mobutu did not remain in power, Zaire would descend into chaos, providing fertile ground for Soviet incursion and influence to take hold. The continued American obsession with Mobutu again raised the question of who played the patron and client roles respectively in the United States-Zaire relationship; though in reality Mobutu remained the client given his dependence on the United States far exceeded American dependence on him, he made sure to employ his leverage. For example, in early 1991 “Mobutu demonstrated how closely his services to the United States were linked to regular cash payments from the U.S Treasury” by “refus[ing] to provide sanctuary for several hundred Libyan exiles trained by the CIA to overthrow the regime of Muammar Kaddafi” after Congress denied him \$4 million in military aid, citing concern over human rights abuses and corruption.³¹¹

Zairian Citizens and the United States Reap the Costs of Washington’s Backing of Mobutu

From the outset of the Congo’s independence, US policy toward the country in the Cold War era was primarily formulated through the manichean East-West paradigm that sought above all else to prevent and mitigate any semblance of Soviet ties or influence. Employing such a lens to policymaking resulted in the United States backing coups and sustaining the regime of a repressive and kleptocratic dictator for decades, of which the implications for the Congolese/Zairian people have been addressed. A key line of thinking that buttressed this American policy was the perception that backing Mobutu would avoid the chaos that would inevitably invite malign Soviet involvement and ergo advantage, known as the ‘Mobutu or chaos’ theory, which Schatzberg (1991) addresses in his namesake book.³¹² To pursue this supposed zero-sum advantage in the Congo, the United States resorted to sacrificing its

³¹⁰ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, viii, 78.

³¹¹ Sean Kelly, *America’s Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, 247.

³¹² Michael G. Schatzberg, 71.

ostensible commitment to democracy and human rights. In reviewing American policy toward the Congo in the Cold War period, Schatzberg (1991) writes,

With the sole exception of the Carter administration's encouragement of parliament's expanded and genuinely critical role in the late 1970s, since the 1960s the effect—though not always the intent—of U.S. policy has been a pronounced antipathy toward democracy in Zaire. The CIA's interventions in favor of Mobutu's coups, its attempt to assassinate Lumumba, and the ongoing efforts of the U.S. government since then to solidify the coercive arms of Mobutu's Zairian state have subverted rather than supported the implantation and evolution of truly democratic processes.³¹³

In addition, America's tangible and visible backing of Mobutu—including trips to the White House to meet the president of a world superpower—throughout the Cold War caused the Zairian opposition to consider their activities to be futile.³¹⁴ Mobutu's American-backed security forces, the single most important determinant of his power, ensured that any dissent was repressed, physically and psychologically.³¹⁵ However it was not simply in the realm of democracy and human rights, in and of themselves, that US policy negatively impacted Zairian society.

Another effect of the CIA's intervention in the Congo in the 1960s is that "Congo's leaders have been distinguished by a unique combination of qualities: scant political legitimacy, little capacity for governing, and corruption so extensive that it devours institutions and norms."³¹⁶ The American role in facilitating Mobutu's incapable and kleptocratic political institution(s) not only undermined democracy and caused repression against Zairian citizens, but also wreaked havoc on their economic conditions and livelihoods.³¹⁷ Mobutu's privatization of the state contributed to state decay, economic collapse, and the progressive impoverishment of the Zairian people. Engaging in the top-down chain of kleptocracy that was outlined earlier,

³¹³ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 102.

³¹⁴ Michael G. Schatzberg, 94–95.

³¹⁵ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*, 153–54.

³¹⁶ Stephen R. Weissman, "What Really Happened in Congo."

³¹⁷ Michael G. Schatzberg, 4.

many funds in state coffers—primarily from mineral resources—were diverted to private use and therefore made unavailable for productive investment or providing essential services. Much of this privately-appropriated state wealth was transferred to foreign bank accounts and real estate holdings—of which Mobutu’s alone were worth billions of dollars—and that which remained in country was often ‘earmarked’ for consumption. While the kleptocratic elite evaded paying taxes, which only contributed to the state’s lack of public services, the poor and powerless experienced a daily life of insecurity due to the arbitrary nature of tax collection. The effect of these practices, to which the United States ostensibly backed out of fear of Soviet incursion, was that “The physical infrastructure of production and distribution decayed thoroughly, the health and educational sectors deteriorated beyond recognition, and children died by the thousands each year of preventable and easily curable diseases.”³¹⁸ In fact, even when the United States provided economic assistance to Zaire, it did not benefit the average citizen given the (neo)patrimonial structure the United States helped uphold, explaining the mechanisms behind the reality that under Mobutu, the average Zairian citizen possessed far less purchasing power than under Belgian rule before independence, while Mobutu and his cronies reveled in their fortunes.^{319 320}

The impacts of the Mobutu era—in the realms of democracy, human rights, economic conditions, and livelihoods—on Congolese citizens is crystal clear, as well as the United States’ role in facilitating and upholding these realities. In spite of the fact that such a political structure and the suffering it caused could have existed endogenously, without American involvement, it is evident that Mobutu “owed his rise to power and the astonishing longevity of his regime to external sponsorship and backing by the United States” and that the regime likely would not have survived for so long without the economic, political, and military assistance from

³¹⁸ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*, 150–51.

³¹⁹ Zaki Laïdi, *The Superpowers and Africa: The Constraints of a Rivalry, 1960-1990*, 147.

³²⁰ Sean Kelly, *America’s Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, x.

Washington.^{321 322} But it was not just Zairian citizens who bore the brunt of Mobutu's American-backed autocracy, though they were certainly the primary victims in incomparable terms; the United States as well was negatively impacted by its Cold War paradigm-driven client in Central Africa.

Washington's support for Mobutu's coups and maintenance of his regime were questionable on both the moral and practical levels. The utter immorality of supporting Mobutu has been widely discussed, especially since the Cold War faded into nonexistence, but the practical implications for American strategic interests, economically and diplomatically, have not received the same attention. With respect to this topic, some defenders of Cold War-era American foreign policy point to the same lines of reasoning that were justified decades ago. The paramount American objective to maintain absolute control over the rich uranium at the Shinkolobwe mine throughout the Cold War was attained, though it certainly did not do much to slow the Soviet nuclear arms program.³²³ Aside from uranium, Zaire continually supplied the United States with strategic minerals, including cobalt, which increasingly grew in importance. In the 1980s, the United States imported half of its cobalt supply from Zaire, making it feasible to supply the expanding aerospace industry, but at what cost?³²⁴ In 1991, as the Cold War was coming to a close, Schatzberg opined, "Even under an extremely improbable worst case scenario of a hostile, pro-Soviet regime in Kinshasa, it is most unlikely that production or sales would have stopped because Zaire must sell its minerals to survive."³²⁵ In a similar book published two years later, Kelly further questioned the American logic by asserting, "While Zaire's mineral resources remain vital to its own economy, the extent of their continued strategic value to the

³²¹ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*, 141–42.

³²² Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 98.

³²³ Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, 511–12.

³²⁴ Michael G. Schatzberg, 73.

³²⁵ Michael G. Schatzberg, 73–74.

United States is also open to question. Most of Zaire's minerals are found in even greater quantities on the North American continent, although the cost of extracting them may be higher."³²⁶

With respect to the opportunity costs of American investment in a theoretically stable Congo, attention is even more scant. When Mobutu seized power in 1965, US economic interests were barely exposed in the country, and though they increased by the 1970s following Nixon and succeeding administrations' encouragement, American investments were never substantial in Zaire.³²⁷ Theoretical and empirical evidence suggest that political instability, unrecognized private property rights (re: Zairianization and nationalization), and kleptocracy do not bode well for attracting foreign investment, and thus American investors' reticence to expose themselves in a Mobutu-led Zaire is not surprising.^{328 329} A stable and bureaucratically effective Congo, combined with the urbanization and demographic growth that have defined many African countries, would have provided American investors and corporations with prime opportunities to benefit, with secondary positive effects on the United States' economy and its workers. Though it was not guaranteed that such a political reality would have surfaced in the Congo, it is evident that America's foreign policy precluded any possibility of it.

The realized and opportunity costs stemming from America's Cold War foreign policy in Zaire also pertain to public perception. Because Zairians at the time "believe[d] the United States [was] primarily responsible for keeping their ruthless tyrant in power, at least some anti-U.S. backlash [was] inevitable."³³⁰ The United States supposedly backed Mobutu to promote its interests, yet supporting his repressive regime had the opposite effect on public opinion in Zaire.

³²⁶ Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, 246.

³²⁷ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 72.

³²⁸ Mike Brodo, "Stateness as a Determinant of FDI Inflows in Sub-Saharan African Countries."

³²⁹ Andrew Wedeman, "Looters, Rent-Scrapers, and Dividend-Collectors: Corruption and Growth in Zaire, South Korea, and the Philippines."

³³⁰ Michael G. Schatzberg, 101-2.

Despite such negative perceptions to some extent, the Zairian opposition continually faced West more so than East, evincing that the United States continually had the opportunity to balance its Cold War interests and democratic values, in addition to the strategic interests that were to be gained in a stable and prosperous Congo.³³¹ Further, the impact of America's Cold War era Congo policies were apparent in its relations with other burgeoning African nations, each with their own potential for American political and economic involvement and related benefits.³³² These diplomatic dynamics provide further evidence that demonstrable and hypothetical American interests were negatively impacted by the Cold War-paradigm driven approach in the Congo.

Tarnishing the zero-sum American approach even further is that it was not simply antithetical to Zairian and American interests, but also based on faulty perceptions in the first place. Perhaps such analysis benefits from decades of hindsight, but the reality is quite clear that communism, and more importantly, Soviet influence, were never legitimate threats in the Congo.³³³ Washington's confusion of nationalism and communism framed its perception of Lumumba and the related events that followed.³³⁴ Lumumba was evidently not a Western puppet, which the United States may have preferred to nonalignment, but the puppet it did get, Mobutu Sese Seko, morphed into a tyrannical kleptocrat whose rule in the grand scheme of things did not benefit Zairians nor Americans. It appears that during the Cold War, the United States rationalized its support for crushing democracy, violating human rights, destroying the Zairian economy and livelihoods, and even harming the United States economically and diplomatically, based on misguided perceptions of political realities.

³³¹ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos?: The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*, 108.

³³² Stephen R. Weissman, "What Really Happened in Congo."

³³³ Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, 247.

³³⁴ Michael G. Schatzberg, 107.

Mobutu Begins to Lose His Luster

As the Cold War-paradigm diminished in influence in 1991, not due to a sober recalculation of its flaws but rather a change in the reality of the global geopolitical landscape, America's support for Mobutu began to wane. Beginning in November 1991, a month prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman J. Cohen began criticizing Mobutu publicly.³³⁵ In a February 1992 US Senate hearing, in what was now a post-Cold War unipolar order, Cohen proclaimed, "We hold [Mobutu] responsible for the deteriorated situation in Zaire. His profligate handling of the finances, his use of government money to try to manipulate the transitional process toward democracy, has effectively bankrupted the country" yet simultaneously stated, "We're not asking him to leave. We feel that he should remain President so that he can control the military forces until there's an election—at which point the people will decide."³³⁶ Though—to reiterate—US policy is not entirely determinant of political outcomes in Zaire, Washington's decision to sit back and allow Mobutu to sit atop his deteriorating country would prove to be a critical factor in ushering in the immense chaos, conflict, and death to which Zaire would soon succumb, in sharp contrast to the budding democratic system that was being constructed in post-Cold War Ghana.

³³⁵ Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, 253.

³³⁶ Sean Kelly, 254.

Chapter Three

The Unipolar Paradigm of Selective Convenience

The Unipolar Paradigm in Africa (1991-2001)

The 1991 United States National Security Strategy reads, “the end of the Cold war should benefit Africa in that it will no longer be seen as a battleground for superpower conflict” and that “in a world at peace, more attention and resources should be freed to help the world’s poorest.”³³⁷ However, the end of the Cold War increased American attention toward other world regions, especially Eastern Europe, and simultaneously reduced the relative importance of Africa given the removal of the Soviet threat.³³⁸ As a result, US policy toward Africa in the unipolar moment of the 1990s, a period in which the United States constituted the world’s lone superpower, consisted of a paradigm of selective convenience. Contrary to the promises of the 1991 National Security Strategy, American attention and resources toward Africa did not dramatically increase amid the unipolar moment. In fact, the 1990s witnessed a general decline of American attention toward the continent. Even when attention did heighten in the middle of the decade, it was selectively applied, more strongly in democratizing and developing countries than in those in which instability and conflict ravaged countless livelihoods. When combined with domestic factors, this selective convenience contributed to disparate outcomes—in contrast to the monolithic prediction made by the 1991 National Security Strategy—as exemplified by the case studies of Ghana and Zaire/the Democratic Republic of the Congo.³³⁹

³³⁷ The White House, “National Security Strategy of the United States: 1991.”

³³⁸ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 331.

³³⁹ Elizabeth Schmidt, 334–35.

Before outlining US policy toward the two cases discussed here and how it combined with domestic realities to effectuate opposing impacts on mutual interests during this era, it is imperative to outline the evolution and nuances of the convenience-based American foreign policy paradigm toward Africa in the 1990s. During this time period, US policy toward Africa was characterized initially by widespread disengagement, followed by a renewed selective interest in involvement determined by convenience to perceived American interests, a paradigm which would have varied implications for the United States and various African countries.³⁴⁰

In the early 1990s, US policy toward Africa experienced an abrupt paradigm shift provoked by the conclusion of the Cold War. The United States cut or reduced ties with pro-Western allies, many of whom were characterized by corrupt and abusive governance, because the downfall of the Soviet Union eliminated their perceived necessity and their clientelism drained US resources and engendered negative perceptions of the United States' engagement in African countries.³⁴¹ More broadly, the United States' disengagement from the continent was reflected by drastic reductions in aid disbursements, which previously were ballooned by the Cold War paradigm.³⁴² Between 1992 and 1996, US economic aid to sub-Saharan Africa declined by 27 percent, even as tenuous political and economic situations peaked on the continent.³⁴³

As regional instability grew in Africa during the mid-1990s, the United States increased attention toward the continent. Military intervention remained limited following the 1993 Black Hawk Down incident in Somalia, but the Clinton administration sought other ways to address the threats that instability posed to international peace and security, such as economic and

³⁴⁰ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 334–35.

³⁴¹ Elizabeth Schmidt, 332.

³⁴² Raymond W. Copson, *The United States in Africa: Bush Policy and Beyond*, 7.

³⁴³ Elizabeth Schmidt, 332, 336.

governance programs, albeit selectively.³⁴⁴ By the late 1990s, the Clinton administration articulated some laudable goals for Africa, such as economic reform and sustainable development, support for democratization and human rights, and promoting political stability and effective governance, though the intensity of support remained determined by convenience since the United States did not perceive a generalized looming threat to its interests on the continent.³⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the unipolar paradigm of selective convenience had disparate implications for the United States and African countries, generally positive in Ghana yet overwhelmingly negative in Zaire/the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as a result of the development of capable and accountable domestic political institutions, and the lack thereof.

The Unipolar Paradigm in Ghana

With the Cold War in the rearview mirror, the American policy of Soviet containment at all costs was no longer necessary, providing the United States with the opportunity to promote abroad the liberalism and democracy that it routinely cherished at home. This shift in foreign policy, brought about more so by a change in geopolitical realities rather than a paradigm shift, was particularly evident in Ghana's budding multiparty democracy.³⁴⁶ However, American policy toward Ghana in the 1990s also maintained continuity; though democracy promotion became a crucial pillar of Washington's approach, foreign policy decisions were still made with American interests—security, economic, diplomatic—in mind.³⁴⁷ Such an approach, combining a pro-democracy stance with national self-interest—which were often mutually

³⁴⁴ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 332-333, 336.

³⁴⁵ Joel D. Barkan and David F. Gordon, "Democracy in Africa: No Time to Forsake It."

³⁴⁶ Ahmed Iddris, "Post-Cold War Foreign Policy of the U.S. in West Africa: A Case Study of Ghana and Nigeria," 61, 73".

³⁴⁷ Moses Allor Awinsong, "Ghanaian Agency in Democratization: Examining Democracy Promotion in U.S.-Ghana Relations After the Cold War, 1992-2001," 110.

reinforcing—marked a departure from the negative implications, both for Ghanaians and Americans, that followed from US policy toward Ghana in the Cold War era. In the unipolar moment of the 1990s, the world’s lone superpower crafted a foreign policy toward Accra that allowed the primarily-domestic driven development of capable and accountable political institutions to serve the mutual interests of the United States, Ghana, and their citizens.

A Timeline of Democratization in Early Post-Cold War Ghana

In the early 1990s, Ghanaian head of state Jerry Rawlings presided over a revival of the Ghanaian economy and a relatively smooth transition to multiparty, democratic governance. Following the reintroduction of local democratic institutions, nationwide presidential and legislative elections were held in November 1992, where Rawlings’ National Democratic Congress (formerly the PNDC) achieved decisive victories.^{348 349} The Fourth Republic of Ghana was ushered in on January 7, 1993, marking the formal reintroduction of democratic rule after decades of oft-alternating regimes and regime types.³⁵⁰ Subsequent nationwide elections were held in 1996, and though the opposition lost again, it possessed greater confidence in the elections’ transparency and fairness.³⁵¹ Throughout this period, Ghanaian democracy gradually strengthened; political parties, civil society organizations, and citizens gained crucial watchdog functions that provided a key element of transparency and accountability that had been missing under previous military regimes.³⁵² In 2000, Ghana’s democratic muscle was evinced and proven;

³⁴⁸ David F. Gordon, David C. Miller, Jr., and Howard Wolpe, *The United States and Africa: A Post-Cold War Perspective*, 60.

³⁴⁹ Rachel Beatty Riedl, *Authoritarian Origins of Democratic Party Systems in Africa*, 1.

³⁵⁰ E. Gyimah-Boadi and Theo Yakah, “Ghana: The Limits of External Democracy Assistance,” 2.

³⁵¹ E. Gyimah-Boadi and Theo Yakah, 19.

³⁵² Moses Allor Awinsong, “Ghanaian Agency in Democratization: Examining Democracy Promotion in U.S.-Ghana Relations After the Cold War, 1992-2001,” 87.

the opposition National Patriotic Party won the presidential election and overturned the NDC's parliamentary majority, and on January 7, 2001, the NPP government was peacefully sworn in.³⁵³

Catalysts for Democratization in Ghana: Exogenous and Endogenous

The forces driving the push for democratization in Ghana were a combination of exogenous and endogenous factors, though the latter were a stronger determinant.

Internationally, the impetus for democratization was strong given the economic collaboration and dependence that Ghana placed on the international community and multilateral financial institutions after years of macroeconomic reforms. The effects of these structural adjustment programs and their austerity measures, however, were major features of the domestic push for Ghana's democratization. Unable to protest the detrimental economic impacts on their livelihoods, Ghanaian citizens pushed for political liberalization as a means of expressing their grievances with government policies.³⁵⁴

By the early 1990s, the Rawlings regime was in close collaboration with and in the good graces of the international donor community due to the relative economic successes of Ghana's macroeconomic reforms.³⁵⁵ As the Cold War came to a close, these primarily Western donors—both bilaterally and through their voting share in multilateral financial institutions—increasingly demanded political conditions if countries wished to continue receiving economic assistance.³⁵⁶ Ghana's dependence on external economic resources to maintain the path of economic stabilization and growth thus mandated that steps be taken to

³⁵³ Moses Allor Awinsong, "Ghanaian Agency in Democratization: Examining Democracy Promotion in U.S.-Ghana Relations After the Cold War, 1992-2001," 12.

³⁵⁴ Rachel Beatty Riedl, *Authoritarian Origins of Democratic Party Systems in Africa*, 73

³⁵⁵ Rachel Beatty Riedl, 75.

