

2014

H-Diplo

H-Diplo Roundtable Review

www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables

Volume XV, No. 35 (2014)

19 May 2014 [Correction to

Author's Response, 30 May 2014]

Roundtable Editors: Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse

Roundtable and Web Production Editor: George Fujii

Commissioned for H-Diplo by Thomas Maddux

Introduction by Andy DeRoche

Lise Namikas. *Battleground Africa: Cold War in the Congo 1960-1965.* Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2013. ISBN: 9780804784863 (cloth, \$60.00).

Stable URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XV-35.pdf>

Contents

Introduction by Andy DeRoche, Front Range Community College	2
Review by John C. Kent, London School of Economics and Political Science	5
Review by Miles Larmer, Associate Professor of African History, University of Oxford	12
Review by Kevin Spooner, Wilfrid Laurier University	17
Author's Response by Lise Namikas, Independent Scholar, Baton Rouge	21

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 United States License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/us/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA.

Introduction by Andy DeRoche, Front Range Community College

With the well-researched and brilliantly insightful *Battleground Africa*, Lise Namikas has made a major contribution to the field of foreign relations history, focusing on the crucial case of the Congo in the first half of the 1960s. Drawing on groundbreaking research in Soviet archives and displaying a mastery of earlier secondary sources, Namikas presents a compelling analysis of the tragic story that unfolded in Central Africa in the years after Belgium granted independence to its giant former colony. The roundtable participants all praise the author for her research in the USSR, as well as her discussions of racial issues and the events of 1960. Overall the verdict of the reviewers is that *Battleground Africa* is an important addition to the literature on the international affairs of southern Africa during the Cold War.

A careful reading of Namikas's book, which consists of lively prose and thought-provoking arguments, is very rewarding and enlightening. The substantive chapters, and even the end notes, are filled with wonderful gems and nuggets that would be of great use to other Africanists or to generalists in their teaching of U.S. foreign relations and similar courses. My favorite of these was the author's fascinating account of President John Kennedy's attempt to send a missive regarding the Congo to Soviet Communist Party leader Nikita Khrushchev in February 1961. Khrushchev suspected what Kennedy wanted to tell him and did not want to hear it, so when U.S. ambassador to the USSR Llewellyn "Tommy" Thompson (who would later play a key role in the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis) arrived in Moscow with Kennedy's message, Khrushchev was nowhere to be found. He had timed a trip to distant Novosibirsk in order to avoid Thompson, but the skilled and determined ambassador, who had known Khrushchev well for many years, tracked him down and delivered Kennedy's letter (142-3, 289). Such stories abound in *Battleground Africa*, and give it the character of a spy novel at times, which will appeal to undergraduate students in particular.

In his highly laudatory review, Miles Larmer identifies the key innovation in Namikas's book as being the fact that she extends the story through the end of 1965. He also singles out her research in the Soviet archives and interpretation of Soviet policy as being extremely important. He finds her analysis especially "persuasive" on racial issues and the story of the Congo's first Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba's rapid rise and tragic demise. Larmer does find some fault, suggesting that more discussion of Joseph Mobutu, Chief of Staff of the Congolese army in 1960 and President after 1965, and the post-1965 legacies of the events under consideration would add value. He also points out that Namikas does not offer a thorough treatment of Congolese politics, and for example could have examined the internal opposition to Lumumba in much more depth. As a superb scholar of African opposition politics himself, Larmer certainly knows about what he is writing with this critique.¹

¹ See Miles Larmer, *Rethinking African Politics: A History of Opposition in Zambia* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), for a fascinating look at Zambian politics during the reign of Kenneth Kaunda, which is

While offering some thoughtful criticisms, Larmer is generally quite positive in his assessment of *Battleground Africa*. He characterizes Namikas's work as being of "real quality and importance," and contends that it will surely be the standard work on the Congo's Cold War for many years to come. In conclusion, Larmer judges this study "by far the best overall analysis of the international aspects of the Congo crisis in the English language."