³⁵⁶ Jonathan T. Reynolds, *Sovereignty and Struggle: Africa and Africans in the Era of the Cold War, 1945-1994*, 46.

democratize.³⁵⁷ Once Rawlings began democratizing, foreign donors responded with financial and technical support, which undoubtedly assisted the process.³⁵⁸ But, these external pressures, though evident, were not the main drivers for democracy in post-Cold War Ghana.³⁵⁹

Ghanaian actors, catalyzed by a variety of domestic factors, “led, shaped, and executed” the democratization process with “limited assistance from foreign donor agencies.”³⁶⁰ By the late 1980s, though the PNDC had increased the participatory nature of the regime through bodies such as the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, the PNDC relationship with key constituent supporters—labor and radical political organizations—had begun to sour.³⁶¹ As the Ghanaian economy continued to grow, laborers claimed that the spoils were not being distributed evenly; the working class maintained that the structural adjustment programs were having a negative impact on their economic livelihoods and that the PNDC government was expropriating wealth that belonged to the workers who generated it. The lack of public forums for expressing these grievances engendered the incorporation of political liberalization demands into already-existing economic ones.³⁶² Some rural citizens joined the chorus of the pro-democracy movement as well since the transactional nature of their previously-strong relationship with the PNDC was not delivering the improved social and economic well-being that Rawlings had promised.³⁶³

³⁵⁷ Rachel Beatty Riedl, *Authoritarian Origins of Democratic Party Systems in Africa*, 75.

³⁵⁸ Isaac Owusu-Mensah, “American Democratic Support to Ghana’s Fourth Republic: Assistance or Encumbrance?,” 13.

³⁵⁹ Moses Allor Awinsong, “Ghanaian Agency in Democratization: Examining Democracy Promotion in U.S.-Ghana Relations After the Cold War, 1992-2001, ii.”

³⁶⁰ Moses Allor Awinsong, 2.

³⁶¹ Rachel Beatty Riedl, 75, 86.

³⁶² Rachel Beatty Riedl, 75.

³⁶³ Moses Allor Awinsong, 66.

Determinants of Ghana's Democratic Success in the 1990s: The Role of Domestic Factors and the United States

Paralleling the catalysts for democratization in Ghana, the determinants of the country's democratic success also possessed endogenous and exogenous roots. In the early 1990s, though the PNDC government was unable to ignore the boisterous demands for political reform from a wide variety of domestic audiences, it did possess the capacity to utilize its patrimonial networks and authoritarian nature to control the transition and ensure political victory. Riedl (2014) characterizes this situation by explaining, "the [PNDC] government felt it was losing ground by stalling and searching to implement its own vision of a grassroots populist democracy, and had to concede to constitutional democracy to maintain its credibility and control, but it did not have to include the opposition in the crafting of this new system, only respond to its ultimate demand."³⁶⁴ The PNDC's patrimonial and authoritarian control over the democratization process, though apparently contrary to democratic goals at first glance, was, according to Riedl, the key to Ghana's party system institutionalization and democratic success.

As the PNDC regime matured throughout the 1980s, it shifted away from its extreme revolutionary focus and violent tactics to a more moderate populist agenda that included some level of grassroots participation in political processes.³⁶⁵ The PNDC utilized organs such as the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution to grow its patronage networks, especially among laborers and farmers, which in turn increased and legitimized support for the government at the grassroots level.³⁶⁶ In addition, the PNDC co-opted various political elites, especially former Nkrumahists, and most importantly, local power brokers, such as traditional chiefs.³⁶⁷ Co-opting

³⁶⁴ Rachel Beatty Riedl, *Authoritarian Origins of Democratic Party Systems in Africa*, 134.

³⁶⁵ Rachel Beatty Riedl, 88.

³⁶⁶ Rachel Beatty Riedl, 87.

³⁶⁷ Rachel Beatty Riedl, 87, 104.

political elites served to reduce competition in elections that were previously subject to vote splitting on the left, but the relationships the PNDC established with local elites were the most crucial in determining Ghana's democratic success and the PNDC's early political victories.³⁶⁸

Local authorities in Ghana, such as chiefs, possess a long political history in Ghana that exists outside the state-centric nature of politics. Their power and influence from "personal wealth, land rights, and judicial capacities" are "tied to lineages, or royal families, social status and legitimacy, religious power, and heredity hierarchy," and are paramount in their respective localities.³⁶⁹ By the time significant democratization pressures had arrived in the early 1990s, the PNDC had already incorporated many of these traditional authorities into their patronage and support networks. Such a strategy of power accumulation is characterized as 'incorporation' since it involves integrating local leaders into the party's and state's networks, and contrasts with a strategy of 'state substitution' in which "the incumbent attempts to eschew local notables and replace them with newly created organizations and committees of the party-state and regime-appointed local political representatives as superimposed extensions of the ruling party," as was the case in Zaire, which did not successfully democratize in the 1990s.³⁷⁰

In addition to local incorporation strategies, the PNDC was able to possess control over the democratization process by maintaining the country's authoritarian structure throughout the democratization period.³⁷¹ For example, the ban on the political parties was not lifted until shortly before the 1992 elections, forcing the political opposition to operate rather clandestinely and therefore reducing their chances of electoral success. Further, the PNDC packed the various transition bodies that determined the democratic rules of the road with pro-Rawlings members.³⁷²

³⁶⁸ Rachel Beatty Riedl, *Authoritarian Origins of Democratic Party Systems in Africa*, 104.

³⁶⁹ Rachel Beatty Riedl, 105.

³⁷⁰ Rachel Beatty Riedl, 9.

³⁷¹ Rachel Beatty Riedl, 134.

³⁷² E. Gyimah-Boadi and Theo Yakah, "Ghana: The Limits of External Democracy Assistance."

As stated earlier, Riedl (2014) asserts that in countries where authoritarians maintain tight control over democratization and therefore inevitably win the inaugural elections, party system institutionalization and democratic institutions tend to strengthen. Therefore, after the 1992 elections, the Ghanaian opposition was unified and bolstered by its coalescence around the anti-incumbent cleavage. Though the opposition's unified and strong nature was primarily determined by the domestic factors that Riedl (2014) thoroughly outlines, its organizational capacity, along with that of domestic civil society organizations, was reinforced by external democracy assistance, especially from the United States.

In spite of the fact that other external actors provided democracy assistance to Ghana in the 1990s, attention will exclusively focus on the role of the United States given this thesis' goal of demonstrating how the American approach to Ghana shifted in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War and resulted in the United States "play[ing] a positive role in Ghana's evolution" after decades of constituting a negative factor.³⁷³ When Ghana was gearing up for its first post-Cold War nationwide elections in 1992, the United States did not express significant interest in providing much democracy assistance; the US Ambassador in Accra had to press Washington hard to provide even some amount. The first major American support for Ghana's fledgling democracy arrived in 1993 in the form of assistance to the parliament. As part of the parliamentary support program, the United States invited Ghanaian lawmakers to tour the US Congress so that they may familiarize themselves with legislative processes.³⁷⁴ The next year, in response to the Ghanaian opposition's lack of trust in electoral processes, the United States launched a multi-million dollar program to promote widespread participation in free, fair, and

³⁷³ Joel D. Barkan and David F. Gordon, "Democracy in Africa: No Time to Forsake It."

³⁷⁴ Moses Allor Awinsong, "Ghanaian Agency in Democratization: Examining Democracy Promotion in U.S.-Ghana Relations After the Cold War, 1992-2001," 47.

transparent elections in Ghana's upcoming elections.³⁷⁵ ³⁷⁶ The programming included "voter education, preparation of a new voter registry and voter identification, institutional strengthening of the Electoral Commission, training and orienting voting observers" among other electoral support activities.³⁷⁷ Beginning in 1995, the United States provided assistance to Ghanaian civil society organizations, but the majority of the pro-democracy funding remained centered around strengthening electoral processes throughout the 1996 election period.³⁷⁸

The Enhancing Civil Society Effectiveness at the Local Level (ECSLL) program, funded by the United States Agency for International Development and managed by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, commenced in 1997 and marked a funding shift by the United States away from electoral processes and more toward governance and civil society development.³⁷⁹ ³⁸⁰ The program resulted in the strengthening of local-level democratization because of the increased capacity of civil society organizations to demand transparency and accountability from public institutions.³⁸¹ As demonstrated by the United States' pro-democracy rhetoric and assistance vis-à-vis Ghana in the mid-1990s, Washington's approach toward the West African nation was a marked departure from the Cold War paradigm-driven disregard for democracy and political stability of years past, a shift that engendered positive economic and political outcomes for Ghanaians and the United States after decades of largely negative ones.

³⁷⁵ Joel D. Barkan and David F. Gordon, "Democracy in Africa: No Time to Forsake It."

³⁷⁶ Moses Allor Awinsong, "Ghanaian Agency in Democratization: Examining Democracy Promotion in U.S.-Ghana Relations After the Cold War, 1992-2001 49-50".

³⁷⁷ Moses Allor Awinsong, 50.

³⁷⁸ Isaac Owusu-Mensah, "American Democratic Support to Ghana's Fourth Republic: Assistance or Encumbrance?," 14.

³⁷⁹ Stephen L. Snook et al., "Civil Society and Local Government in Twenty Districts in Ghana: Surprises, Problems, and Opportunities, IFES Project ECSELL Baseline Assessment."

³⁸⁰ Isaac Owusu-Mensah, 14.

³⁸¹ Isaac Owusu-Mensah, 1.

Mutual Benefits from Democratization and a Shifting American Approach in the Immediate Post-Cold War Period

In stark contrast to the repeated economic struggles attributed to Cold War-era political instability and mismanagement, the 1990s in Ghana were a period of economic revival and growth, largely thanks to the development of relatively more capable and accountable political institutions. Between 1992 and 2000, Ghana achieved positive GDP per capita growth each year, while poverty dropped from 52.7% in 1991 to 39.5% in 1998, building off of the economic growth trends that followed from economic liberalization in the mid-1980s.^{382 383}

Politically, the benefits accruing to Ghanaians in the 1990s were initially consigned to voting rights and not a wider range of civil liberties, though the violent repression that characterized much of the Cold War period had dissipated. Concerned primarily with winning the 1992 multiparty elections, the opposition National Patriotic Party forwent pushing for a more extensive agenda of liberal rights at the outset of democratization.³⁸⁴ Overtime, coinciding with the bolstering of civil society organizations' capacity, civil liberties and societal checks on the government increased, most notably and importantly in the ability of citizens to demand transparency from public institutions and therefore hold them accountable. Though transparency and accountability are inevitably political benefits, they can translate into other benefits for Ghanaians since “the difference between a military regime and a democratic administration lay

³⁸² The World Bank, “GDP per Capita Growth (Annual %) - Ghana | Data.”

³⁸³ Michael Geiger, Tomomi Tanaka, and Camille Nuamah, “Ghana’s Growth History: New Growth Momentum since the 1990s Helped Put Ghana at the Front of Poverty Reduction in Africa.”

³⁸⁴ Rachel Beatty Riedl, *Authoritarian Origins of Democratic Party Systems in Africa*, 144–45.

in the presence of opportunity in the latter to advocate, through threat of electoral rejection, for infrastructure, economic improvement and social change.”^{385 386}

The United States, through the ECSELL project, contributed to these developments in transparency and accountability in domestic political institutions.³⁸⁷ The ECSELL project generated the formation of civil unions which facilitated dialogue between citizens and district assemblies, assuring increased government transparency.³⁸⁸ In addition, because civic unions bridged the gap between citizens and district assemblies, Ghanaians could more effectively advocate for and attain public goods from the government.³⁸⁹ Another specific benefit of the civic unions’ facilitation of transparency and accountability was the realm of budget development and revenue mobilization. Civic unions’ participation in budget development at the local level resulted in budgets better addressing the needs of various communities, increasing the positive social contract between citizen and government, and improving revenue mobilization since citizens felt that their government was providing goods and services that addressed their specific needs. Further, citizen oversight of budget processes contributed to the more prudent use of public resources, thereby leading to greater government efficiency and effectiveness.³⁹⁰ In the realm of foreign relations, civic unions enhanced citizens’ ability to demand transparency and accountability on large, foreign-funded development projects, such as by requiring the government to publish costs and sources of funding on public noticeboards.³⁹¹ Therefore, in general, civic unions—whose creation was partially due to American pro-democracy

³⁸⁵ Moses Allor Awinsong, “Ghanaian Agency in Democratization: Examining Democracy Promotion in U.S.-Ghana Relations After the Cold War, 1992-2001,” 99.

³⁸⁶ David A. Lake and Matthew A. Baum, “The Invisible Hand of Democracy: Political Control and the Provision of Public Services.”

³⁸⁷ Isaac Owusu-Mensah, “American Democratic Support to Ghana’s Fourth Republic: Assistance or Encumbrance?,” 26.

³⁸⁸ Isaac Owusu-Mensah, 23–24.

³⁸⁹ Isaac Owusu-Mensah, 26.

³⁹⁰ Isaac Owusu-Mensah, 27.

³⁹¹ Isaac Owusu-Mensah, 27–28.

programming—acted as “an umbrella body through which civil society could engage with the state and participate in local governance” to facilitate “greater accountability, transparency, and improved governance.”³⁹²

As the United States supported Ghana in developing capable and accountable domestic political institutions, it witnessed an accrual of its own positive benefits as well. US foreign direct investment doubled over the decade, which Jensen (2003) has associated with democratic governance engendering greater credibility. On the diplomatic front, the United States enjoyed more fruitful relations with an increasingly stable Ghana that would continue into the next century, a sharp contrast to the experience of Zaire and its citizens in the 1990s.

The Unipolar Paradigm in Zaire/Democratic Republic of the Congo

After three decades of being one of the United States’ closest allies on the African continent, Washington promptly dropped Mobutu Sese Zeko. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Cold War foreign policy paradigm eradicated any need for propping up the kleptocratic autocrat who was responsible for countless violations of human rights and the mass destitution of the Zairian people.³⁹³ In the decade that followed, the United States’ limited and selective engagement toward Zaire/the Democratic Republic of the Congo was reflective of the unipolar moment that offered Washington the opportunity to engage when and where it desired, primarily according to its perceived national interests amid other competing priorities. However, in contrast to the mutual benefits which accrued to Ghana and the United States during the 1990s, the American paradigm of selective convenience and its interaction with domestic

³⁹² Isaac Owusu-Mensah, “American Democratic Support to Ghana’s Fourth Republic: Assistance or Encumbrance?,” 24.

³⁹³ Annelisa Lindsay, “Continuity and Change in U.S.- Congo Relations: A Critical Analysis of Post-Cold War U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Zaire-Democratic Republic of Congo,” 19.

factors—many of them institutional remnants of Cold War-era policies—in Zaire/the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the 1990s engendered primarily negative outcomes for both countries. As demonstrated in this section, despite the United States doing away with its Cold War paradigm, the persistence of the weak, unaccountable, and kleptocratic institutions it fostered drove Zaire into civil war, setting up a cycle of conflict that would undermine the potential for significant institutional development, and negatively impact the interests of Zairian citizens and the United States.

Washington's Divorce with Mobutu and Failed Attempts at Reform

Reflecting an abrupt paradigm shift toward the continent and Zaire specifically, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs George Moose stated in a June 1993 US Senate hearing that the nightmarish situation in Zaire was “part of a tragic consequence of the Cold War era” when US policies were influenced by broader strategic interests “often to the detriment of other considerations,” and that the concept of what was strategic during the Cold War no longer applied to the nascent unipolar moment.³⁹⁴ When the threat of communist influence in Africa and Zaire was eliminated by the end of the Cold War and the departure of Cuban troops from Angola in 1991, the United States ended direct support for the Mobutu regime, yet the legacy of Cold War-era policies would contribute to a domestic reality in the country that continually worsened.³⁹⁵

Upon the dissipation of aid to his kleptocratic regime, Mobutu resorted to increasingly exploiting diamonds and other minerals in order to maintain his patronage-backed grip on power. At times, this exploitation took the form of allowing supportive elites to directly control mineral

³⁹⁴ Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, 255.

³⁹⁵ Annelisa Lindsay, “Continuity and Change in U.S.- Congo Relations: A Critical Analysis of Post-Cold War U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Zaire-Democratic Republic of Congo,” 18–19.

deposits, further weakening the state apparatus and creating fiefdoms that generated regional instability. As the Zairian state effectively privatized and broke down into one of regional feudalism, a formal attempt to transition to democracy was undertaken by Mobutu and his cronies, though Mobutu's unwillingness to truly reform and the United States' preoccupation with other regions precluded any possibility of democratization, in stark contrast to Ghana's 1990s experience.³⁹⁶

The first five years of Zaire's post-Cold War history were characterized by continual failed attempts to democratize and build state capacity. Such failures were primarily the result of endogenous factors, such as Mobutu's obstruction. However, the institutional remnants of US Cold War-era policy toward Zaire combining with the minimal support provided to democratization and capacity-building projects typify how the unipolar paradigm of selective convenience engendered the continuation and exacerbation of negative implications in the country, both for Zairian citizens and the United States. From 1991 to 1994, Mobutu tacitly endorsed but subsequently rescinded support for power-sharing agreements and other forms of political liberalization, often via the application of violent crackdowns, which only made the political instability and its negative impact on livelihoods worse.³⁹⁷ In contrast to the Cold War period, the United States publicly criticized Mobutu's autocratic repression, but deployed limited efforts and resources in an attempt to effect political and economic liberalization.³⁹⁸ By the mid-1990s, the Clinton administration had been critical of Mobutu's maintenance of power but failed to call for or effectuate his removal, providing minimal support to the Zairian democracy movement. Although these pro-democracy forces continued to push for change, Mobutu's

³⁹⁶ Pierre Englebert, "Life Support or Assisted Suicide? Dilemmas of U.S. Policy toward the Democratic Republic of the Congo," 58–59.

³⁹⁷ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 163.

³⁹⁸ Annelisa Lindsay, "Continuity and Change in U.S.- Congo Relations: A Critical Analysis of Post-Cold War U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Zaire-Democratic Republic of Congo," 28, 127.

resistance and the lack of external (especially American) support rendered their chances nearly impossible. For Mobutu to fall from power, force would be required. In 1996, as a result of regional tensions created by the repercussions of the Rwandan Genocide, an armed rebellion supported by Rwanda and Uganda began their march toward Kinshasa to dethrone the ailing autocrat.³⁹⁹

The Rwandan Genocide and a Brewing Crisis in Eastern Zaire

The Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front's takeover of power in neighboring Rwanda, largely in response to the concurrent genocide, created a massive outflux of Hutu refugees into Zaire in 1994. Mobutu, a longtime supporter of the Hutu regime in Kigali, opened Zaire's borders to 1 million Hutus, which consisted of a mix of refugees as well as government soldiers, militia members, and other genocidaires. When the genocidaires quickly asserted their dominance over the refugee camps, including by controlling the distribution of food, medicine and other humanitarian relief, Mobutu turned a blind eye. Mobutu also began to question the citizenship of Zairian Tutsis, espousing rhetoric that scapegoated them for the country's problems and even supported his own soldiers' engagement in the anti-Tutsi ethnic cleansing in eastern Zaire.⁴⁰⁰ Although initially driven by an attempt to mitigate a potential Tutsi rebellion from weakening his hold on patronage networks in the mineral-rich Kivu provinces of eastern Zaire, Mobutu's actions angered the Tutsi government in neighboring Rwanda, which threatened invasion if Tutsis were not protected, on both sides of the border.^{401 402}

³⁹⁹ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 163.

⁴⁰⁰ Elizabeth Schmidt, 163–64.

⁴⁰¹ Annelisa Lindsay, "Continuity and Change in U.S.- Congo Relations: A Critical Analysis of Post-Cold War U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Zaire-Democratic Republic of Congo," 42.

⁴⁰² Elizabeth Schmidt, 164.

The United States, confronting a unipolar paradigm of selective convenience, was faced with opposing choices that were indicative of its early 1990s experience of intervention, and the lack thereof. Remaining skeptical of direct intervention after videos of American soldiers being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu were broadcast on television in 1993, Washington was not eager to involve itself in African conflagrations, especially if there was no other superpower or looming threat to American interests on the continent. This lingering reticence, demonstrated by America's refusal to deploy soldiers to Rwanda during its 1994 genocide, stood in contrast to the embarrassment that followed such refusal to intervene in Rwanda.⁴⁰³ The United States resolved to minimally engage the refugee crisis in eastern Zaire, deploying humanitarian aid but failing to distinguish between refugees and genocidaires, which would have inevitably precipitated bloodshed, both African and American. After only a few weeks, the aid deployment dubbed Operation Support Hope ceased to exist.⁴⁰⁴

In contrast to the Cold War era, in which instability threatening Mobutu's reign would have prompted direct American support or intervention so that Soviet influence had no chance of taking root, the unipolar moment of the 1990s allowed the United States to selectively engage Zaire as it believed best suited its interests. Balancing American casualties with the diplomatic and public relations scorn of doing nothing to stop the Rwandan genocide, the United States engaged minimally to help resolve the refugee crisis in eastern Zaire, just as it had done little to promote democratic reforms in the beginning of the decade. Though the mutual implications of this decision were far less monocausal than America's sins of commission vis-à-vis Zaire in the Cold War, Washington's limited involvement allowed domestic realities, some of which were institutional remnants of Cold War policies, to evolve into a domestic and regional conflagration.

⁴⁰³ Annelisa Lindsay, "Continuity and Change in U.S.- Congo Relations: A Critical Analysis of Post-Cold War U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Zaire-Democratic Republic of Congo," 41.

⁴⁰⁴ Annelisa Lindsay, 128.

The First Congo War and the Fall of Mobutu

By October 1996, both Mobutu and the international community had displayed a lack of willingness to resolve the deteriorating situation in eastern Zaire, prompting the Rwandan army to launch raids into Zaire to destroy Hutu refugee camps.⁴⁰⁵ ⁴⁰⁶ During these initial raids, the Rwandans encouraged Zairian Tutsis to rebel against Mobutu and within a few weeks had established a Zairian rebel group known as the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre, or AFDL. Though externally backed by Rwanda and Uganda, and staffed with Rwandan commanders, the AFDL quickly incorporated Zairians into its movement. The group's spokesperson, Laurent Désiré Kabila, was an eastern Zairian smuggling kingpin, and was handpicked by the Kigali regime to make the AFDL appear more locally-rooted.⁴⁰⁷ As the AFDL marched westward across the country toward Kinshasa, both sides plundered and raped. Despite these atrocities, the United States refused to criticize the Rwandan-backed AFDL given its failure to intervene in the Rwandan genocide two years prior. By April 1997, Kabila and his foreign-backed army controlled all of Zaire's major sources of revenue and were closing in on the capital. At this point, the United States established contact with Kabila's top political and military aides, recognizing the inevitability of his victory. In addition, the United States blocked French-sponsored initiatives at the United Nations Security Council that would have allowed humanitarian intervention and slowed the rebellion's advance.⁴⁰⁸ The Clinton administration at last urged Mobutu to step down, completing his fall from American grace.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁵ Annelisa Lindsay, "Continuity and Change in U.S.- Congo Relations: A Critical Analysis of Post-Cold War U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Zaire-Democratic Republic of Congo," 64.

⁴⁰⁶ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 165.

⁴⁰⁷ Elizabeth Schmidt, 164–65.

⁴⁰⁸ Elizabeth Schmidt, 166–67.

⁴⁰⁹ Elizabeth Schmidt, 167.

A day before the planned invasion of Kinshasa, Mobutu fled into exile in Morocco (where he died a few months later) and his troops laid down their arms. AFDL troops quickly seized the city without a fight, and Kabila declared himself president of the renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo on May 29.^{410 411 412} Lindsay (2012) writes, “U.S. neutrality during the overthrow provided evidence for the first time that even the highest levels of the United States government would not intervene to save Mobutu. After the Cold War, no one wanted to own the problems of Zaire, and so the United States allowed other actors to step in,” highlighting how the unipolar paradigm of selective convenience allowed the United States to largely ignore the First Congo War.⁴¹³ While non-intervention may have been preferable to the sins of commission derived from US support for Mobutu during the Cold War, it is evident that American policy—or lack thereof—toward Zaire from 1991 to 1997 effectuated negative implications for Zairians and Americans. However, with Laurent Kabila now at the helm, the United States faced the potential of engaging in a more promising African government, just as it had done in Ghana with largely positive outcomes. The remnants of historical legacy and actions taken by Kabila, however, spoiled this opportunity within a year of taking power.

The False Hope of Laurent Kabila: Instability Remains and War Returns

Believing that Kabila represented a better chance of meeting its superpower interests of stability and economic opportunities, the United States provided its blessing and support for the new regime. Washington was quickly perceived to be the closest Western sponsor of Kabila, as a

⁴¹⁰ Annelisa Lindsay, “Continuity and Change in U.S.- Congo Relations: A Critical Analysis of Post-Cold War U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Zaire-Democratic Republic of Congo,” 76.

⁴¹¹ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 168.

⁴¹² Alexis Arieff, “Democratic Republic of Congo: Background and U.S. Relations.”

⁴¹³ Annelisa Lindsay, 77.

mission from the US Agency for International Development visited the DRC only two weeks into the new government's tenure to discuss the resumption of foreign aid.⁴¹⁴ Lindsay (2012) indirectly explains the new political reality through the lens of the democratic convenience-rooted unipolar paradigm, writing, "Once Kabila claimed Kinshasa, the United States held cautious optimism for the realization of promises for democracy that had raised hopes for many Western donors. Pleased with little bloodshed during the transition of power and optimistic about a power at the helm of Congo other than Mobutu, the Clinton Administration quickly extended recognition to the new regime ... and pledged to help develop a democratic government."⁴¹⁵ Though the United States began to conveniently and easily push for democracy and human rights, which was buttressed by Secretary of State Madeline Albright's December 1997 trip to Kinshasa, Kabila had other plans.⁴¹⁶

Quite quickly, Kabila made it clear that he was not interested in establishing the capable and accountable political institutions necessary for a functioning democratic government. Kabila refused to work with the internal democratic opposition and preferred to administer the country through patronage networks of relatives and cronies rather than through a broad-based coalition government. In these initial months, the United States accepted the lesser evil brought about by the Kabila government and blocked UNSC condemnation of his rule, but this US-DRC diplomatic honeymoon would not last long.⁴¹⁷ In a private meeting in March 1998, President Clinton warned Kabila, stating, "We are fed up. You have six months to free the opposition

⁴¹⁴ Pierre Englebert, "Life Support or Assisted Suicide? Dilemmas of U.S. Policy toward the Democratic Republic of the Congo," 70.

⁴¹⁵ Annelisa Lindsay, "Continuity and Change in U.S.- Congo Relations: A Critical Analysis of Post-Cold War U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Zaire-Democratic Republic of Congo," 77.

⁴¹⁶ Annelisa Lindsay, 78, 86.

⁴¹⁷ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 168.

politicians, stop harassing the civil society, NGOs, and the press and curb your army. If you fail to do that, in six months we drop you flat.”⁴¹⁸

At the same time that Kabila faced external pressure to reform, he also faced a crisis of domestic illegitimacy, as the presence of foreigners—primarily Rwandan—in Kinshasa became a growing concern among Congolese citizens, especially since some of the foreigners had evicted many residents to secure housing.⁴¹⁹ Lindsay (2012) analyzes this predicament by writing, “The new President recognized his deteriorating legitimacy with domestic and international audiences and began to realize he would need to take dramatic action to have any hope of maintaining power,” yet instead of working to build state capacity and democratize, “Kabila reverted to Mobutu’s oppressive tactics while claiming that the country was not yet ready for democracy.”⁴²⁰ Kabila banned free press and political activity, forced parties to merge with the AFDL, and engaged in arbitrary arrests and repression against dissidents.⁴²¹ Englebert (2006) assesses the deteriorating political situation by claiming,

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.⁴²²

Reflecting on the concurrent deterioration in the relationship between Kabila and the United States, Englebert (2006) writes, “Kabila’s ideological rigidities and his own erratic nature

⁴¹⁸ Annelisa Lindsay, “Continuity and Change in U.S.- Congo Relations: A Critical Analysis of Post-Cold War U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Zaire-Democratic Republic of Congo,” 101.

⁴¹⁹ Annelisa Lindsay, 97.

⁴²⁰ Annelisa Lindsay, 98.

⁴²¹ Annelisa Lindsay, 98.

⁴²² Pierre Englebert, “Life Support or Assisted Suicide? Dilemmas of U.S. Policy toward the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” 59.

prevented the establishment of a sustained positive relationship” and that “the 1998 invasion/rebellion against Kabila, initiated by Rwanda, led to a further deterioration, given Washington’s sympathy for the Kigali regime.”⁴²³

A Cycle of Instability and Suffering: The Second Congo War

In August 1998, Rwanda and Uganda again enlisted Congolese rebel groups, including Congolese Tutsis, Mobutuists, disappointed office seekers, and leftist intellectuals to invade the DRC, this time against their former puppet Laurent Kabila who had decided to pursue his own agenda. After Kabila ousted Rwandan officials from his military and instead incorporated elements of the Hutu Power movement to build his own fighting force, the DRC’s eastern neighbors were not keen with Kabila remaining in power, and thus the Second Congo War commenced.⁴²⁴ Other African countries, however, viewed Rwanda and Uganda’s motives as illegitimate, citing them as a ploy to maintain instability in the DRC for the purposes of natural resource exploitation.⁴²⁵ Despite the conflagration that became dubbed the ‘African World War,’ the United States largely remained on the sidelines aside from tacit support for peace agreements.⁴²⁶

After three years of renewed conflict engendered a partitioned country, Laurent Kabila was assassinated by one of his bodyguards in January 2001, “possibly on behalf of disgruntled diamond traders, disadvantaged domestic factions, or displeased neighbors.”⁴²⁷ Laurent Kabila was promptly replaced by his son Joseph Kabila, who was tasked with leading the Kinshasa

⁴²³ Pierre Englebert, “Life Support or Assisted Suicide? Dilemmas of U.S. Policy toward the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” 70.

⁴²⁴ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 168-169.

⁴²⁵ Elizabeth Schmidt, 170-171.

⁴²⁶ Pierre Englebert, 73-74.

⁴²⁷ Pierre Englebert, 59.

government through a devastating civil war, the pinnacle of the DRC's nightmarish early post-Cold War experience.⁴²⁸

The Democratic Republic of the Congo in the 1990s: A Continual Nightmare

Despite the discarding of the Cold War paradigm that had caused the United States to incessantly back Mobutu and consequently engendered political instability, human rights abuses, kleptocracy, and economic disaster, the experiences of Congolese citizens in the 1990s were not much different given that weak and unaccountable institutions continued to define Congolese politics. During the first six years of the decade, the United States' weak and minimized engagement with Kinshasa—driven by the lack of a geopolitical threat, decreased relative attention, and the ability of the world's lone superpower to act conveniently—combined with the institutional path dependence of its Cold War policies to effect a disorderly democratic transition, the violent repression of dissent, and continued economic crisis in Zaire, rendering the country in a state of apparently permanent crisis.⁴²⁹ Civil war, which engulfed the DRC beginning in 1996, only exacerbated these problems and negatively impacted the livelihoods of Congolese citizens, to say the least.

Failing to substantially intervene in the two civil wars out of the convenience of its unipolar paradigm, the United States played an omissive role in allowing disaster in the DRC to continue. Washington largely failed to engage when government and rebel troops in both wars repeatedly plundered and raped across the country, shredding the country's social fabric for

⁴²⁸ Pierre Englebert, "Life Support or Assisted Suicide? Dilemmas of U.S. Policy toward the Democratic Republic of the Congo," 59.

⁴²⁹ Annelisa Lindsay, "Continuity and Change in U.S.- Congo Relations: A Critical Analysis of Post-Cold War U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Zaire-Democratic Republic of Congo," 54.

decades to come.⁴³⁰ Yet, similar to the implications of US policies toward the DRC in the Cold War era, it was not only Congolese interests that suffered from the American application of a foreign policy paradigm rooted in global geopolitical realities, but American interests as well. Contrary to the Cold War era in which Washington might have felt that its hands were tied by the perceived importance of containing Soviet influence over supporting other positive outcomes in Zaire, in the unipolar moment of the 1990s, the United States was only constrained by its own choices, such as prioritizing other world regions and deciding that ‘basket case’ countries were not important foreign policy priorities.

The negative impacts on American interests in 1990s DRC largely reflected a continuation of the implications witnessed in the Cold War era, especially since the weak and unaccountable institutions that the United States helped foster in that era were maintained. Aside from failing to uphold democracy and the responsibility to protect framework, the United States experienced detrimental effects in the economic and diplomatic spheres. The opportunity costs of investments carried over from the Cold War and lasted until the fall of Mobutu’s unstable, kleptocratic regime in 1997. When Kabila took power, there was an initial optimism among American investors and mining companies, but by 1998 these firms had run for cover as changing investment laws, additional taxes, and renewed conflict threatened their profit prospects.⁴³¹ ⁴³² After the overthrow of Mobutu, the United States experienced diplomatic inconsistency, with Kabila not living up to be the democratic ally that Washington had envisioned. America’s public image in the DRC was remarkably consistent from 1996 to 2000, yet overwhelmingly negative, with majorities of Congolese respondents reporting negative

⁴³⁰ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 166, 169.

⁴³¹ Pierre Englebert, “Life Support or Assisted Suicide? Dilemmas of U.S. Policy toward the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” 68.

⁴³² Annelisa Lindsay, “Continuity and Change in U.S.- Congo Relations: A Critical Analysis of Post-Cold War U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Zaire-Democratic Republic of Congo,” 84–85.

perceptions of the United States in three polls conducted during that time period.⁴³³ In January 2001, Ghana, the DRC, and the United States all inaugurated new presidents, but it was events in September and the application of a new US foreign policy paradigm that would test the capacity and accountability of domestic institutions and determine the impact on mutual interests.

⁴³³ Pierre Englebert, "Life Support or Assisted Suicide? Dilemmas of U.S. Policy toward the Democratic Republic of the Congo," 71.

Chapter Four

The War on Terror Paradigm

The War on Terror: America's New Paradigm for Africa (2001-2017)

The media-portrayed bogeyman of the first post-Cold War decade in Africa consisted of warlords engaged in brutal civil wars, whose atrocities the United States selectively and conveniently engaged, but following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, “the presence of terrorists in Africa—real or imagined—became the new bogeyman.”⁴³⁴ In contrast to the selective ambivalence that characterized much of the United States’ 1990s policies toward Africa, throughout the beginning of the 21st century, Washington perceived direct threats to its interests and security, and constructed a paradigm that accordingly structured its actions. From 2001 to 2017, the United States primarily viewed its analysis of and engagement with Africa through the ‘War on Terror’ paradigm.⁴³⁵ Other interests, such as responding to instability and violence, combating the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and malaria, and promoting trade and investment were evident, yet subsidiary and often coupled with counterterrorism concerns.^{436 437} In addition to restructuring the American paradigm through which it viewed Africa, the War on Terror also rekindled American interest in the continent and its trajectory, forcing the “US to rejig its policy of disengagement into an active engagement concentrated on fighting terrorism in Africa and protecting its interests.”^{438 439} For example, the potential of state failure was no longer

⁴³⁴ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 1.

⁴³⁵ Elizabeth Schmidt, 2, 332.

⁴³⁶ Elizabeth Schmidt, 338-339.

⁴³⁷ Raymond W. Copson, *The United States in Africa: Bush Policy and Beyond*, 33.

⁴³⁸ Isaac Owusu-Mensah, “American Democratic Support to Ghana’s Fourth Republic: Assistance or Encumbrance?,” 12.

⁴³⁹ Stephen M. Magu, *Great Powers and US Foreign Policy Towards Africa*, 147.

treated as an inconvenience but rather a direct threat to American interests as terrorists could easily fill the power vacuum.⁴⁴⁰

The War on Terror paradigm, like its Cold War paradigm antecedent, generated American support for African governments that supported its prioritized interests in countering terrorism, regardless of regime type.⁴⁴¹ This increasingly narrow focus on security concerns caused the United States to contradict its liberal democratic values and instead shore up repressive governments accused of widespread human rights abuses, such as the Museveni regime in Uganda, whose counterterror-centric relationship with the United States has been extensively documented.^{442 443 444 445} In addition to Uganda, the Pentagon has provided money, training, and equipment to dozens other African governments, as well as engaged in direct air support and special forces operations to eliminate terrorist threats.⁴⁴⁶ Schmidt (2018) assessed that “after September 2001, the George W. Bush administration’s war on terror became the new anticommunism” as “African dictators who had appealed to the West by playing up the communist menace were replaced by a new generation of strongmen who won support by cooperating in the fight against terrorism.”⁴⁴⁷ Not only did American counterterrorism-driven backing for African tyrants and training for their armed forces facilitate violent repression, but it also engendered hostility toward the United States in the eyes of African citizens. Aside from undermining US diplomatic interests, this public relations backlash also ran contrary to

⁴⁴⁰ Isaac Owusu-Mensah, “American Democratic Support to Ghana’s Fourth Republic: Assistance or Encumbrance?” 12.

⁴⁴¹ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 7, 346.

⁴⁴² Raymond W. Copson, *The United States in Africa: Bush Policy and Beyond*, 110.

⁴⁴³ Helen C. Epstein, *Another Fine Mess: America, Uganda, and the War on Terror*.

⁴⁴⁴ Mike Brodo, “The Humanitarian Hypocrisy of US Counterterrorism Policies in Uganda.”

⁴⁴⁵ Mike Brodo, “Time to Cut Uganda’s Museveni Loose from Military Aid?”

⁴⁴⁶ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 332.

⁴⁴⁷ Elizabeth Schmidt, 333–34.

Washington's counterterrorism efforts, since "Instead of winning hearts and minds, US intervention tended to alienate local populations, rendering them more susceptible to the appeals of international terrorist organizations and undermining America's long-term security interests."⁴⁴⁸

Despite the aforementioned negative implications that resulted from the War on Terror paradigm being applied to the African continent, there were also some related benefits, especially in comparison to the United States' 1990s paradigm of selective convenience, which often resulted in ambivalence toward various forms of suffering. Viewing countries inflicted with economic deprivation and political chaos as breeding grounds for terrorist activity, the United States more actively engaged to mitigate these challenges, albeit sometimes unsuccessfully, especially when its preferred counterterrorism partners sat atop political systems that disregarded such concerns.⁴⁴⁹

Beyond the varying implications that followed from the double edged sword of America's War on Terror paradigm and related policies, the domestic political institutions of African countries also conditioned the implications that American policy had for them and the United States itself during this time period. Ghana's continued development of relatively capable and accountable political institutions contributed to mitigating terrorist threats and any significant negative impacts stemming from Washington's counterterrorism-obsessed approach to the country, as well as attracting advantageous American support and investment, benefiting both Ghanaian citizens and the United States. In the DRC, Washington's 1990s' ambivalence to instability was swapped for granting external legitimacy to a regime that lacked capable and accountable political institutions with the hope of curbing terrorist breeding grounds and activity.

⁴⁴⁸ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 342.

⁴⁴⁹ Elizabeth Schmidt, 333.

While Islamist terrorism remained relatively uncommon in the DRC throughout this time period, rampant conflict and corruption—driven in part by weak and unaccountable political institutions—continued to undermine the interests of Congolese citizens and the United States.