In his equally positive review, Kevin Spooner echoes several of the arguments made by Larmer about the major strengths of Namikas's book. Spooner, like Larmer, found the research in Soviet archives, the discussion of Lumumba, the analysis of racial issues, and the fact that the story extends to the end of 1965, to be noteworthy aspects of *Battleground Africa*. Spooner does argue that Namikas could perhaps have included more details regarding the role of the United Nations in the Congo crisis, but nonetheless judges her study to be a useful advance in the field of the history of southern African international history which offers a "more nuanced interpretation" than any previous work on the topic. He concludes that overall Namikas has made an "important contribution" to the literature on the Congo in particular and outside powers' relations with southern Africa during the Cold War in general.

Of the three reviewers in the roundtable, John Kent found the most to criticize in *Battleground Africa*, but at the same time offered considerable praise. Kent applauded Namikas for her use of Soviet sources, her analysis of racial issues, and her discussion of the events in the first half of 1960. He felt that the book would be stronger if it had included more economics, and could also have benefitted from an additional assessment of the role of Belgium. He also contends that the interpretation was somewhat limited in that it did not clearly explain the complex interaction of decolonization and the Cold War. The overall impression is that Namikas has crafted an important book that should be read carefully by anyone interested in the Congo, the Cold War in Africa, or great power foreign relations in the 1960s.

Participants:

Lise Namikas, Ph.D., is an independent scholar and adjunct instructor in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Her book *Battleground Africa: Cold War in the Congo* (Wilson Center and Stanford University Press) was published in 2013. She is currently working on an article about the Ford administration and Mobutu and a book length project, "Banging the Shoe, Breaking the Gavel" about the UN General Assembly of September 1960.

Andy DeRoche teaches the History of U.S. Foreign Relations at Front Range Community College, and is a lecturer in International Affairs with a focus on Africa at the University of Colorado. His major publications include a biography of Andrew Young, and he is about to

especially valuable for its insights on Simon Kapwepwe. After serving as foreign minister and then vice president for Kaunda in the 1960s, Kapwepwe emerged as the leading opposition figure in the 1970s.

start revising and editing his manuscript on Zambia/USA relations that is under contract with Kent State University Press.

John C. Kent is a Reader in International Relations at the London School of Economics. He received his MA and Ph.D. at Aberdeen University. His major publications include British Documents on the End Of Empire Project Series B Volume 4, *Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East Part 1945 -1956* (ed) (1998); *America, the UN and Decolonisation Cold War Conflict in the Congo* (Routledge, 2010); with John Young, *International Relations Since 1945: A Global History* (Oxford University Press 2nd ed, 2013); *British Imperial Strategy and the Origins of the Cold War* (Leicester University Press,1993); and *The Internationalisation of Colonialism: Britain, France and Black Africa 1939-1956* (Oxford University Press, 1992). His current research focuses on the “Disjuncture between British Foreign Policy and Defence Strategy for ‘The Mismanagement of Decline: British Foreign Policy and Defence Strategy 1945-1971’; and articles on the Congo 1964-1967, Kennedy and Johnson: Cold War contrast in policy to the less developed world, and The Breakdown of the Grand Alliance 1943-46.

Miles Larmer is University Lecturer in African History and a Fellow of St Antony's College. He was Senior Lecturer in International History at the University of Sheffield until 2013 and has previously taught at the universities of Sheffield Hallam, Keele and Pretoria (South Africa). He was awarded his Ph.D. in 2004 by the University of Sheffield. He has written widely about southern-central Africa in general and post-colonial Zambia in particular and has authored two books, *Mineworkers in Zambia* (2007) and *Rethinking African Politics: A History of Opposition in Zambia* (2011). He is currently researching the history of the Katangese gendarmes with Erik Kennes, for a book which will hopefully be published in 2014.