The War on Terror Paradigm in Ghana

Throughout the Bush and Obama administrations, the United States and Ghana maintained very close bilateral and economic relations, which Shai et al. (2017) characterize as a relationship rooted in mutual benefits, despite the unequal footing.⁴⁵⁰ This time period also witnessed Ghana continue on its positive political and economic trajectory: the country experienced two peaceful transfers of power from one party to the other, while GDP per capita increased from \$269 in 2001 to \$2075 in 2017.^{451 452 453} Deriving from and contributing to these successes is the existence of a highly vibrant media and civil society, which enhance democratic governance and policymaking by demanding transparency and accountability.⁴⁵⁴ Due to Ghana's political stability and thriving democracy, the United States positively engaged the country and held it up as an African role model. In addition, though counterterrorism concerns figured into this relationship, the relative lack of terrorist activity in Ghana combined with its state capacity and democratic accountability, mitigating any negative implications that might have derived from such a paradigm—as was seen in Uganda—while allowing for positive ones.

⁴⁵⁰ Kgothatso B. Shai, Rachidi Molapo, and Tholene Sodi, “The United States of America’s Post-1990 Foreign Policy Towards West Africa: The Case Study of Ghana,” 162.

⁴⁵¹ Isaac Odoom, “Dam In, Cocoa Out; Pipes In, Oil Out: China’s Engagement in Ghana’s Energy Sector,” 604.

⁴⁵² John Mukum Mbaku, “The Ghanaian Elections: 2016.”

⁴⁵³ The World Bank, “GDP per Capita Growth (Annual %) - Ghana | Data.”

⁴⁵⁴ E. Gyimah-Boadi and Theo Yakah, “Ghana: The Limits of External Democracy Assistance,” 2.

Ghana Continues Along a Path of Democracy and Development

Given Ghana's satisfactory alignment with the requirements of the Millennium Challenge Corporation, in August 2006 Ghana became one of its first beneficiaries, receiving \$547 million to spend on agriculture, transport, and rural development.⁴⁵⁵ Following Ghana's 2007 oil discovery, the United States-based Kosmos Energy began exploring and producing oil off the West African coast in 2010.⁴⁵⁶ After conducting several other free and fair elections, including the successful completion of the two turnover test⁴⁵⁷ in 2008, Ghana received additional MCC compacts to address agriculture, transport infrastructure, and energy generation.⁴⁵⁸ Ghana has simultaneously invested its own funds in providing social services and infrastructural development, whose provisioning was improved by the transparency and accountability inherent to effective democratic governance.⁴⁵⁹ In 2016, Ghana hosted a peaceful election that led to another opposition victory, essentially cementing its status as an African democratic powerhouse. That year, as well as in previous elections, the United States was heavily involved in supporting election administration and civil society monitoring, which increased citizens' trust in the contests.⁴⁶⁰

Driven by Ghana's reputation as an island of democracy and stability in Africa, the United States heavily supported its military and police given the War on Terror paradigm.⁴⁶¹ Ghana constitutes a beneficiary of the Security Governance Initiative (SGI), a partnership with the United States that strives to enhance the competence of Ghana's security sector, including

⁴⁵⁵ Jerry Joe E. K. Harrison, "Toward Sustainable Development in Ghana: The China Factor," 215.

⁴⁵⁶ Ahmed Iddris, "Post-Cold War Foreign Policy of the U.S. in West Africa: A Case Study of Ghana and Nigeria," 76.

⁴⁵⁷ The two turnover test refers to peaceful transfers of political power in which the initial ruling party is replaced by the opposition party and subsequently regains power through elections.

⁴⁵⁸ Nicolas Cook, "Ghana: Current Issues and U.S. Relations in Brief," 11.

⁴⁵⁹ E. Gyimah-Boadi and Theo Yakah, "Ghana: The Limits of External Democracy Assistance," 2.

⁴⁶⁰ Nicolas Cook, 3.

⁴⁶¹ Kgothatso B. Shai, Rachidi Molapo, and Tholene Sodi, "The United States of America's Post-1990 Foreign Policy Towards West Africa: The Case Study of Ghana," 167.

funds for border, maritime, and cyber security, as well as the administration of justice. American security engagement with Ghana not only benefited the United States in its mission to promote instability and combat terrorism but also Ghana, which has gained from the training, education, and sponsorship of its armed forces.⁴⁶² Yet it was not only in the security sector that US-Ghana relations espoused mutual benefits under the Bush and Obama administrations, though it is imperative to note that Ghana's achievements of political and economic stability and accountable democracy mitigated the potential for negative implications to arise from such a paradigm.

In a continuation of outcomes from the first post-Cold War decade, and in line with President Obama's 2009 speech in Accra that spoke of a US-Africa and US-Ghana relationship as "grounded in mutual responsibility and mutual respect," US policy toward Ghana from 2001 to 2017 bolstered Ghana's commitment to capable and accountable domestic political institutions, and thus largely effectuated mutual benefits for Ghanaians and Americans.⁴⁶³ While Ghana's capable democratic political institutions benefited Ghanaian citizens in their own right and by preventing America's terror-crazed policy from engendering negative implications, they also contributed to the country benefiting directly from American engagement. For example, Ghana's successful economy capitalized on US programs such as the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) to provide a boost to its budding manufacturing industry, especially for apparel.⁴⁶⁴

As the United States began to see the threat of unstable and weak governments as a direct threat to its security in the aftermath of 9/11, Ghana presented a unique contrast and counterweight on the continent. Because of this perception and reality, the US government and

⁴⁶² Ahmed Iddris, "Post-Cold War Foreign Policy of the U.S. in West Africa: A Case Study of Ghana and Nigeria," 82-83.

⁴⁶³ Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President to the Ghanaian Parliament."

⁴⁶⁴ Ahmed Iddris, 74.

American firms were able to capitalize on the favorable commercial climate and reap the benefits of their economic investments, especially in the medical and computing sectors.⁴⁶⁵ Though it can be argued that the War on Terror paradigm did spur additional US investment into the continent, for the most part the United States' positive implications stemming from its relations with Ghana during this period were attributed to capable and accountable domestic political institutions, which the US has undoubtedly helped uphold, both in the 1990s and the 21st century. In other words, Ghana's success allowed the United States to benefit from addressing concerns such as instability and terrorism in a level-headed manner, without falling subject to the worst possible outcomes of such a paradigm. But, despite these positive implications, including for Ghana's development, throughout this period the country still faced significant development constraints such as insufficient and inadequate infrastructure.⁴⁶⁶

The War on Terror Paradigm in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Unlike during the unipolar moment of the 1990s when the United States selectively addressed the rampant violence and instability in the DRC out of perceived convenience, the post-9/11 period and its War on Terror paradigm subsumed such instability under the looming threat of terrorism.⁴⁶⁷ In spite of peace accords ending the Second Congo War by 2003, throughout this time period conflict and instability characterized the mineral-rich Kivu provinces in eastern DRC, while the Kabila government struggled to exert control beyond Kinshasa and resorted to patronage politics over bureaucratic and accountable governance. The lack of effective state capacity was directly facilitated by the external support and legitimacy granted to

⁴⁶⁵ Nicolas Cook, "Ghana: Current Issues and U.S. Relations in Brief," 9.

⁴⁶⁶ Isaac Idun-Arkhurst, "Ghana's Relations with China," 4.

⁴⁶⁷ Alexis Arieff, "Democratic Republic of Congo: Background and U.S. Relations."

the Kabila regime by the United States, which feared instability begetting terrorism above all else.⁴⁶⁸ In addition, Rwanda and Uganda, key US counterterrorism partners, continued to foster instability in eastern DRC in order to exploit the region's resources, but given the War on Terror paradigm, the United States largely remained silent—at least in action—on such culpability. Therefore, during this period the War on Terror paradigm caused Washington to ignore and exacerbate the true roots of domestic political and security challenges, consequently undermining the interests of the Congolese people and the United States.

The War Ends, but Conflict Persists... to Mutual Detriment

Nearly immediately upon taking office, President Joseph Kabila initiated notable changes to his father's policies vis-à-vis the war; the younger Kabila promptly reopened the stalled peace negotiations, which were signed in 2002.⁴⁶⁹ Contrasting its ambivalent and isolationist approach toward the conflict prior to September 11, the United States lent support and credibility toward the peace process, promising that it would endorse Kabila overseeing a power-sharing agreement in order to convince rebel leaders to come to the table.⁴⁷⁰ In July 2003, the transitional government took office with Kabila at the helm; though rebel leaders were incorporated into the official apparatus of the government, power was effectively upheld and projected via resource- and foreign aid-backed patronage networks.^{471 472} Nonetheless, the United States heavily supported the adoption of a new constitution followed by presidential and parliamentary

⁴⁶⁸ Voice of America, "Bush, Kabila Discuss Political Stability in DRC Congo."

⁴⁶⁹ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 172.

⁴⁷⁰ Pierre Englebert, "Life Support or Assisted Suicide? Dilemmas of U.S. Policy toward the Democratic Republic of the Congo," 74.

⁴⁷¹ Elizabeth Schmidt, 172.

⁴⁷² Todd J. Moss and Danielle Resnick, *African Development: Making Sense of the Issues and Actors*, 55.

elections in 2006, the first in the country in decades.⁴⁷³ ⁴⁷⁴ Unfortunately, for the Congolese people and the United States, the elections were fraught with controversy, as violent intimidation tactics on the part of Kabila and his sycophants caused some of the opposition to boycott the vote.⁴⁷⁵ The October presidential runoff election in which Kabila emerged victorious was, however, deemed free and fair by international observers, though their motivations for granting such legitimacy could be attributed to stemming post-election instability, which continued anyway, as a result of the War on Terror paradigm.⁴⁷⁶

In eastern DRC, Rwanda and Uganda continued to take advantage of and actively facilitated political instability for their own gain, bleeding the region dry of its valuable resources, a point of continuity in Congolese history.⁴⁷⁷ Even as a January 2008 ceasefire attempted to address the ongoing conflict in the Kivus, it failed to address the underlying causes of political instability, one of which included the external backing—directly by Uganda and Rwanda, and indirectly by their sponsors—which made armed rebellion against the Congolese state appear feasible.⁴⁷⁸ But, it was not only Rwanda and Uganda who had American and international backing by way of the War on Terror paradigm.⁴⁷⁹ Kabila—though not a crucial counterterrorism partner like Kagame and Museveni in the respective aforementioned countries—recognized that Washington feared increased instability and therefore used the consequent international backing to ignore the DRC’s deep structural problems while relying on resource revenue and foreign aid to stay in power. Using his lavish funds, Kabila was able to

⁴⁷³ The Carter Center, “International Election Observation Mission to Democratic Republic of Congo 2006.”

⁴⁷⁴ Alexis Arieff, “Democratic Republic of Congo: Background and U.S. Relations,” 4.

⁴⁷⁵ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 173.

⁴⁷⁶ Elizabeth Schmidt, 173.

⁴⁷⁷ Elizabeth Schmidt, 171.

⁴⁷⁸ Elizabeth Schmidt, 175–76.

⁴⁷⁹ Elizabeth Schmidt, 179.

employ bribery and coercion to curtail the powers of the parliament and judiciary, and later rig the 2011 elections to retain power.⁴⁸⁰

When Rwanda supported the brutal, human rights-abusing M23 rebellion in eastern DRC beginning in late 2012, the United States temporarily escaped its counterterrorism tunnel vision and briefly reduced aid to the Kigali regime, but notably did not address nor sanction Rwanda's other actions that facilitated continued instability in the region.⁴⁸¹ In this instance, the public relations scorn that would have followed from the highly visible Rwandan support for the invasion forced the United States to briefly uphold its reputational interests, before reverting back to support for Rwanda, a critical counterterrorism ally.

Amid a backdrop of continued violence in eastern Congo and weak state capacity in Kinshasa, Kabila refused to hold the elections scheduled for 2016, an announcement that led to scores of protesters being killed and arrested.⁴⁸² As the Obama administration left office in 2017, the domestic situation—politically and economically—in the DRC saw few signs of improvement. Despite discarding the policy of selective convenience and ambivalence that Washington espoused in the 1990s, its replacement with the War on Terror paradigm contributed little to resolving the country's ills and often actively countered any attempts at stability, reform, and progress.⁴⁸³

The United States' counterterrorism-driven backing of Kabila effectively fostered support for the continuation of weak and unaccountable political institutions in the DRC, despite rhetoric and some actions emanating from Washington promoting the opposite.⁴⁸⁴ As a result of domestic political institutions failing to deliver and account for the wishes of its citizens, economic

⁴⁸⁰ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 177.

⁴⁸¹ Elizabeth Schmidt, 178.

⁴⁸² Elizabeth Schmidt, 180.

⁴⁸³ International Crisis Group, "Time for Concerted Action in DR Congo."

⁴⁸⁴ Voice of America, "Bush, Kabila Discuss Political Stability in DRC Congo."

outcomes and related living standards remained some of the poorest in the world. In addition, throughout the 2010s, US-trained and -financed troops in the DRC committed mass rape and other atrocities, contributing to the widespread human rights abuses that continued to plague the country's citizens.⁴⁸⁵ While clearly not entirely the fault of the United States, policymakers in Washington often did no more than verbally criticize such instances of abuse, as preventing terrorism in the country remained paramount, no matter the cost.

Not only has the United States undermined its own investment opportunities by contributing to the continuation of weak and unaccountable political institutions in the DRC, but it has also risked its ability to import critical minerals, such as cobalt. Following the September 11 attacks and the US adoption of the War on Terror paradigm, the main focus of American policy toward the DRC shifted from primarily selective humanitarian aims during the 1990s, to seeing the government in Kinshasa and the Congolese military as a potential ally in the fight against terrorism. This, in addition to the desire of the United States to maintain relations with Rwanda and Uganda, two countries with extensive nefarious involvement in the long-troubled eastern regions of the country, led to a continuous deterioration of the political and security situation. By not wanting to damage its counterterrorism alliances with the governments led by both Laurent and Joseph Kabila in Kinshasa, Paul Kagame in Kigali, and Yoweri Museveni in Kampala, the United States avoided going far beyond simply issuing rhetorical critiques and selective sanctions in the face of dreadful actions across the DRC. These counterterrorism-driven US policies have undermined its interests commercially, diplomatically, and strategically. The continued insecurity and corruption—functions of the country's weak and unaccountable political institutions—created a commercial environment that became difficult for American

⁴⁸⁵ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 343.

companies to operate in, allowing Chinese companies to have an upper hand. Therefore, as Kabila consolidated his kleptocratic power during this time period, Chinese companies increasingly cornered the mining industry, most notably the cobalt market. The pervasive corruption that characterized these deals, which will be discussed in the next chapter, harmed American economic competitiveness and allowed for closer ties between China and the DRC, a consequence that would contribute to Washington's application of a new foreign policy paradigm by 2017.

Chapter Five

Return of the Great Power Competition Paradigm

The Great Power Competition Paradigm Returns to Africa (2017-)

As the Trump administration formulated its foreign policy with great power competition—primarily with China—at the core, US policy toward Africa adopted the same paradigm.⁴⁸⁶ National Security Advisor John Bolton confirmed this approach when he unveiled the Trump administration’s official Africa policy in December 2018, nearly 23 months after inauguration day. Situating this paradigmatic shift in context, Bolton stated, “American foreign assistance was originally designed to counter the Soviet Union during the Cold War—and most recently to fight terrorism after 9/11. Today, we need to make adjustments to address the pressing challenge of great power competition and to correct past mistakes in structuring our funding” since “we are already seeing the disturbing effects of China’s quest to obtain more political, economic, and military power” in Africa.⁴⁸⁷

To date, the Biden administration has taken a slightly less China-centric approach toward Africa, regularly highlighting other components often appearing in America’s Africa policy—such as supporting economic growth and development, enhancing peace and security, addressing health challenges, and promoting good governance, democracy and human rights—but concerns with great power competition globally and on the continent remain

⁴⁸⁶ Daniel Large, *China and Africa*, 72.

⁴⁸⁷ John Bolton, “A New Africa Strategy: Expanding Economic and Security Ties on the Basis of Mutual Respect,” 4, 6.

paramount in Washington.^{488 489 490 491} As US-China competition becomes increasingly hostile and as Chinese engagement with Africa acquires new forms and depth, it is entirely plausible that the United States will swap out the red-tinted glasses for the red-stained tunnel vision of the Cold War era, a decision which would engender implications detrimental to the African and American interests that the Biden administration seeks to promote.^{492 493 494} In order to examine the potential implications on mutual interests resulting from the United States' great power competition-dominated paradigm in Africa, the chapter will proceed as follows.

In line with the previous three chapters, this chapter seeks to answer the two interrelated research questions that underpin my analytical framework and the motivation for this thesis: (1) What is the primary motivator and paradigm through which US policy toward Africa was formulated during the time period? and (2) How has this paradigm and consequent policies impacted the interests of African citizens and the United States? The chapter's introduction has begun to answer the first question, arguing that great power competition with China is the primary motivator and paradigm through which Washington currently crafts its Africa policy. However, in contrast with previous chapters which solely analyzed the realized implications for mutual interests during historical eras and paradigms, this chapter seeks to investigate how a US paradigm toward Africa adopted in 2017 could impact the interests of African citizens and the United States if the red-tinted glasses become red-stained tunnel vision, as happened during the Cold War.

⁴⁸⁸ Veda Vaidyanathan, "What Could a Non-China-Centric US Africa Policy Look Like?"

⁴⁸⁹ Statecraft Staff, "China Warns US Against Initiating Great Power Competition in Africa."

⁴⁹⁰ Nwanze, "The New Cold War Spells Trouble for Africa."

⁴⁹¹ Tomas F. Husted et al., "Sub-Saharan Africa: Key Issues and U.S. Engagement," 14–15.

⁴⁹² Daniel Large, *China and Africa*, 76.

⁴⁹³ The White House, "President Biden to Host Second U.S. - Africa Leaders Summit," 2.

⁴⁹⁴ FY2022 Budget and U.S. - Africa Relations.

As outlined in Chapter One, this thesis aims to utilize historical US-Africa policy paradigms to contextually understand and assess the potential implications of the United States' current China-centric approach to the continent. Since the Cold War paradigm was similarly motivated and defined by great power competition, the Cold War era provides valuable insight into how great power competition in Africa might negatively impact African and American interests today. However, it would be misguided to assert that the two eras are identical. Not only does China's current engagement with Africa differ from that of the Soviet Union, but the domestic realities in African countries have evolved over time as well, especially in the 26-year period between the end of the Cold War and the reemergence of great power competition as the dominant American paradigm. Therefore, following a section overviewing how an increasingly geopolitical approach and a continued economic importance to African countries characterize China's involvement in Africa since 2017 and shape diplomatic alignment, a comparison between the Cold War era and the present day—both in terms of the nature of great power engagement as well as the import of domestic factors—will be undertaken. In comparing the nature of Soviet and Chinese engagement in Africa across the two time periods, it becomes evident that modern-day China is a significantly more established geopolitical and economic player across Africa; when analyzed through the paradigm of great power competition, such a reality is especially foreboding for the mutual interests framework, as a reversion to red-stained tunnel vision could repeat the Cold War experience that negatively impacted African citizens and the United States.

However, as demonstrated in Chapters 3 and 4, domestic realities in Africa today differ significantly from the Cold War era, especially in the realm of capable and accountable institutions. If Washington policymakers ignore this lesson that such institutions foster mutual

benefits, a full blown reversion to Cold War-like red-stained tunnel vision could come to frame US policy toward Africa. As a result, any semblance of capable and accountable domestic political institutions would be destroyed, engendering severely negative consequences for Africans and the United States. In order to contextualize this possibility evolving from the current paradigm, it is imperative to provide background on China's engagement in Africa over the past few decades and how Washington has responded to date.

The Rise of China in Africa and Initial American Responses (Pre-2017)

In 1999, concurrent with its own rapid economic growth and entrance as a major power on the world stage, China embarked on a 'going global' strategy in an attempt to expand Chinese economic interests overseas, buttressed by generous backing from the Chinese state. By the turn of the century and symbolized by the first Forum of China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000, China began to figure prominently in African economies.⁴⁹⁵ Though certainly not a new actor on the continent, China's 21st century forays were far more significant and substantial, with some scholars characterizing "the rapid increase of China's economic and political involvement in Africa" as "the most momentous development on the continent of Africa since the end of the Cold War."⁴⁹⁶ China's engagement with Africa from the turn of the century to late 2012 was dominated by the economic realm, demonstrated by the skyrocketing figures in trade, loans, and investment from China to Africa, with minor reciprocity, such as in trade.⁴⁹⁷ China-Africa trade increased from \$10 billion in 2001 to \$164 billion in 2012, and slightly decreased to \$155 billion by 2017. Chinese loans to Africa increased from \$315 million in 2001 to \$11 billion in 2012, and

⁴⁹⁵ Daniel Large, *China and Africa*, 21.

⁴⁹⁶ Olayiwola Abegunrin and Charity Manyeruke, *China's Power in Africa: A New Global Order*, 1.

⁴⁹⁷ Daniel Large, 2.

stood at \$12.2 billion in 2017 (though \$29.5 billion in 2016). Chinese FDI stock increased from \$491 million in 2003 to \$21.7 billion in 2012 and \$43.3 billion in 2017.⁴⁹⁸ The uptick in Chinese lending and investment on the continent facilitated the construction of much-needed infrastructure, especially in energy generation and transportation, sectors in which Western actors have been considerably less involved.⁴⁹⁹ ⁵⁰⁰ After constituting only 15% of contract revenues in Africa's construction market in 2004, Chinese contractors accounted for 60% in 2017.⁵⁰¹ Chinese loans for infrastructure have tended to reduce high costs of production, though contracts are often tied to Chinese firms and possess opaque terms.⁵⁰²

During China's first era of engagement in Africa during the 21st century, roughly from 2000 to late 2012, economics was the focal point and American perceptions were varied and for the most part lacked any serious concern. In the mid-2000s, US policy officials were split over countering and cooperating with China in Africa, though the rhetoric of common interests certainly outweighed the abrasive competitive language.⁵⁰³ US officials even encouraged China to do more in Africa, citing the potential benefits of its support for infrastructure construction, though indicated preference for working through and with other bilateral and multilateral donors.⁵⁰⁴ In 2007, a trilateral Africa-China-US forum announced that there was "no strategic conflict" and "no zero-sum dynamic" between the United States and China, though around the same time, the Washington-based think tank, the Heritage Foundation, published a report

⁴⁹⁸ China Africa Research Initiative, "Data."

⁴⁹⁹ Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa*, 307.

⁵⁰⁰ Joshua Eisenmann and David H. Shin, *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement*, 130.

⁵⁰¹ Daniel Large, *China and Africa*, 88.

⁵⁰² Deborah Brautigam, 11.

⁵⁰³ Chris Alden, *China in Africa*, 106–7.

⁵⁰⁴ Daniel Large, 71.

promoting US competition with China in Africa given its supposed role in undermining American economic and democratic interests.^{505 506}

The Bush administration, through the end of its tenure, viewed China's activities in Africa as largely benign, though noted the mixture of benefits and costs that it brought to its African partners.⁵⁰⁷ President Bush himself declared in 2008 that "I don't view Africa as zero-sum for China and the United States."⁵⁰⁸ This is not to say that the United States did not recognize and appreciate the magnitude and import of China's engagement with Africa, as demonstrated by numerous Congressional hearings dedicated to the topic and Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazier (2005-2009) writing, "The U.S. viewed China, during my tenure ... as an important country to engage in Africa due to the scale and magnitude of its involvement on the continent."⁵⁰⁹ However, America's primary focus on the African continent during the Bush administration remained counterterrorism, a paradigm that would continue to dominate throughout the entire Obama administration as well, despite China's changing approach to Africa and Washington's growing anxieties of a new 'red menace.'

During the Obama administration, critical rhetoric on China in Africa became more pronounced, as exemplified by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's 2012 trip to the continent, in which she characterized China as an exploiter of Africa's resources.^{510 511 512} Despite this rhetoric, "the enactment of policies justified by the war on terror paradigm intensified during the Barack Obama administration."⁵¹³ With the elevation of Xi Jinping as the leader of the People's Republic

⁵⁰⁵ Daniel Large, *China and Africa*, 71.

⁵⁰⁶ Peter Brookes and Ji Hye Shin, "China's Influence in Africa: Implications for the United States."

⁵⁰⁷ Princeton Lyman, "China and the U.S. in Africa: A Strategic Competition or Opportunity for Cooperation?," 75.

⁵⁰⁸ Daniel Large, 71.

⁵⁰⁹ Jendayi E. Frazer, "Common Ground," 29.

⁵¹⁰ Daniel Large, 71.

⁵¹¹ Bugra Sari, "Africa: A Constant Battlefield of Great Power Rivalry," 86-87.

⁵¹² Smith, "Hillary Clinton Launches African Tour with Veiled Attack on China."

⁵¹³ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*, 352.

of China in late 2012, Chinese engagement toward Africa underwent a change in direction that ideologically aligned with Xi's broader foreign policy. Under Xi, politics has increasingly defined China-Africa relations, with the state playing a more active role in a geopolitically-driven foreign policy that includes economic statecraft.⁵¹⁴ Consistent with this geopolitical approach, China has pursued policies such as political party exchanges, journalist trainings, and propaganda media to bolster its image on the continent.⁵¹⁵ ⁵¹⁶ Xi's signature foreign policy initiative, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) attempts to combine China's experience in economic development with these aforementioned strategies to promote China as a positive influence and reshape global governance to reflect China's values and interests, with some success so far in Africa.⁵¹⁷ ⁵¹⁸

Whereas Chinese propaganda initiatives in Africa have largely negative implications for African and American interests, it is evident that while not without flaws (e.g., lack of transparency) and related costs, China's economic engagement with Africa has significantly contributed to economic development, especially by helping to address the troublesome infrastructure gap. In Africa, infrastructure is not simply *a* development issue, but arguably *the* development issue as "it is abundantly clear that Africa cannot develop without developing its infrastructure."⁵¹⁹ When African countries are saddled with poor infrastructure conditions, production costs increase, as well as the cost and time of transporting goods, while business uncertainty and other bottlenecks undermine export competitiveness and investment

⁵¹⁴ Daniel Large, *China and Africa*, 2–3.

⁵¹⁵ Daniel Large, 124, 126.

⁵¹⁶ Lina Benabdallah, *Shaping the Future of Power: Knowledge Production and Network-Building in China-Africa Relations*, 96.

⁵¹⁷ Daniel Large, 27.

⁵¹⁸ Mike Brodo, "Economic Statecraft, Media Influence Strategies, and the Impact on Public Perceptions of Chinese Influence in African Countries."

⁵¹⁹ Sharon T. Freeman, "52 Years after Independence," 250.

attractiveness.⁵²⁰ As such, “One of the reasons why all eyes are on China is because China is doing *‘the’* thing in Africa that matters most at this time, and it is doing it in a way that is lowering the cost and time of construction.”⁵²¹ Odoom (2015) assesses, “Given the scale of infrastructure deficit across the continent, Chinese infrastructure investments represent a vital contribution to the continent’s development” because “without roads, affordable telecommunication, and electricity, businesses in Africa cannot operate and African economies will continue to experience severe development hindrances,” and also adds that such investments are making “definite contributions to improving the lives of the continent’s people.”⁵²² Addressing a common claim vis-à-vis Chinese engagement in African infrastructural development, Odoom (2015) states, “The lack of transparency in China’s infrastructure investment does not negate the fact that such projects are crucial and make significant contributions to infrastructure development in Africa,” yet it is evident that increased transparency and accountability play major roles in conditioning the benefits of Chinese engagement for African citizens, as is demonstrated by the varying 21st century experiences of Ghana and the DRC.^{523 524}

The Rise of China in Ghana (Pre-2017)

China’s presence and involvement in Ghana dates back to its pre-independence days and especially to the reign of Kwame Nkrumah, but as is the case with Africa at large, Chinese engagement in the country—economically, politically, and culturally—has skyrocketed during

⁵²⁰ Sharon T. Freeman, “52 Years after Independence,” 253.

⁵²¹ Sharon T. Freeman, 250.

⁵²² Isaac Odoom, “Dam In, Cocoa Out; Pipes In, Oil Out: China’s Engagement in Ghana’s Energy Sector,” 603, 615.

⁵²³ Isaac Odoom, 603.

⁵²⁴ Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon’s Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa*, 21.

the 21st century.⁵²⁵ ⁵²⁶ Following the 2000 FOCAC, China began financing projects aimed at closing Ghana's infrastructure gap (both in energy and transport) and supporting its security sector, such as rehabilitating roads, and constructing barracks and telecommunications systems for security agencies.⁵²⁷ ⁵²⁸ Ghana-China trade rapidly expanded during this time period, though this section will focus on predominantly state-driven loans and investments employed to improve Ghana's infrastructure.⁵²⁹ From 2004 to 2009, China was the backer of the largest number of infrastructure projects in Ghana, one of which, a gas-fired power plant, was a pilot program of the China-Africa Development Fund, which launched in June 2007.⁵³⁰ ⁵³¹ In the same year, Ghana signed six major agreements with China that included programs to upgrade telecommunications infrastructure as well as support health and education initiatives, of which many projects included a technical assistance component to boost the skills of Ghanaian workers.⁵³² ⁵³³ One major Chinese-financed project in Ghana notable for its scope is the Bui Hydroelectric Dam, whose facilitation and benefits will be outlined next.⁵³⁴

Responding to the recurrent issue of power cuts—which caused growth in the industrial sector to decline from 9.5% in 2006 to 7.4% in 2007 and placed significant costs and expansion constraints on Coca Cola—and dependence on energy imports, in 2007 the Chinese Eximbank committed to finance the construction of the Bui Hydroelectric Dam using a resources-for-infrastructure scheme in which Ghana paid back the loans with cocoa beans,

⁵²⁵ Isaac Odoom, "Dam In, Cocoa Out; Pipes In, Oil Out: China's Engagement in Ghana's Energy Sector," 598–99, 601.

⁵²⁶ Joshua Eisenmann and David H. Shin, *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement*, 287.

⁵²⁷ Sharon T. Freeman, "52 Years after Independence," 210.

⁵²⁸ Isaac Idun-Arkhurst, "Ghana's Relations with China," 6–7.

⁵²⁹ Sharon T. Freeman, 208.

⁵³⁰ Sharon T. Freeman, 209.

⁵³¹ Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa*, 94.

⁵³² Joshua Eisenmann and David H. Shin, 288.

⁵³³ Isaac Idun-Arkhurst, "Ghana's Relations with China," 9.

⁵³⁴ Isaac Odoom, 606.

enabling Ghana to move forward on the much-needed and expensive project.^{535 536 537 538} When the sod was cut for the project, it constituted China's largest investment in Ghana and the second largest foreign direct investment in the country since the Akosombo Dam was financed in the 1960s.⁵³⁹ Upon the 400 megawatt dam's completion in 2013, electricity access, especially in rural communities, notably increased.⁵⁴⁰

Ghana, like other African countries, has faced significant development constraints given the deficiency in power generation and infrastructure. These gaps both hinder industrial operations and economic development, prompting China, driven by a win-win mentality, to heavily lend and invest in order to give rise to effective projects, especially given that Western donors have not sufficiently risen to the occasion.⁵⁴¹ Contrasting the dominant Western approach to development during this time period, Idun-Arkhurst (2008) argues that, "By helping to build productive infrastructure and expand access to new technologies, China is helping Ghana combat poverty in ways that humanitarian aid and the distribution-consumption-focused poverty alleviation strategies do not."⁵⁴²

Given the preeminence of its War on Terror paradigm during this time period, the United States was somewhat distracted by the rise of China in Ghana, but generally monitored the development with a close eye.⁵⁴³ Just as the counterterrorism paradigm's impacts were largely muted by Ghana's domestic institutional success, China's growing influence in Ghana, primarily economic but also possessing a security-component, was also conditioned by Washington's

⁵³⁵ Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa*, 175, 280.

⁵³⁶ Isaac Idun-Arkhurst, "Ghana's Relations with China," 7-8.

⁵³⁷ Kwame Adovor Tsikudo, "How the Bui Dam Set Up China's Future Engagement Strategy with Ghana."

⁵³⁸ Isaac Odoom, "Dam In, Cocoa Out; Pipes In, Oil Out: China's Engagement in Ghana's Energy Sector," 603.

⁵³⁹ Kwame Adovor Tsikudo.

⁵⁴⁰ Isaac Odoom, 606-607.

⁵⁴¹ Isaac Odoom, 604-6, 610.

⁵⁴² Isaac Idun-Arkhurst, 24.

⁵⁴³ Tom C. McCaskie, "The United States, Ghana and Oil: Global and Local Perspectives," 332.

confidence in Accra to exercise its agency. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, however, domestic institutions remained weak and corrupt after years of conflict carried on, engendering more negative consequences stemming from the War on Terror paradigm and the rise of China.

The Rise of China in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Pre-2017)

As in Ghana, China was not a newcomer to the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the dawn of the 21st century. During the Congo Crisis that epitomized the violent entry of the Cold War into post-independence Africa, China bolstered Soviet-aligned rebels, especially the Simbas.⁵⁴⁴ During the Simba rebellions, which occurred in the context of the Sino-Soviet split, China supported and supplied Mobutu, and provided arms to his regime for the duration of his tenure.⁵⁴⁵ Upon seizing power in 1997, Laurent Kabila visited China, indicative of Beijing's import; the year after Joseph Kabila took over for his father, he too visited Beijing. By 2003, China had become involved in the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC, but had yet to escalate its economic involvement, likely due to the challenges posed by the civil wars, which peacekeeping missions sought to mitigate.⁵⁴⁶ In the coming years, though peacekeeping engagement remained, economics came to dominate China's engagement with Kinshasa. Between 2005 and 2017, the DRC constituted the top Chinese FDI destination in Africa.⁵⁴⁷ In 2007, the two countries' economic relationship took off, with China supplementing its increased investment and trade with massive infrastructure loans, most notably the Sicomines agreement.⁵⁴⁸

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⁵⁴⁴ Joshua Eisenmann and David H. Shin, *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement*, 290–91.

⁵⁴⁵ Joshua Eisenmann and David H. Shin, 166–67.

⁵⁴⁶ Joshua Eisenmann and David H. Shin, 292.

⁵⁴⁷ Olayiwola Abegunrin and Charity Manyeruke, *China's Power in Africa: A New Global Order*, 71.

⁵⁴⁸ Alexis Arieff, "Democratic Republic of Congo: Background and U.S. Relations," 14.

⁵⁴⁹ Johanna Malm, "'China-Powered' African Agency and Its Limits: The Case of the DRC 2007-2019," 4.

The 2007 Sicomines Agreement and Beyond: Infrastructure, Mining, and Corruption

Upon its signing in 2007, the \$9 billion⁵⁵⁰ Sicomines agreement between the DRC and China was the single largest loan that China had proffered on the continent.^{551 552} Kabila's advisors and allies along with the top executives of the Congolese state-controlled mining giant, Gécamines, conceived of the agreement, which involved creating a consortium between Gécamines, China Railway Group Limited (the world's largest construction company by revenue), Sinohydro (China's largest energy company), and Zhejiang Huayou Cobalt.⁵⁵³ In exchange for mining titles, the Chinese partners agreed to provide infrastructure and social services, such as roads, hydroelectric dams, hospitals, and schools. Similar to Ghana's use of cocoa to ensure loan repayment, the Sicomines deal allowed the involved Chinese companies to extract a substantial amount of the DRC's mineral reserves and stand exempt from any related taxation.⁵⁵⁴

From the outset of negotiations, it was evident that despite being Congolese-proposed, the deal would not extract the maximum possible benefit for the vast majority of the Congolese people. Given the (neo)patrimonial nature of Kabila's regime, decision-making on the Congolese side rested upon Kabila's handpicked cadres. Building upon *guanxi*—a system of beliefs in Chinese culture that shapes how reciprocity is built through personal ties and mutual obligations—the highly personalized exchanges between Congolese and Chinese officials allowed for eased negotiations, but eliminated much need for transparency and accountability. The Congolese Parliament claimed that it had not been involved nor informed of the project, which became criticized for violating the DRC's Mining Code for offering presidentially-rooted

⁵⁵⁰ The loan was subsequently reduced to \$6 billion to appease Western creditors (HIPC).

⁵⁵¹ Paul Nantulya, "Guānxi: Power, Networking, and Influence in China-Africa Relations."

⁵⁵² Joshua Eisenmann and David H. Shin, *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement*, 293.

⁵⁵³ Paul Nantulya.

⁵⁵⁴ Joshua Eisenmann and David H. Shin, 293.

special tax arrangements.⁵⁵⁵ At the time, the World Bank and IMF lambasted the Sicomines agreement for lacking transparency and warned that the DRC might only benefit in the short-term.⁵⁵⁶ A landmark 2021 report entitled, “The Backchannel: State Capture and Bribery in Congo’s Deal of the Century”⁵⁵⁷ from the investigative, anti-corruption organization, the Sentry, confirmed some of these fears that stemmed from the (neo)patrimonial, kleptocratic, and opaque nature of the Congolese government. The report exposed a previously discrete amendment of the Sicomines deal that increased the portion of profits that Chinese shareholders would receive, replacing an original agreement that stipulated that all mining profits would be reinvested in local infrastructure. Such an amendment did not bother the Kabila-tied elites negotiating the deal, since Congolese citizens stood to lose from the redirected profits. Quite the contrary, Kabila’s patronage network benefited from the agreement, as the report documents that between 2013 and 2018, Sicomines redirected \$65 million through a Kabila-allied intermediary, after which the funds were redistributed to professional and family contacts of the then-president. As of early 2022, \$40 million of the project's funds remained missing.⁵⁵⁸

Shortly after the Sicomines agreement was signed, the DRC separately awarded a China Railway subsidiary with a no-bid contract to rebuild its main export and import road routes, including a key mining highway, and proposed that tolls would pay for the future upkeep. The rapidly-constructed roads became a boon for the Congolese economy—at least for some people—as copper and cobalt exports exploded. Simultaneously, from 2010 through the end of Kabila’s presidency in early 2019, a large portion of the \$757 million in tolls collected vanished, and less than one-fifth of maintenance spending was being carried out, threatening the long-term

⁵⁵⁵ Paul Nantulya, “Guānxì: Power, Networking, and Influence in China-Africa Relations.”

⁵⁵⁶ Joshua Eisenmann and David H. Shin, *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement*, 293.

⁵⁵⁷ The Sentry, “The Backchannel: State Capture and Bribery in Congo’s Deal of the Century.”

⁵⁵⁸ Matthew Teasdale, “China and the DRC.”

viability of the roads. Through overbilling and embezzlement, a cut of the tolls flowed directly to Kabila, his family, and his patronage network.⁵⁵⁹

These two corruption scandals exemplify the poignant assessment made by Taylor (2009), who wrote, “In some African countries, predatory elites at the apex of neopatrimonial regimes, unconcerned with promoting development, will forfeit the chance to make the most of renewed Chinese interest in Africa.”⁵⁶⁰ Writing in 2009 and therefore unaware of the aforementioned scandals to come, Taylor imparted a harsh assessment on the Kabila regime vis-à-vis its dealings with China, arguing “the DRC stood to benefit when cobalt became very commercially attractive, but for the most part, the rock is simply bagged and driven out of the country, ensuring the smallest possible benefit to the local economy” since “The reality is, the authorities in the Congo are not interested in how cobalt mining benefits the local economy. They are only interested in what they can take in bribes. It is easier to count sacks of rock at the border and work out how many dollars you can cream off per bag.”⁵⁶¹ Yet it would be misleading to state that Chinese economic engagement in the DRC during this period solely benefited Kabila-allied elites; though they certainly were the primary Congolese beneficiaries, Congolese citizens benefited from substantial improvements in infrastructure, especially in the transportation and telecommunications sectors.⁵⁶² Chinese telecoms companies ZTE, Huawei, and China International Telecommunication all launched large projects in the DRC, providing relatively accessible mobile phones and cellular connectivity to Congolese citizens.⁵⁶³

Because the United States was primarily occupied with counterterrorism and related stability concerns in the DRC during the Bush and Obama administrations, Chinese forays into

⁵⁵⁹ William Clowes and Michael J. Kavanaugh, “China Built Congo a Toll Road That Led Straight to the Ruling Family.”