Kevin Spooner is Associate Professor of North American Studies and History, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Canada and is Program Coordinator of the North American Studies Program. He is the author of *Canada, the Congo Crisis, and UN Peacekeeping, 1960-64* (University of British Columbia Press, 2009), which was awarded the 2009 C.P. Stacey Prize. Currently, he is working on the history of Canadian foreign policy in Africa during the period of decolonization.

Research into the fascinating relationship between the Cold War and decolonisation has been an ideal topic for debate involving a number of interesting and inevitably contentious issues. On the one hand there have been the LSE's seminar contributions of Barry G. Buzan who has predicted that decolonisation will remain an important feature of the international system, requiring investigation long after the Cold War has ceased to have any relevance for important academic research. On the other hand Ronald Hyam has argued and repeated the phrase in one of his latest books that decolonisation could be legitimately seen as a footnote to the Cold War.¹ The controversy is exacerbated by the fact that few historians or political scientists have equal awareness and knowledge of the vast array of literature in both fields.

The Congo is a crisis which has long epitomised all aspects of the Cold War/decolonisation conflicts with the key international component, arguably the driving force behind the crisis that has been somewhat ignored in both fields. The book of Lise Namikta has the advantage of drawing on Soviet and East German sources and the disadvantage that the main time period in which most of the detailed and extremely thorough and impressive research has been conducted has been approached with the aim of fitting the Congo into what is largely a conventional Cold War focus and interpretation. Some elements of the decolonisation process and the role of the United Nations (UN) are mentioned, particularly in the coverage of 1960 and the murder of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba but are not fully investigated. Neither the political relationship that the U.S. under Presidents Dwight Eisenhower and John Kennedy endeavoured to develop with the UN nor the way the U.S. sought to reconcile the economic relationships between a new African state and its old colonial relationship with European enterprises are fully explored within the context of decolonisation – the Cold War supersedes everything. Instead attention is focused much more on the attempts of the Soviets to gain influence in the Congo; this is how the orthodox conception of the Cold War appears as defining the Congo crisis by the prevention of Soviet influence in Africa. Much less consideration is given to what were the priorities of the Cold War strategies of the different presidential administrations in the new Cold War circumstances of the early 1960s or the decolonisation that produced them.

Thus the complex interaction between the impact of the Cold War on decolonisation and the impact of decolonisation on the Cold War (rather than one automatically superseding the other and defining the resultant issues), never becomes the key context for the book. Yet the Cold War, as defined by the anti-communist strategies of Kennedy, was geared more to attracting the support of African leaders because of decolonisation. The benefits expected from the New Frontier's more dynamic approach to African (and other Third World areas not recently suffering at the hands of European colonialism) development as outlined by Kennedy's advisor Walt Rostow and implemented with an important role for the former European metropolises would be a key component of U.S. policy and the Cold

¹ Ronald Hyam has included it in one of his latest books *Understanding the British Empire* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2010) 262.

War. Thus although we have on an acceptance that the “United States and the Soviet Union each set out to prove the superiority of its ideology by attracting allies” (p3) there seems little consideration that this may have been what the Cold War was primarily all about given that African states were on the edge of independence. Thus the question of how they might be attracted was of Cold War concern particularly to Kennedy, who assumed that the influence of communism and/or the Soviet Union would be less than that of a proactive U.S. A considerable snag would only appear if the European powers were determined to cling to the kind of economic benefits colonialism had provided. Unfortunately, in the Congo Belgian enterprises and their supporters in Brussels, along with the key British investors in the Tanganyika Concessions who were bankrolling the Conservative party and benefitting from Congo concessions and mining operations still in place from King Leopold's days, were determined to do. Thus the problem was not simply the cautious reluctance of Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev to push for greater Soviet influence in the Congo, which he would have liked but which could produce any number of costs and expose Soviet weakness in comparison to the U.S. The book downplays the events immediately preceding any Soviet involvement - namely the reaction of some Belgians and Africans in Brussels and Katanga to the Congo's impending independence and the almost immediate post-independence invasion by Belgian armed forces to the events which followed it. Yet these were arguably the fundamental issues for both decolonisation and the Cold War as well as providing the root of the problem facing the UN and Dag Hammarskjöld.