⁵⁶⁰ Ian Taylor, *China's New Role in Africa*, 182-183.

⁵⁶¹ Ian Taylor, 182.

⁵⁶² Joshua Eisenmann and David H. Shin, *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement*, 293.

⁵⁶³ Joshua Eisenmann and David H. Shin, 293.

the mineral-rich country did not elicit a boisterous response from Washington. Certainly some US officials were displeased with the unfair awarding of mining contracts to Chinese firms that disregarded corruption on the part of Congolese officials and undermined American competitiveness, but full-throated condemnation of Beijing had not yet come to the fore by the beginning of 2017.⁵⁶⁴ The lack of fire-breathing rhetoric considered, US officials still declined to partner with China on a \$12 billion dam project in the DRC after being approached by Beijing in 2013.⁵⁶⁵

If infrastructure development was the benefit of Chinese engagement in the DRC from the turn of the century to 2017, then China's (partially corruption-driven) growing dominance of the Congolese mining industry was a consequence.⁵⁶⁶ Having already been a major investor in the copper and cobalt sectors by 2012, Chinese state-backed corporations effectively began to corner the market after a 2015-2016 commodity price crash forced Western firms to divest their assets, often to these Chinese corporations.^{567 568 569} As the Trump administration entered the White House in 2017, this trend of Chinese domination of the Congolese mining sector continually exacerbated alongside major shifts in Chinese foreign policy that would set the stage for the country at the heart of Africa to again become the setting of great power competition, this time a brewing rivalry between Washington and Beijing.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁴ Cyrille Mabiata Nazobo, "Patterned Dynamism: US Policy Securing Strategic, Humanitarian and Economic Interests in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 1996-2016," 23-24, 199-200.

⁵⁶⁵ Geoff Dyer, "Beijing Invites US to Link Up Over Africa."

⁵⁶⁶ William Clowes and Michael J. Kavanaugh, "China Built Congo a Toll Road That Led Straight to the Ruling Family."

⁵⁶⁷ Joshua Eisenmann and David H. Shin, *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement*, 292.

⁵⁶⁸ Alexis Arieff, "Democratic Republic of Congo: Background and U.S. Relations," 14.

⁵⁶⁹ Eric Lipton and Dionne Searcey, "How the U.S. Lost Ground to China in the Contest for Clean Energy."

⁵⁷⁰ Eric Lipton and Dionne Searcey.

The Road to Sino-American Great Power Competition in Africa

During the George W. Bush and Obama administrations, the War on Terror paradigm remained paramount in America's relations with Africa, and therefore the simultaneous rise of China took a backseat to America's concern with counterterrorism during this period. However, in the final years of the Obama administration, China's Africa policy became more overtly political and more aligned with Xi's goal of promoting greater Chinese centrality in world affairs, a key component of achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.^{571 572} Rather than solely being the setting of economic opportunity for Beijing, Africa increasingly constituted a critical landscape to serve "China's ambitions as a major power pursuing a vision of future global leadership."⁵⁷³ China's aspirations to global leadership, which would necessitate the overthrow of the Western-dominated liberal international order, sounded sirens in Washington, causing a gradual pivot toward China as a strategic priority and competitor. As the next section demonstrates, US policy toward Africa would become influenced by the return of great power competition, while China's increasingly militarized, political, economic, and diplomatic endeavors on the continent fostered the potential to facilitate Washington's reversion to red-stained tunnel vision, whose application during the Cold War negatively impacted the interests of African countries and the United States.⁵⁷⁴

Security Becomes a China-Africa Pillar

In 2017, China commissioned a military base in Djibouti, its first on the African continent, sending a signal that Beijing's engagement with Africa under Xi would not simply

⁵⁷¹ Daniel Large, *China and Africa*, 5, 46.

⁵⁷² Nadège Rolland, "A New Great Game?: Situating Africa in China's Strategic Thinking," 26.

⁵⁷³ Daniel Large, 11.

⁵⁷⁴ Daniel Large, 72.

mirror the predominantly economic engagement of the past two decades.⁵⁷⁵ Five years earlier when Xi came to power, security was a largely absent aspect of China-Africa relations; by 2017, however, security had become a fundamental and growing pillar of China's approach to Africa.⁵⁷⁶ To date, China's military engagement in Africa remains small, especially in comparison to that of the United States, but is continually growing, notably in the form of professionalization trainings offered to African militaries.^{577 578 579} By undertaking formalized security engagement, Beijing is able to promote its desired diplomatic image as a responsible power committed to global peace.⁵⁸⁰ Through its security trainings, Beijing is able to diffuse authoritarian norms that foster less accountable militaries and governments, which are easier for Beijing to influence.⁵⁸¹ However, the budding Chinese security engagement is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to deploying a more politically-driven foreign policy in Africa.

Beijing's Growing Political Influence Strategies in Africa

CCP-sponsored training programs and scholarships represent a growing component of Chinese engagement with Africa over the past five years.⁵⁸² These programs target and include a wide range of African participants, such as politicians, journalists, and students.⁵⁸³ Similar to China's security training programs, the goal is to spread the Chinese model of governance to Africa, not because there exists any ideological impetus for its own sake, but rather as a means of

⁵⁷⁵ Daniel Large, *China and Africa*, 175.

⁵⁷⁶ Daniel Large, 199.

⁵⁷⁷ Daniel Large, 203.

⁵⁷⁸ Lina Benabdallah, *Shaping the Future of Power: Knowledge Production and Network-Building in China-Africa Relations*, 69.

⁵⁷⁹ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, "Chapter 1, Section 3: China's Strategic Aims in Africa (from: 2020 U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Annual Report to Congress)," 169.

⁵⁸⁰ Daniel Large, 174.

⁵⁸¹ Caitlin Dearing Scott, "Does China's Involvement in African Elections and Politics Hurt Democracy?"

⁵⁸² Lina Benabdallah, 6–7.

⁵⁸³ Daniel Large, 123.

detering criticism of the Chinese regime and fostering authoritarian governments that are more malleable to Chinese influence.^{584 585}

The CCP's party training program is the primary mechanism deployed by Beijing to promote its ideology of authoritarian governance in Africa. Through this training program, Beijing seeks to train African political parties to emulate the Chinese one-party system of governance and prevent large-scale democratization and liberalization.⁵⁸⁶ In African countries where democracy is more entrenched, China has recently begun engaging with opposition parties and civil society organizations as well, in an attempt to undermine the democratic processes that keep its political engagement in check.⁵⁸⁷ On a few occasions, Beijing has even interfered in African elections by shoring up political parties that prioritize engagement with China, even if the party in question is not ideologically aligned with the CCP.^{588 589}

Chinese professionalization trainings targeting African journalists, the “painters of China’s image in Africa,” have similar political motives.⁵⁹⁰ Surely African participants do benefit from some of the hard skills involved in the trainings, but they simultaneously are exposed to authoritarian journalistic practices—such as avoiding criticism of the government—and a content component that teaches them how to report on topics which Beijing deems sensitive (e.g., Taiwan, Xinjiang).^{591 592} As a result, when African journalists return home from these trainings, they not only possess a more positive view of China and its political system, but also integrate

⁵⁸⁴ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, “Chapter 1, Section 3: China’s Strategic Aims in Africa (from: 2020 U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Annual Report to Congress),” 143.

⁵⁸⁵ Implications of China’s Presence and Investment in Africa, 7.

⁵⁸⁶ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 144.

⁵⁸⁷ Daniel Large, *China and Africa*, 130.

⁵⁸⁸ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 150.

⁵⁸⁹ Glenn Tiffert and Oliver McPherson-Smith, “China’s Sharp Power in Africa: A Handbook for Building National Resilience,” 3–4.

⁵⁹⁰ Lina Benabdallah, *Shaping the Future of Power: Knowledge Production and Network-Building in China-Africa Relations*, 105.

⁵⁹¹ Glenn Tiffert and Oliver McPherson-Smith, 19.

⁵⁹² Lina Benabdallah, 139.

authoritarian journalistic practices into their own reporting, meaning that critical accountability of the Chinese government and their own is often muted, to the detriment of African publics.⁵⁹³

Confucius Institutes, though officially learning centers for Chinese language and culture, are the primary forum through which Beijing controls the narrative presented to African students. Similar to the journalist trainings, Confucius Institutes—which have grown in number from one to 53 in Africa between 2005 and 2019—censor discussions on topics sensitive to the CCP.⁵⁹⁴ In addition to deploying the networked relations of *guanxi* through the aforementioned trainings or educational programs, China also takes advantage of the economic demands and shortcomings of African countries for political gain, most perniciously through the media and telecommunications infrastructure.

A 2019 *Foreign Policy* article entitled, “In Africa, China Is the News” succinctly reflects Beijing’s sharp power⁵⁹⁵ forays into African media, a cause for alarm in Washington.⁵⁹⁶ While China’s state media maintains a presence in Africa on a variety of platforms, they all receive minimal viewership and thus do not significantly alter the African media landscape.⁵⁹⁷ Chinese media investments and content licensing agreements with African outlets, however, are far less transparent and more likely to damage the free-flowing dissemination of information on the continent.⁵⁹⁸ Through these investments and licensing agreements, Chinese state media, most notably Xinhua, provide free content to oft-economically struggling African outlets. The

⁵⁹³ Lina Benabdallah, *Shaping the Future of Power: Knowledge Production and Network-Building in China-Africa Relations*, 15.

⁵⁹⁴ Jianli Yang, “China’s ‘Soft Power’ in Africa Has Hard Edges.”

⁵⁹⁵ National Endowment for Democracy, “Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence.”

‘Sharp power’, a term coined by Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig in a report for the National Endowment for Democracy, refers to authoritarian influence efforts in young and vulnerable democracies being “sharp” in the sense that they pierce, penetrate, or perforate the information and political environments in the targeted countries, in contrast to simply seeking to “win hearts and minds,” the common frame of reference for “soft power” efforts. Sharp power involves seeking to influence target audiences by manipulating or distorting the information that reaches them.

⁵⁹⁶ Aubrey Hruby, “In Africa, China Is the News.”

⁵⁹⁷ Daniel Large, *China and Africa*, 124.

⁵⁹⁸ Aubrey Hruby.

provided content inevitably paints China in a positive light and avoids critical criticism of Chinese practices that are essential to informing democratic accountability.⁵⁹⁹ These arrangements, which Benabdallah (2020) characterizes as “giv[ing] Chinese actors censorship and silencing capabilities in African outlets” are especially problematic for African media when there is no indication that the content provided is sourced from Chinese state media and that Chinese investors are shaping the journalistic practices of the local outlet.^{600 601} Despite the fact that the media environment in Africa is underdeveloped and underfunded, which actually provides Beijing an opening to secure such content and investment arrangements, it is fundamental in shaping African views on foreign policy and governance issues.⁶⁰²

To achieve its political goal of shaping African media and telecommunications, Beijing also takes advantage of the underdeveloped nature of Africa’s television and telecoms infrastructure, just as it has taken advantage of various underfunded African media outlets. The digital television provider, StarTimes, which is partially owned by China’s Development Bank, offers affordable cable packages to middle class consumers across the continent.⁶⁰³ By undercutting other television providers, StarTimes is able to corner the market and control the content accessible to millions of African consumers.⁶⁰⁴ Though StarTimes does offer more Western-oriented channels, these come at a premium in comparison to more China-friendly channels included in basic subscription packages.⁶⁰⁵ China’s dominance of the African

⁵⁹⁹ Aubrey Hruby, “In Africa, China Is the News.”

⁶⁰⁰ Lina Benabdallah, *Shaping the Future of Power: Knowledge Production and Network-Building in China-Africa Relations*, 91.

⁶⁰¹ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, “Chapter 1, Section 3: China’s Strategic Aims in Africa (from: 2020 U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Annual Report to Congress),” 152.

⁶⁰² U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 151.

⁶⁰³ Aubrey Hruby.

⁶⁰⁴ Glenn Tiffert and Oliver McPherson-Smith, “China’s Sharp Power in Africa: A Handbook for Building National Resilience,” 21.

⁶⁰⁵ Edem Selormey, Ukertor Gabriel Moti, and William Davison, “Global Thought Work: Case Studies on PRC Influence in Africa’s Information Space,” 32.

telecommunications sector, similar to its dominance of the infrastructure sector, allows China to promote a positive image of itself as contributing to African development. Beyond constituting a missed economic opportunity for American firms and a contributor to Africa's Beijing-aligned diplomatic stances, which will be addressed shortly, these Chinese telecoms firms generate security concerns that Washington policymakers invariably lament. The services provided by Huawei and ZTE, which dominate the construction of 4G and more recently 5G networks across the continent, are prone to bugging and data sharing with the Chinese government, which China has similarly undertaken in its construction of African government buildings.^{606 607}

Seizing the opportunities presented by underdeveloped and underfunded African politicians, journalists/media outlets, students, and telecommunications infrastructure, China has recently deployed numerous sharp power strategies to increase positive perceptions of its influence and promote authoritarian tendencies and sympathies in African countries, making them more malleable to Beijing's influence amid the growing great power competition with the United States. However, it is not simply sharp power strategies that are generating such perceptions, but also continued economic investments, especially in infrastructure, which often benefit African societies.

China's Infrastructure-Centric Economic Import to Africa Shows No Signs of Abating

Since 2017, Chinese economic engagement has slowed its rapid growth, yet its import to African economies remains paramount.⁶⁰⁸ China-Africa trade grew at a slow pace from \$155 billion in 2017 to \$176 billion in 2020, Chinese loans to Africa decreased from \$12.2 billion in

⁶⁰⁶ Looking Forward: U.S.-Africa Relations, 43.

⁶⁰⁷ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, "Chapter 1, Section 3: China's Strategic Aims in Africa (from: 2020 U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Annual Report to Congress)," 166.

⁶⁰⁸ Daniel Large, *China and Africa*, 215.

2017 to \$7.6 billion in 2019, while Chinese FDI stock from 2017 to 2020 remained consistent in the \$43 billion-\$46 billion range, just shy of US FDI figures.⁶⁰⁹ Most notably, China's role in Africa's infrastructure construction, the dearth of which remains a key inhibitor of African growth and development, continues to be of crucial importance. In 2018, Chinese commitments to African infrastructure projects—worth \$25.7 billion—were second only to those of African national governments (\$35.7 billion).⁶¹⁰ A 2020 estimate determined that China accounted for 31% of all construction projects in Africa worth \$50 million or more during that year, demonstrating that China's contribution in this sector is critical.⁶¹¹ China's economic importance, though serving mutual economic interests, also provides Beijing a leverage point for political and diplomatic purposes, which could contribute to a flashpoint with the United States.

African Diplomatic Alignment: A Flashpoint?

Buoyed by its networked connections (*guanxi*), sharp power strategies, and economic import, China has been able to bolster its credibility among African states and consequently receive critical African diplomatic support on key issues, such as the South China Sea, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong.⁶¹² ⁶¹³ African diplomatic support has also proven quite important in allowing China to attain leadership positions in UN bodies, an additional avenue through which Beijing can shape global norms to the detriment of American hegemony.⁶¹⁴ A consequence of China's more recently deployed political agenda in Africa, American concerns with the continent's diplomatic alignment—which is predominantly pro- or at least not anti-Chinese—harken back to

⁶⁰⁹ China Africa Research Initiative, “Data: China-Africa.”

⁶¹⁰ Daniel Large, *China and Africa*, 91.

⁶¹¹ Charles Kenny, “Why Is China Building So Much in Africa?”

⁶¹² Implications of China's Presence and Investment in Africa, 9.

⁶¹³ Daniel Large, 48.

⁶¹⁴ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, “Chapter 1, Section 3: China's Strategic Aims in Africa (from: 2020 U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Annual Report to Congress),” 148.

the Cold War era.⁶¹⁵ In a 2018 Congressional testimony, Yun Sun, the director of the Stimson Center's China Program, warned of these consequences, stating, "In the context of the great power competition, the support China rallies from African countries greatly enhances China's ability to effectively compete with the United States over the legitimacy, credibility, and capability of the new model of international relations that China advocates for."⁶¹⁶ In an era characterized by growing American concern with its maintenance of the liberal international order that facilitates its global hegemony, Africa's recruitment into China's sphere of influence could engender a reversion to the Cold War paradigm on the continent, especially since China is a more widely and deeply established actor in Africa than the Soviet Union ever was. While this comparison to the Cold War could generate American support for an approach solely focused on undermining Chinese forays in Africa, taking stock of the Cold War paradigm's impact on domestic political institutions and how such institutions have impacted mutual interests both during that period and since, shines light on the importance of avoiding such an approach.

Great Power Competition in Africa: The Cold War vs. Today

In 2005, while Washington was distracted by its War on Terror Paradigm, Congressman Donald Payne announced to the House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights, and International Operations that in Africa, the "engagement of China and the U.S. has begun to resemble a competition for resources and influence that has the potential to result in an ugly dynamic akin to that created by the Soviet Union and the U.S. during the Cold War."⁶¹⁷ During that time period, when Beijing was primarily concerned with economic ends and when Washington and Beijing showed some desire to cooperate across issue areas, it was not evident

⁶¹⁵ Carla D. Jones, Hermann A. Ndofor, and Mengge Li, "Chinese Economic Engagement in Africa."

⁶¹⁶ Implications of China's Presence and Investment in Africa, 9.

⁶¹⁷ Earl Conteh-Morgan, "The United States and China: Strategic Rivalry in Africa," 48.

that a cold war had returned to Africa. But, the story of China and the United States in Africa today paints a vastly different picture, albeit not one equivalent to the Cold War era.

Despite possessing differences in the form and scope of their engagement with Africa, the Soviet Union during the Cold War and China today have both been motivated at least in part by great power competition with the United States. Radu and Klinghoffer (1991) write, “The superpower competition thus lies at the heart of Soviet strategy,” whereas Nadège Rolland’s 2021 report maintains that “Chinese strategists evidently envisage the continent as an essential piece in an escalating geostrategic contest for global influence between China and the U.S.-led West.”^{618 619} Further, in her systematic analysis of Chinese policy papers on Africa, Rolland confirms the import of African diplomatic alignment to Beijing’s global strategy, highlighting that “When Chinese scholars cited in this report write on China’s Africa strategy, they frequently use the image of a ‘great game’ (da qiju) and its related metaphors of ‘chess pieces’ (qizi) or ‘game rounds’ (boyi)” which suggests that “Chinese strategists clearly see African countries as crucial pieces in an intensifying contest with China’s archrival, the United States.”⁶²⁰ Though it is not yet evident that the United States primarily views African countries through this great power competition tunnel vision, as it did during the Cold War, Beijing’s adoption of this approach, especially amid its rising global status that threatens American hegemony, could cause Washington to dangerously revert to such a paradigm.

The differences in scope and form vis-à-vis Soviet and Chinese engagement in Africa do not bode well for avoiding Washington’s potential adoption of the red-stained tunnel vision paradigm either, as Beijing is a more powerful and influential competitor whose African engagement is not confined by regime type. As demonstrated in the previous and current

⁶¹⁸ Michael Radu and Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, *The Dynamics of Soviet Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 110.

⁶¹⁹ Nadège Rolland, “A New Great Game?: Situating Africa in China’s Strategic Thinking,” 2.