The book actually begins with Lumumba portrayed as a victim of nineteenth-century and post-1945 imperialism and refers to post-war reconstruction and how a stronger Europe would benefit Africa. This is a somewhat controversial statement with which several British and European works have taken issue². There is then a useful overview of the literature of (largely) American approaches to the important international elements in a crisis such as the one beginning in the Congo. It divides them into left, right and centre by their general approach to Third-World issues with Cold-War (however defined) implications which are unlikely to produce consensus on who should be placed where especially in the case of the centrist or middle-of-the-roaders. The Cold-War analysis of Khrushchev is then followed by an introductory portrait of the American presidents who had to deal with the Congo from 1960 to 1965: Eisenhower – “more comfortable in Europe”, and Kennedy, “young and optimistic” who “quickly focused on the dangers of the Cold War at the expense of real political and economic development in the Congo” (17). An alternative approach would see Kennedy focusing on the dangers of communism because of the need for real political and economic development. Preference for one approach, and the resultant ignoring of alternatives, has heavily influenced the outcomes of the research which with its emphasis on the Lumumba period is impressive and meticulous whatever

² David K. Fieldhouse, “The Labour Governments and the Empire Commonwealth 1945-1951” in Ritchie Owendale (ed), *The Foreign Policy of the British Labour Governments* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984); Ronald Hyam, “Africa and the Labour Governments 1945-1951,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 16:4 (1988); John Kent, *British Imperial Strategy and the Origins of the Cold War 1944-49* (London: Leicester University Press, 1993); Jacques Marseille, *Empire Colonial et Capitalisme Français : Histoire d'un Divorce* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1984); Jean Suret-Canale, *Afrique Noire de la Colonisation aux Indépendances 1945-1960* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1972).

the issues of interpretation. As early as the introduction, the book is set on an interpretation in which U.S. foreign policy on the impact of decolonisation and Cold War in the Congo is “defined more clearly by Cold War thinking and larger strategic goals” (18). Even if readers might be wondering what these were and how they related to the new international circumstances produced by the emerging independent African states. The introduction concludes with the categorising of the Americans and the Belgians as cooperating to maintain their position – i.e. a Western one – in Africa, which misrepresents the position in Washington and Brussels in the post-independence month of July 1960. Yet the position of Hammarskjöld as pro-Western in terms of cooperating essentially to serve U.S. goals through the UN is accurately portrayed, including the shift to get closer to the Afro-Asian bloc after the apparent encouragement provided by both the U.S. and the UN to the dismissal of Lumumba and his rapid replacement, albeit temporarily, by a parliamentary regime of Joseph Mobutu's College of Commissioners. As head of the Congolese National Army, Mobutu's dislike of Congolese politicians provided an initial forewarning of his eventual ruthless dictatorship.

The historiographical section of the introduction is not entirely comprehensive, and despite the well-deserved credit the author should receive for a wide range of archival usage, that too has gaps. In part the gaps are inevitable and can be more appropriately referred to as the 'priorities chosen' given the breadth and scale of the material involved. Covering all the wide ranging issues and their protagonists in the Congo from 1960-1965 would lead to serious difficulties with publishers and be likely to result in excessively dense writing, which is sensibly avoided here. After a chapter entitled “Which Way Africa,” the book provides nearly 100 pages covering 1959 to the end of 1961 and 70 on the Kennedy administration with 36 on Johnson's presidency. Thus in the first period all the tributaries which might lead into the great Cold War river are covered along with some careful exploration of interesting creeks that provide detail on the less essential water flows. Secondary sources are particularly comprehensive, and along with Soviet primary ones, which exceed in referenced terms those from the main State Department central file, include Belgian and East German ones. Throughout the book less attention appears to have been paid to the National Archives at College Park than to the relevant volumes of the *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) and to the material at the presidential libraries. Yet under Kennedy the central file on the Congo contains over 50 boxes -twice as much material as that concerning Britain and other European countries, and is only exceeded by material on the obvious U.S. foreign pre-occupation of the sixties.