⁶²⁰ Nadège Rolland, 24.

chapters, China's economic prowess allows it to economically engage with Africa with scope far outstripping that of the Soviet Union, to the benefit of African countries.^{621 622} This economic engagement contributes to Chinese soft power and diplomatic alignment across the continent, contrasting with the assessment of the Soviet Union which proffered that its "greatest vulnerability was its lack of soft power."⁶²³ Beijing's deployment of sharp power regardless of African regime type reflects the difference in form with Soviet engagement. For much of the Cold War, the Soviet Union sought to engage primarily with sympathetic left-wing regimes in order to support the global struggle for communism, and only engaged with other regimes when there was an explicit benefit to the Soviet economy.⁶²⁴ In contrast, Beijing's greater economic prowess allows it to expand beyond cultivating a few elites in sympathetic countries, which aligns with its goal of "seek[ing] to outflank the U.S. by mobilizing African endorsement of China's distinctive institutions and governing ideology" for geopolitical gain.^{625 626} By building partnerships with African countries that do not currently share ideological similarities with the CCP, China constitutes a greater geopolitical challenge to American interests on the continent and the world than the Soviet Union ever did.⁶²⁷

Barnett (2020) characterizes these aforementioned comparisons which stipulate that Beijing constitutes a greater threat than Moscow during the Cold War, writing,

The PRC has managed to secure an impressive degree of influence across Africa over the past 20 years, and not simply due to the loans that it has dispensed. It has also been Beijing's willingness to work with all varieties of African regimes, from democracies to authoritarian states, left-wing and conservative governments, entrenched regimes and

⁶²¹ James Barnett, "The 'China Dream' and the African Reality: The Role of Ideology in PRC-Africa Relations," 37.

⁶²² Daniel Large, *China and Africa*, 215.

⁶²³ Matthew Kroenig, *The Return of Great Power Rivalry: Democracy Versus Autocracy from the Ancient World to the U.S. and China*, 151.

⁶²⁴ Colin W. Lawson, "Soviet Economic Aid to Africa," 505.

⁶²⁵ Nadège Rolland, "A New Great Game?: Situating Africa in China's Strategic Thinking," 2.

⁶²⁶ James Barnett, 9.

⁶²⁷ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, "Chapter 1, Section 3: China's Strategic Aims in Africa (from: 2020 U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Annual Report to Congress)," 169.

those new to power (including those who came to power by force), that has facilitated smooth Sino-African relations.⁶²⁸

While on one hand China's courtship of African regimes regardless of ideology constitutes a greater challenge to US influence on the continent and globally, especially because the scope of Chinese engagement far outstrips that of the Soviet Union and even the United States today, it is misguided to assume that the capacity and accountability of these African regimes are equivalent to the Cold War era.⁶²⁹ As demonstrated by the two preceding chapters, the ramifications of US foreign policy in Africa were conditioned by the capacity and accountability of the African government in question; where capacity and accountability were stronger, such as in Ghana, domestic and US interests were generally achieved, but where capacity and accountability were weaker, such as in the DRC, domestic and US interests were often undermined. If Washington policymakers recognize this importance of capable and accountable domestic political institutions, then they should realize that despite geopolitical realities indicating a greater threat than that of the Soviet Union, the reversion to red-stained tunnel vision would only undermine African interests as well as its own, as the Cold War experience vividly demonstrated.

The Sino-American Dynamic in Ghana Since 2017

Over the past five years, as Ghana has continued to entrench its economic growth, political stability, and democracy, it has remained a key US partner in the region.⁶³⁰ Despite the reemergence of the great power competition paradigm, US policy toward Ghana has avoided becoming overtly one-dimensional. Nonetheless, Washington's incessant rhetorical critique of Chinese engagement with the country without offering comparable economic terms has the

⁶²⁸ James Barnett, "The 'China Dream' and the African Reality: The Role of Ideology in PRC-Africa Relations," 15.

⁶²⁹ Implications of China's Presence and Investment in Africa, 19.

⁶³⁰ Nicolas Cook, "Ghana: Current Issues and U.S. Relations in Brief."

potential to significantly undermine American diplomatic and public relations interests. With respect to economics, some analysts argue that the great power competition paradigm could spur US engagement and investment into Ghana, to the benefit of Ghanaian and American interests. However, applying such a one-dimensional paradigm still risks undermining accountable political institutions and witnessing a return of the Cold War-era consequences that stemmed from related actions.

In an Afrobarometer survey conducted in Ghana in 2019, 56% of respondents indicated that they held a positive view of US influence in the country, whereas the same question asked regarding Chinese influence received 48% positive responses, significantly up from the 34% positive rating indicated in a survey five years earlier.⁶³¹ In the same 2019 survey, Ghanaians indicated that infrastructure constituted the most important problem facing the country that the government ought to address. Given its alignment with domestic priorities, China's implementation of numerous successful infrastructure projects in Ghana is paying off diplomatically for the Chinese, not only among the public but also among political elites.⁶³² Since 2016, both major political parties in Ghana have participated in party-to-party exchanges with the CCP and under the current Akuffo-Addo administration, which took office in January 2017, Sino-Ghanaian relations have developed rapidly, paving the way for Ghana's gaining membership in China's Belt and Road Initiative in 2018.⁶³³ ⁶³⁴ The Ghanaian government has explicitly labeled China as an important partner precisely for its role in helping it achieve economic development objectives, especially in infrastructure, which has had positive impacts

⁶³¹ Josephine Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny and Edem Selormey, "Africans Welcome China's Influence but Maintain Democratic Aspirations," 9–10.

⁶³² Edem Selormey, Ukertor Gabriel Moti, and William Davison, "Global Thought Work: Case Studies on PRC Influence in Africa's Information Space," 33.

⁶³³ Lina Benabdallah, *Shaping the Future of Power: Knowledge Production and Network-Building in China-Africa Relations*, 35.

⁶³⁴ Edem Selormey, 26.

on Ghanaian livelihoods.⁶³⁵ ⁶³⁶ Ghana's opening of a consulate in Guangzhou in 2019 offers additional evidence of the economically-driven diplomatic importance of China to the Accra government.⁶³⁷ During the same time period, the United States has maintained economic engagement in Ghana, one of its more significant economic partners on the continent, though in aggregate such figures dwarf in comparison to Chinese trade, loans, and investment combined.⁶³⁸ ⁶³⁹ The stark differences in economic import cause Washington's great power competition-driven lambasting of Chinese engagement in Ghana to fall on deaf ears both among Ghanaian political elites and the general populace, which could increasingly undermine US public perception in Ghana and foster increased diplomatic alignment between Accra and Beijing. As Sino-Ghanaian ties strengthen, Washington might be tempted to dust off the Cold War playbook, not realizing that applying such a paradigm would only make matters worse—for Ghanaians and Americans—as was the case only a few decades ago.

As outlined in Chapter Two, Washington's Cold War approach to Ghana in the 1960s contributed to the US-supported overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah, the effects of which would engender a variety of negative implications for the mutual interests objective. By precipitating the coup, the United States triggered decades of political instability in Ghana. Consequently, the Ghanaian people became subject to human and civil rights violations as well as a struggling economy that negatively impacted their livelihoods. For the United States, such political instability created an opportunity cost for US economic interests and facilitated flip-flopping geopolitical alignment with each fleeting regime. If the United States were to apply the same

⁶³⁵ Edem Selormey, Ukertor Gabriel Moti, and William Davison, "Global Thought Work: Case Studies on PRC Influence in Africa's Information Space," 28.

⁶³⁶ Keyi Tang and Yingjiao Shen, "Do China-Financed Dams in Sub-Saharan Africa Improve the Region's Social Welfare? A Case Study of the Impacts of Ghana's Bui Dam," 1.

⁶³⁷ Daniel Large, *China and Africa*, 152.

⁶³⁸ China Africa Research Initiative, "Data: China-Africa."

⁶³⁹ Office of the United States Trade Representative, "Ghana."

red-stained tunnel vision to its approach to Ghana today, similar implications would follow. Washington would benefit by recognizing what is significantly different in Ghana today—capable and accountable political institutions—and understand its benefits to Ghanaian and American interests amid noteworthy and potentially positive Chinese engagement.

The Role of Accountability in Sino-Ghanaian Relations

As Sino-Ghanaian ties have blossomed over the past two decades, and especially over the past five years, public accountability has played a central role in monitoring the engagement. The accountability demanded and pushback received from the political opposition and civil society actors with respect to the 2018 bauxite deal, officially dubbed the ‘Master Project Support Agreement,’ is a case in point.⁶⁴⁰ The terms of the agreement stipulated that the Chinese company Sinohydro would build \$2 billion worth of infrastructure—predominantly roads and bridges—in exchange for a 5% stake in Ghana’s bauxite reserves.⁶⁴¹ ⁶⁴² In order to develop greater sources of income to service the resource-backed loan, the Ghanaian government bypassed environmental protection procedures, raising the potential that the delicate ecosystems in the Atewa rainforest would be damaged and drinking water polluted.⁶⁴³ In response, environmentally-conscious Ghanaian NGOs in 2020 filed a High Court complaint that claimed the environmental consequences violated constitutional rights to a clean and healthy environment.⁶⁴⁴ ⁶⁴⁵ As of this writing, the court has yet to reach a decision, though the ability of civil society to utilize the judicial system and the media to hold the executive branch accountable

⁶⁴⁰ Edem Selormey, Ukertor Gabriel Moti, and William Davison, “Global Thought Work: Case Studies on PRC Influence in Africa’s Information Space,” 29.

⁶⁴¹ Eric Olander, “Three Years Since Ghana Signed That Big Bauxite-For-Infrastructure Deal With China and Not One Road Has Been Built Yet.”

⁶⁴² Kwame Adovor Tsikudo, “How the Bui Dam Set Up China’s Future Engagement Strategy with Ghana.”

⁶⁴³ Edem Selormey, 29.

⁶⁴⁴ Daniel Large, *China and Africa*, 153.

⁶⁴⁵ Paul Nantulya, “Reshaping African Agency in China-Africa Relations.”

signifies an appreciable level of Ghanaian citizens' agency.^{646 647} The Ghanaian political opposition also outlined concerns with the deal, albeit more focused on the perceived lack of infrastructure received in return.⁶⁴⁸ Most notably, opposition MP Cassiel Ato Forson, the ranking member on Parliament's Finance Committee, criticized the agreement on a nationally-broadcast television show in late 2021 for lacking measurable progress in delivering infrastructure.⁶⁴⁹ The executive branch responded to these claims by citing various infrastructure projects that were underway, though admitted the amount had yet to resemble anything above even \$100 million.⁶⁵⁰ Therefore, though accountability from civil society and the domestic political opposition does not automatically guarantee better deals, it offers the potential that current and future deals remain transparent to the Ghanaian public, who can hold their government accountable through elections and other forms of political protest.

A 2022 report from the International Republican Institute indicates that "Ghana's robust media environment plays a large role in keeping elected officials accountable and voters informed," contributing to the dynamic that "Domestically, political competition and a robust civil society keep the government accountable (or at least responsive) to its electorate, which will punish the government for deferring resources needed for Ghana's development."⁶⁵¹ Given the vibrancy of transparency and accountability evident in Ghana's domestic political institutions and broader society, the report concludes that "China's influence in Ghana has its limits" and that "So long as Ghana's vibrant civil society is able to hold the government accountable, as in the

⁶⁴⁶ "Investigate Negligence and Connivance of Forestry Commission Staff—Group."

⁶⁴⁷ "Investigate Negligence and Connivance of Forestry Commission Staff—Group."

⁶⁴⁸ Jevans Nyabiage, "China's African Resource-for-Infrastructure Deals Face Growing Concern That Locals Don't Feel the Benefits."

⁶⁴⁹ Eric Olander, "Three Years Since Ghana Signed That Big Bauxite-For-Infrastructure Deal With China and Not One Road Has Been Built Yet."

⁶⁵⁰ Eric Olander.

⁶⁵¹ Edem Selormey, Ukertor Gabriel Moti, and William Davison, "Global Thought Work: Case Studies on PRC Influence in Africa's Information Space", 26, 34.

case of the Master Project Finance Agreement, there are encouraging signs that Ghana will be able to navigate this challenging relationship while maintaining its democratic integrity.”⁶⁵² Therefore, by reverting to red-stained tunnel vision, the United States would undermine the capable and accountable institutions whose existence benefit Ghanaians—including in their engagement with China—and the United States, which seeks to maintain democratic governance and diplomatic amicability. How the United States ought to align its policy toward Ghana in support of capable and accountable political institutions is outlined in the next and final chapter. Next, an assessment of the Sino-American dynamic in the DRC is undertaken, where the observed negative implications for US interests could bring about a reversion to red-stained tunnel vision, despite historical and recent evidence showing that such would only make matters worse, for Congolese citizens and the United States.

The Sino-American Dynamic in the DRC Since 2017

In December 2018, despite numerous indications that he was not the true winner, Felix Tshisekedi won the Congolese presidential election, replacing longtime autocratic kleptocrat Joseph Kabila as president the following month. Kabila, who had preferred sycophant Emmanuel Shadary as his replacement, was unable to rig the election in his favor due to Shadary’s vote totals being quite low. Thus, Kabila resolved to throw his behind-the-scenes support to Tshisekedi, whom he found more malleable and less vindictive than the other opposition candidate, Martin Fayulu.⁶⁵³ In response to the election, the United States, which had been a consistent external supporter of democratic change in the DRC, responded positively and

⁶⁵² Edem Selormey, Ukertor Gabriel Moti, and William Davison, “Global Thought Work: Case Studies on PRC Influence in Africa’s Information Space”, 26, 34.

⁶⁵³ Herman J. Cohen, “An Alternative Perspective on the U.S. Decision to Recognize Tshisekedi.”

welcomed Tshisekedi's peaceful accession to power, despite concerns with electoral fairness.⁶⁵⁴ State Department officials claimed that the decision was made in order to avoid widespread violence or the continuation of Kabila's autocratic rule.^{655 656} While scholars have debated the motivations and validity of the decision at the time^{657 658}, none have systematically investigated the consequent impact on Congolese and American interests. Even when considering the context vis-à-vis Kabila's maintenance of rosy relations with Beijing, it is important to note that Washington's support for Tshisekedi has not been attributed to great power competition with China, even when I posed the question directly to former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Tibor Nagy, who occupied the office when the election occurred.^{659 660}

However, given Chinese dominance of cobalt mining in the DRC, a mineral increasingly critical to the production of modern technologies (e.g., electric cars, fighter jets), there is increased potential that Washington could dust off the Cold War playbook in the DRC, which would likely include personal political support for Tshisekedi rather than promoting capable and accountable political institutions, which it maintains in practice today.^{661 662 663} Such increased personalized clientelism could engender much of the same negative implications—for Congolese citizens and the United States—witnessed under Mobutu, such as human rights violations, poor economic outcomes and precarious livelihoods, US economic opportunity costs, and negative public opinion of the United States.

⁶⁵⁴ Michelle Gavin, "The Truth About United States' Complicity in DRC's Fraudulent Election."

⁶⁵⁵ Stephen R. Weissman, "Why Did Washington Let a Stolen Election Stand in the Congo?"

⁶⁵⁶ Michelle Gavin.

⁶⁵⁷ Stephen R. Weissman.

⁶⁵⁸ Herman J. Cohen, "An Alternative Perspective on the U.S. Decision to Recognize Tshisekedi."

⁶⁵⁹ William Clowes and Michael J. Kavanaugh, "China Built Congo a Toll Road That Led Straight to the Ruling Family."

⁶⁶⁰ Tibor Nagy, Personal Interview with Tibor Nagy.

⁶⁶¹ Eric Lipton and Dionne Searcey, "How the U.S. Lost Ground to China in the Contest for Clean Energy."

⁶⁶² Taylor Clausen, "The Democratic Republic of the Congo Is in Crisis, and US Interests Are at Stake."

⁶⁶³ United States Agency for International Development, "Democratic Republic of the Congo Country Development Strategy."

While much of this analysis remains hypothetical and cautionary given that Washington has yet to revert to red-stained tunnel vision, some implications of US support for Tshisekedi have gradually been realized. As US endorsement of Tshisekedi has remained consistent over the past few years, Congolese public opinion of the United States has declined along with Tshisekedi's approval ratings.⁶⁶⁴ In contrast to public opinion in July 2018, when the United States received 82% positive views from Congolese respondents amid its policy of holding the-then unpopular Kabila accountable to holding democratic elections, by March 2021 this figure had slipped to 68% and reached 51% by December 2021, mirroring Tshisekedi's approval rating slide from 54% in March 2021 to 29% in December 2021.^{665 666} Polling experts assert that the correlation in views of the United States and Tshisekedi is due to the perception and reality that Washington is lending support to Tshisekedi's rule.⁶⁶⁷ When prompted to indicate the main reasons behind Tshisekedi's slipping approval rating, many Congolese respondents point to continued insecurity in eastern Congo and the persistence of corrupt governance, both of which are in part driven by the continual lack of sufficiently capable and accountable political institutions.^{668 669}

In addition to losing support among Congolese citizens, the United States has failed to fully back the development of capable and accountable institutions in the DRC, preferring to maintain friendly relations with the man at the helm in Kinshasa amid growing competition with China. US policymakers may believe that friendly ties with Tshisekedi will prevent further Chinese forays into the country, but history proves that such is far from the truth. Despite Mobutu's extensive and expensive loyalty during the Cold War, autocratic allies are often poor

⁶⁶⁴ Martina Schwikowski, "DR Congo: Felix Tshisekedi Moves Closer to the US."

⁶⁶⁵ Congo Research Group, "DRC Public Opinion Poll Elections 2018: The Not-So-Silent Majority," 19.

⁶⁶⁶ Congo Research Group, "L'an 3 de Tshisekedi: La Fin de l'embellie ?," 7, 10.

⁶⁶⁷ Congo Research Group, "L'an 3 de Tshisekedi: La Fin de l'embellie ?," 9.

⁶⁶⁸ Congo Research Group, "L'an 3 de Tshisekedi: La Fin de l'embellie ?," 13.

⁶⁶⁹ Michelle Gavin, "Conspiracy and Mistrust Poison Congolese Politics."

ones; they have no problem seeking corrupt deals with American competitors such as China without letting American companies compete on an even playing field.⁶⁷⁰ Despite some instances of holding Chinese deals accountable, which will be outlined in the following section, corruption, which makes it harder for US firms to compete and profit in the DRC, has continued to permeate and define Congolese political institutions.⁶⁷¹ Further, such continued kleptocracy, which is harder for Congolese citizens to uncover and resist peacefully given the lack of transparency and accountability, has engendered the same negative implications that have characterized Congolese life for decades: insecurity, weak and unevenly-distributed economic growth, poor livelihood indicators, and human rights violations.⁶⁷² As demonstrated throughout this thesis' analysis of the DRC, these negative implications for Congolese citizens also undermine American interests, morally, economically, and diplomatically.

The Deceiving and Minimal Role of Accountability in Sino-Congolese Relations

Beginning in 2021, President Tshisekedi launched investigations into Chinese mining investments and contracts in the DRC, most notably China Molybdenum's investment in the massive Tenke Fungurume cobalt and copper mine and the Sicominex infrastructure-for-resources agreement.⁶⁷³ Domestic pressures, as witnessed in Ghana, may be one impetus behind these investigations, though it is also in the interest of Tshisekedi to ensure better arrangements amid rising commodity—particularly cobalt—demand and prices.⁶⁷⁴ In fact,

⁶⁷⁰ The Sentry, "The Backchannel: State Capture and Bribery in Congo's Deal of the Century."

⁶⁷¹ U.S. Department of State, "2021 Investment Climate Statements: Democratic Republic of the Congo."

⁶⁷² Pascal Kalume Kambale and Mvemba Phezo Dizolele, "Power Shift in Congo: The President and the Pursuit of Reform."

⁶⁷³ Eric Olander, "The DR Congo Government Now Has Sicominex in Its Sights as the Investigation Into Chinese Mining Contracts Advances."

⁶⁷⁴ Eric Olander, "Q&A: Why Now? The Domestic Politics Driving the DRC's Review of Chinese Mining Contracts."

the March 2022 suspension of all legal proceedings by the Congolese government against China Molybdenum was ostensibly spurred by the Chinese company's increase in royalty payments to the DRC's state-owned mining firm, Gécamines.⁶⁷⁵ ⁶⁷⁶ The continued lack of transparency surrounding these proceedings raises questions as to whether these increased royalties will end up benefiting Congolese citizens or simply lining the pockets of political and economic elites. If this norm of opaque corruption continues to characterize Congolese dealings with Chinese firms, the United States and its corporations will lose out on crucial sources of strategic minerals and economic opportunities. Rather than viewing this critical exclusion as reason to dust off the Cold War playbook, Washington would benefit by realizing that doing so would hinder the development of capable and accountable domestic political institutions in the DRC, which would serve the interests of Congolese citizens as well as the United States, including in a more transparent and fair mining sector.

Learning from the Past: Working Toward—Rather than Against—the Development of Capable and Accountable Domestic Political Institutions in Africa

By demonstrating the continued importance of capable and accountable political institutions in Africa for the mutual interests objective, this chapter has uncovered that if US policy seeks to suit African and American interests amid growing great power competition, it is better off supporting the continued development of these institutions rather than allowing red-stained tunnel vision-driven policies to undermine them, as has historically been the case. The next and final chapter outlines suggestions for a more positive and mutually beneficial US foreign policy approach to Africa, which by supporting the development of capable and

⁶⁷⁵ Eric Olander, "New Details Emerge on China Moly-Gécamines Mining Settlement in the DR Congo."

⁶⁷⁶ Eric Olander, "China Moly Back in Control of the Massive TFM Mine in the DR Congo."

accountable domestic political institutions, also allows the United States to effectively compete with China on imperative issues and align its strategic interests with its cherished values, which are shared by a majority of Africans.

Chapter Six

Pursuing a Mutually Beneficial American Approach to Africa

The Role of Capable and Accountable Political Institutions in Achieving Mutual Interests

In 1998, when the United States constituted the world's lone superpower, three US-Africa policy specialists provided recommendations for how Washington should approach the continent in the post-Cold War era. Noting the sweeping yet uneven wave of democratization in Africa, Gordon, Miller, and Wolpe posited, "As the democratic process in many African countries advances, U.S. programs should emphasize the building of capacity and competence of state institutions, such as legislative bodies, justice systems, the civil service, the police, and the military" and that "an essential component of promoting democracy and human rights is the strengthening of African civil society."⁶⁷⁷ Put simply, Gordon, Miller, and Wolpe believed that supporting the development of capable and accountable domestic political institutions ought to have constituted a major pillar of US policy toward the continent. Though in some African countries Washington did support such efforts, its succumbing to foreign paradigms driven by a changing geopolitical environment often precluded consistent adherence to this policy, such as in the DRC.

In the present day, the geopolitical environment is increasingly threatening to the United States, causing Washington policymakers to adopt a foreign policy paradigm driven by the new reality of great power competition. While this geopolitical reality is difficult to alter in itself, the United States can learn from the past to change how it allows great power competition to structure the lens through which it sees the rest of the world, including Africa, and the foreign

⁶⁷⁷ David F. Gordon, David C. Miller, Jr., and Howard Wolpe, *The United States and Africa: A Post-Cold War Perspective*, 132–33.

policies it implements. Despite the fact that 2022 presents a vastly different geopolitical environment than 1998, the suggestions made then remain valid, as this thesis has demonstrated. By highlighting the mutual downsides of undermining the development of capable and accountable African political institutions during the great power competition of the Cold War, this thesis has cautioned against reverting to such a paradigm and consequent policies if the United States seeks to serve mutual US-Africa interests. In addition, the juxtaposed impacts on mutual interests in post-Cold War Ghana and the DRC uncovered that mutual interests are better served when domestic political institutions on the continent are both capable and accountable. Therefore, by examining the past, I have contextually supported the claim that if the United States seeks to advance a foreign policy in Africa that seeks to serve the mutual interests of African and American citizens, then it should support the development of capable and accountable domestic political institutions on the continent. However, in addition to providing historical evidence to this argument, it is warranted to bolster the claim in the modern context.

The existing literature on the benefits to African citizens—such as in the realm of economic prosperity and human rights—that stem from their governments and societies possessing capable and accountable political institutions is extensive, and the evidence warrants US support for the development and maintenance of such institutions.^{678 679 680} More specific to current geopolitical realities is evidence that capable and accountable political institutions in African countries would help African governments and citizens maximize the benefits from Chinese economic engagement. Presently, the terms contained in many Chinese loan and investment contracts on the continent overwhelmingly favor Chinese interests and remain

⁶⁷⁸ Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson, “The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation.”

⁶⁷⁹ Daron Acemoglu et al., “Democracy Does Cause Growth.”

⁶⁸⁰ Neil A. Englehart, “State Capacity, State Failure, and Human Rights.”

cloaked in secrecy, ramifications due in part to a lack of capacity and accountability in African political institutions. A lack of capacity prevents African governments from negotiating favorable deals with Chinese entities while a lack of accountability allows corrupt African elites to negotiate deals that benefit them, but hardly their constituents. Given this reality, the United States can serve the interests of African citizens by assisting in the development of capable and accountable political institutions to negotiate with Chinese entities.⁶⁸¹ However, even if African governments do develop the bureaucratic capacity to negotiate fairer deals with Chinese entities and promote transparency to prevent corruption from reducing benefits accruing to African citizens, the essential need for infrastructure and the lack of alternative options still provide Chinese entities with the upper hand. Therefore, coupled with its support for the development of capable and accountable domestic political institutions in Africa, the United States also ought to expand its economic engagement on the continent.⁶⁸² Not only would such increased American economic engagement benefit African interests, but in the context of more capable and more accountable domestic political institutions in Africa, American economic interests would also be served.

As demonstrated by the contrasting cases of post-Cold War Ghana and the DRC, capable and accountable domestic political institutions in Africa provide better opportunities to serve American economic interests. In countries with weak and largely unaccountable political institutions, such as the DRC, Chinese firms are able to “use corruption and other anti-competitive measures to win contracts.”⁶⁸³ Though US companies certainly have and continue to benefit from corrupt dealings in other African countries with similar institutional characteristics (such as ExxonMobil in Equatorial Guinea), the negative impact on African and

⁶⁸¹ Paul Nantulya, “Reshaping African Agency in China-Africa Relations.”

⁶⁸² Joshua Meservey, “China’s Propaganda in Africa Hurts U.S. Interests—and the U.S. Must Counter It,” 3.

⁶⁸³ Joshua Meservey, 1.

American interests that follow from weak and unaccountable domestic political institutions (including the Equatorial Guinean government being able to simply cancel ExxonMobil contracts in favor of Sinopec) demonstrates that such a political environment is not preferable.⁶⁸⁴

Recognizing the benefit of capable and accountable domestic political institutions to American economic interests, Senior Policy Analyst for Africa and the Middle East at the Heritage Foundation, Joshua Meservey (2019), recommended that the United States work to “facilitate regulatory and normative environments that ensure U.S. companies’ ability to compete for the continent’s rapidly growing economic opportunities on an equal footing with Chinese companies.”⁶⁸⁵ For example, in the DRC, where a weak, unaccountable, and corrupt government has contributed to Chinese domination of its critical mining sector, the development of capable and accountable domestic political institutions would raise the prospects for American economic investment and increase the likelihood that critical minerals such as cobalt are not only exported to China.^{686 687}

In addition to providing economic benefits for American firms, consistent US support for the development and maintenance of capable and accountable domestic political institutions in Africa would reap diplomatic windfalls for Washington. First, capable democratic African governments would constitute more predictable and reliable allies, fostering institutional environments that allow US interests to thrive. According to Nye (2020), elevating support for democratic institutions over autocratic individuals “can create stable expectations and norms for behavior that enhance the prospects for cooperation, reciprocity, and moral concerns.”⁶⁸⁸ With the development of democratic political institutions, domestic public opinion in Africa becomes

⁶⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch, “Well Oiled: Oil and Human Rights in Equatorial Guinea.”

⁶⁸⁵ Looking Forward: U.S.-Africa Relations, 47.

⁶⁸⁶ The Sentry, “The Backchannel: State Capture and Bribery in Congo’s Deal of the Century.”

⁶⁸⁷ Glenn Tiffert and Oliver McPherson-Smith, “China’s Sharp Power in Africa: A Handbook for Building National Resilience,” 3.

⁶⁸⁸ Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Do Morals Matter? Presidents and Foreign Policy from FDR to Trump*, 22.

increasingly relevant to international affairs. Fortunately for the United States, if it pursues a policy of supporting such institutions, its image would become even more positive in the eyes of African publics. Afrobarometer surveys indicate that 68 percent of African citizens prefer democracy and accountable governance over other forms of government, and thus if the US is perceived as supporting—rather than occasionally undermining—democratic institutions, its favorability would increase.⁶⁸⁹ However, as comparable African public support for the United States and China demonstrate, there are other factors that influence support for foreign powers.⁶⁹⁰ In this context of great power competition with China, the United States need not only prevent a Beijing-obsessed foreign policy from undermining its support for capable and accountable domestic political institutions; it also must increase its engagement on issues that matter to African citizens, especially in an African political environment characterized by capable and accountable institutions, where they can exercise influence over their governments' policies. While such an institutional environment demands that the United States increase its engagement to maintain African public and governmental support, it also increases the likelihood that such American engagement will reap mutual benefits. Therefore, while supporting the development and maintenance of capable and accountable domestic political institutions in Africa should not be the only aspect of US foreign policy toward the continent, it lays the foundation for engagement in other areas, which becomes necessary in competing with China.

The Role of Capable and Accountable Political Institutions in Competing with China

Though this thesis has continually cautioned Washington policymakers against viewing their approach to Africa primarily through the lens of great power competition with China, it is

⁶⁸⁹ Robert Mattes, "Democracy in Africa: Demand, Supply, and the 'Dissatisfied Democrat,'" 7.

⁶⁹⁰ Josephine Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny and Edem Selormey, "Africans Welcome China's Influence but Maintain Democratic Aspirations."

evident that such a competition exists, and in some realms actively threatens US interests. Quite ironically, this thesis uncovers that if the United States focuses less on competition with China in Africa and more on assisting the development of capable and democratic domestic political institutions, then it is more likely to outcompete China in critical areas on the continent. Rolland (2021) highlights this dynamic, writing, “Beijing is evidently striving to encourage African countries to adopt its governance practices in an effort to make them better client states. Robust democratic societies are seen as a major challenge to China’s ability to reach this goal” and that “the U.S. ... should work with African governments and civil society groups to bolster their efforts to build resilient, effective institutions and open societies.”⁶⁹¹ Large (2021) outlines a similar argument, positing that “Beijing can mostly control official African governing elite discourse but struggles to exert the same control over its version of history within heterogeneous African countries, especially those characterized by open debate.”⁶⁹²

Put simply, the most nefarious (in terms of potential impacts on US interests) of Beijing’s actions in China—such as military engagement and sharp power political and media influence strategies—would be mitigated in African societies whose governments possess capacity and are willingly held accountable by a strong civil society. It is for this precise reason that Chinese scholars list African agency and democratization as two key hindrances to Beijing’s forays across the continent. With respect to agency, Rolland (2021) summarizes Chinese assessments that African governments now “pay more attention to their own interests,” are no longer satisfied with simply “exchanging their own resources for foreign industrial products,” and have “imposed higher demands on Chinese companies regarding environmental protection, labor rights, and the promotion of local economic development.”⁶⁹³ Discussing democratization in

⁶⁹¹ Nadège Rolland, “A New Great Game?: Situating Africa in China’s Strategic Thinking,” 2.

⁶⁹² Daniel Large, *China and Africa*, 217.

⁶⁹³ Nadège Rolland, 25.

Africa, Chinese scholars have blamed it for “erod[ing] the political trust between China and Africa ... especially on issues such as human rights and sovereignty,” while also noting that “election cycles prevent the continuity of government policies and the continuity of China-Africa cooperation.”⁶⁹⁴ Despite the benefits on the security and political fronts, Chinese engagement still dominates in comparison to American contributions to Africa’s economic development, especially in the construction of infrastructure.

A famous Acholi proverb states, “A roaring lion does not catch any prey,” and provides useful advice for US policymakers who seek to achieve mutual US-Africa interests amid significant Chinese economic engagement on the continent.⁶⁹⁵ Washington’s continual lambasting of Chinese telecommunications firms’ operations in Africa despite American companies’ failure to provide comparably widespread and affordable alternatives is a case in point. Surely the United States should expose the ramifications of Chinese telecommunications infrastructure, especially its role in helping the Chinese government spy on African citizens and politicians, but Washington policymakers should also recognize the transformative role that Chinese telecommunications companies have played in expanding access to mobile telephone, internet, and financial services, even in the most remote regions.⁶⁹⁶ Jordan Link (2021), the China Policy Analyst at the Center for American Progress, has rightfully criticized Washington’s approach to this issue, writing, “Unless U.S. government warnings to avoid technology from Chinese companies are accompanied by financial assistance or a near-peer competitor to Huawei’s service offerings, they will likely continue to fall on deaf ears,” as evidenced by the fact that “To date, U.S. warnings have not resulted in any African governments switching from

⁶⁹⁴ Nadège Rolland, “A New Great Game?: Situating Africa in China’s Strategic Thinking,” 25–26.

⁶⁹⁵ Daniel Large, *China and Africa*, 74–75.

⁶⁹⁶ Amy Mackinnon, “For Africa, Chinese-Built Internet Is Better Than No Internet at All.”

Huawei or ZTE.”⁶⁹⁷ Though this thesis does not attempt to suggest specific American approaches toward Africa outside supporting the development of capable and accountable domestic political institutions and broadly increasing engagement, including economically, Link’s suggestion vis-à-vis Huawei and ZTE in Africa that “the United States, together with other countries, should seek to create competition in the 5G arena through a coalition of export credit agencies” is a step in the right direction given that it offers a positive framework for American economic competitiveness in contrast to standalone anti-Chinese rhetoric that has proven ineffective.⁶⁹⁸

Overall, by supporting the development of capable and accountable domestic political institutions in Africa, the United States seeks to gain in its great power competition with China, especially on security and political issues that threaten the interests of African citizens and the United States. On the economic front, Washington would also benefit by prioritizing support for African political institutions that maximize the benefits accruing to African publics from Chinese economic engagement. However, without also encouraging the substantial increase in economic engagement by American firms, the United States will not be able to compete with China. Launched under the Trump administration, Prosper Africa, “a U.S. Government initiative to increase trade and investment between African nations and the United States” by “bring[ing] together services and resources from across the U.S. Government to empower businesses and investors with market insights, deal support, financing opportunities, and solutions to strengthen business climates” is a positive step toward encouraging and facilitating increased American economic investment to the benefit of African publics, American firms, and Washington’s great power competition with China, but it currently lacks the scale to rival Beijing’s economic

⁶⁹⁷ Jordan Link, “5 Things U.S. Policymakers Must Understand About China-Africa Relations,” 11, 18.

⁶⁹⁸ Jordan Link, 18.

contributions on the continent.^{699 700} Despite scholars' various suggestions for how Washington policymakers ought to increase American economic engagement with Africa, it remains evident that supporting the development and maintenance of capable and accountable domestic political institutions on the continent remains paramount in promoting mutual US-Africa economic and political interests, including Washington's great power competition with Beijing. Yet, it is not simply mutual interests that would be served by the United States grounding its Africa policy in supporting institutional capacity and accountability, but also mutual values.

Mutual Interests, Mutual Values

Brands (2022) contends that “an enduring myth of U.S. foreign policy is that values and interests are typically at odds; a resilient misconception is that contestants in great-power rivalry must check their principles at the door.”⁷⁰¹ In a bluntly titled December 2021 op-ed, “Values ARE Interests,” Fontaine and Twining concur with Brands' assessment that not only are American foreign policy interests and values not inherently contradictory, but rather mutually reinforcing.⁷⁰² Throughout this thesis, American foreign policy paradigms and actions have been primarily investigated through their impact on (mutual) interests, demonstrating that when the United States allowed its geopolitically-driven foreign policy paradigms to contribute to undermining the development and existence of capable and accountable African political institutions, it undermined the interests of African citizens and the United States. It is also evident that Washington's contributions to undermining the development and existence of capable and accountable African political institutions contradicted its espoused national values as

⁶⁹⁹ Prosper Africa, “About Prosper Africa.”

⁷⁰⁰ Herman J. Cohen, “The Time Is Right for a U.S. Pivot to Africa.”

⁷⁰¹ Brands, *The Twilight Struggle What the Cold War Teaches Us about Great-Power Rivalry Today.*, 243.

⁷⁰² Richard Fontaine and Daniel Twining, “Values ARE Interests.”

well, which the 2017 National Security Strategy considers to be “individual liberties beginning with freedoms of religion, speech, the press, and assembly” as well as “free enterprise, equal justice under the law, and the dignity of every human life.”⁷⁰³ However, by putting support for the development of capable and accountable domestic political institutions at the core of its Africa policy, the United States would be able to align its strategic interests with its cherished values. Moreover, recent survey data shows that a majority of Africans share these same values, meaning that not only would American interests and values be upheld as a result of a US-Africa policy rooted in support of capable and accountable domestic political institutions, but rather *mutual* interests and values, which US officials have consistently listed as their foreign policy objective for the continent.⁷⁰⁴

It is important to note that these aforementioned conclusions are not entirely new. For example, three published works from 2021 offer similar assessments and recommendations for the Biden administration’s approach to Africa. Director of the Africa Program at Freedom House, Jon Temin, penned that “Biden pledged to put values at the center of U.S. foreign policy” and that “To remain true to that commitment in Africa, his administration will have to . . . focus more on strengthening institutions than on maintaining relationships with individual leaders.”⁷⁰⁵ Senior Fellow for Africa Policy Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, Michelle Gavin, suggested that “As the United States copes with a rising China and a period of change and uncertainty in the global order, its Africa strategy should focus on building mutually beneficial partnerships with African states and working with them to create an international order that accommodates shared interests and values.”⁷⁰⁶ Lastly, Senior Fellow in the Africa Growth

⁷⁰³ Donald J. Trump, “National Security Strategy of the United States of America.”

⁷⁰⁴ Temin, “Africa Is Changing—and U.S. Strategy Is Not Keeping Up.”

⁷⁰⁵ Temin.

⁷⁰⁶ Michelle Gavin, “Major Power Rivalry in Africa,” 28.

Initiative at the Brookings Institution, Landry Signé, assessed that “The Biden administration has an opportunity to change course and positively shape the legacy of U.S.-Africa relations” and that “If the Biden administration focuses on areas of strong U.S. competitive advantage and crafts a values-based foreign policy that takes into account Africans’ preference for accountability and democracy, the United States still has a chance to outperform China on the continent—but it has to act fast.”⁷⁰⁷

This thesis has sought to ground such recommendations in historical context and identify one element that would allow the United States’ Africa policy to support the mutual interests and values of African citizens and the United States. Though not suggesting that supporting the development and maintenance of capable and accountable domestic political institutions in Africa is a silver bullet, evidence from the past and present indicates that such institutions are a prerequisite to serving the mutual interests and embodying the mutual values that Washington’s Africa policymakers have identified as their goal.⁷⁰⁸ As the Biden administration continues to develop and implement its strategy toward Africa amid the geopolitical context of increasing great power competition with China, it would be wise to put supporting the development of capable and accountable domestic political institutions in Africa atop the agenda; by doing so, the United States would be able to positively contribute to the potential for future generations of Africans *and* Americans to pursue and achieve their hopes and dreams, after decades of allowing geopolitically-driven foreign policy paradigms to engender actions that regularly quashed them.

⁷⁰⁷ Landry Signé, “How to Restore U.S. Credibility in Africa.”

⁷⁰⁸ Bureau of African Affairs and Bureau for Africa, “Joint Regional Strategy - Africa.”

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