Which way for the future of Africa has hardly been addressed when we are confronted with orthodox Cold War interpretations about how containment was being brought into Africa given the assumption, which was disputed by British Colonial Service Officers and the Colonial Office officials in London, that “communism quickly becoming an appealing alternative to the Western model of development” (23). If indeed it was so perceived by Africans - as opposed to the appeal of a socialist alternative supported by radical nationalists like Lumumba (and U.S. administrations may well have believed it was), then containing an idea required different policies and emphases to containing Soviet power, or 'expansion' as it is normally referred to in the Western fudge of separate and contrasting Cold War terms, when there are links between the two that go through Moscow. The

coverage provided is initially so detailed, and the research so meticulous in this section, that JFK's desire to promote independence for colonial peoples is mentioned but never interpreted and developed as part of U.S. Cold War strategy. Such strategy is only to be conceived or pursued for strategic Cold War reasons even in black Africa. By contrast there is a good appreciation of the issue of communism in Africa as it was perceived by the Eisenhower administration in that it had not been a major problem but was being seen as a matter of growing concern in the late 1950s even as the importance of the Congo's resources, including uranium, was diminishing.

There is also valuable coverage of the Soviet interest in Africa, which was apparently growing, if more slowly than that of the U.S., which after beginning with the Lourenco Marques conference for diplomats in 1949 had culminated in the creation of a separate State Department Bureau in 1958. From its beginning in the late 1950s, a degree of caution was running through Soviet policy and influencing its implementation as the evidence produced by the author indicates. As occurred after the war, when a desire for increased Soviet influence under Joseph Stalin did not initially extend to fellow communists outside areas contiguous to the Soviet Union, in Africa support for the use of force by liberation movements that were seeking self-determination and independence was not initially given. An excellent appraisal of the run-up to the 1960 independence election includes a small section on the all-important economic factors. The fact that "Belgian intentions were nothing less than to retain profits even if this meant fully undermining Congolese sovereignty" is duly noted (52). Why this insight is not used when the analysis turns to the events immediately following independence is not entirely clear. The *Comité Spécial du Katanga* was not a parent company of *Union Minière du Haut Katanga (UMHK)* and the problems with debt resulted from the colonial government's borrowing on the bond market in order to finance the belated efforts at social welfare. That these costs would be borne three years later by the independent government and Congo citizens rather than by Belgian tax payers indicates the importance given to the economics of decolonisation.

A start to analysing the post-independence events is made by analysing whether Lumumba was accurately assessed as a communist. The author offers limited assessment from the U.S. embassy in Brussels but it is not clear whether Lumumba was deemed, and by whom, to be a communist, someone in the pay of communists, someone who was advised by communists, or someone who had met communists. Despite the significance of whom had or had not assessed Lumumba's commitment to communism or not and how his connections to it may have been deemed by U.S. and non-U.S. officials to change over time, the book takes us into the election and the Soviet statements that were essentially accurate about Belgian plotting to remove Lumumba. Whatever evidence this may be drawn from, the author is convinced that the electoral campaign revealed someone, i.e. Lumumba, whom the Soviets could count on. This is the result of the emphasis on a particular kind of Cold War, as opposed to the machinations of the Belgian *formateur* of the new government once the election had revealed Lumumba's *Mouvement National Congolais (MNC)* as the largest minority party. The lack of emphasis on the ending of the colonial relationship with Belgium becomes more evident with the coverage of the Independence Day 'celebrations' on 30 June 1960. The use of the Belgian parliamentary enquiry and American press sources gives a different picture of the nature of Lumumba's and King Baudouin's speeches than

that given by independent British sources or the verbatim record of them. More important is the interpretation of the mutiny at Thysville a few days later and the disturbances which followed producing Lumumba's agreement with the soldiers, and the excuse to despatch Belgian troops from the base at Kamina (an arrangement not yet ratified by the new Congo government), into Katanga. The additional Belgian troops sent from Europe allegedly to deal with the resultant violent disturbances, which the British ambassador did not regard as being of major significance, should lead to more attention as to why this was done, given the colonial context and the need to support the secession of Katanga province from the Congo. However, because of what is defined as the Cold War, instead we get interesting material, some of it speculative, on the disproportionate numbers of Soviet officials entering Leopoldville. This information should have been weighed against the efforts of Belgian representatives in Brussels and Katanga to undermine the new state, which are described by the author as "insensitive," (64) rather than covertly hostile. The formal need of Brussels to refrain from opposing an independent Congo with a legitimate democratically elected government by overtly assisting and recognising the secession was self-evident – decolonisation again. Yet the single-track emphasis on Soviet policy (Cold War), however important or unimportant it might have been, continues without equivalent emphasis on the Belgian role (decolonisation/neo-colonialism).

Into this unfortunate situation stepped the UN, and with it the Cold War/decolonisation relationship in the form of Dag Hammarskjöld's overriding goal of keeping the Soviets out of Africa. The desire of some Western representatives also to keep full economic independence out was the UN decolonisation dilemma in the Congo. Avoiding pitting NATO allies against the Cold-War desirability of also attracting the emerging African nations to the West was to continue to be a problem with the importance the Kennedy administration attached to Africa. While the Eisenhower administration required emerging African states effectively to become part of the Western bloc, the Kennedy administration was more willing to accept them adopting a genuinely neutral stance. Either way, it was evident from the start that the position of Katanga with its covert Belgian support would damage the Cold-War position of the West in Africa once Brussels adamantly refused to withdraw the uninvited Belgian troops, despite two unambiguous UN Security Council resolutions calling on them to do so. Although another element of these resolutions was ambiguous, which Hammarskjöld sought to manipulate in order to mitigate the effect of the Belgian opposition to the UN, the West, because of the Belgian 'invasion' being opposed by the new Congo government, was definitely in the dock.

The problems this caused the Eisenhower administration are never fully explored or their implications analysed because of the particular form of the book's Cold-War analytical framework. Instead of a definite dual-track approach we get a well-researched history, given the limitations of the Soviet archives, of Moscow's often reluctant attempt to act within the Congo to try and increase the low level of its black African influence. Although the comprehensive nature of the research into the 1960 early 1961 period means that very little is not mentioned, whether enough attention is paid to some of its implications is another matter. The most glaring example of a lack of emphasis is on the role of the UMHK and its board in working with the right wing pro-Western tribal leader of the Lunda people, Moise Tshombe, and the influence it was able to bring to bear in Brussels even after Gaston

Eyskens's government was replaced in Spring 1961 by Theo Lefèvre's coalition including Paul-Henri Spaak.³ If this had been done, a better analysis could have been provided of the reasons, centred on the concessions and operational enterprises that colonialism had brought to British and Belgian owners of capital in Central Africa and its supporters in the highest levels of government. The Cold War could thus be seen as a highly desirable cloak for what was more of a neo-colonial enterprise exposing the support of the UN for the West.

Whatever the validity of the two alternative approaches to the nature and meaning of the Cold War in the Congo and its implications, one is left regretting that the general emphasis of 'new Cold War' histories on sources behind the former Iron Curtain with the undoubted value and accompanying envy of the linguistic skills and hard work of its practitioners, as here, is not accompanied by an equal commitment to review the interpretations of Western Cold-War policy. We could then have a much better chance of 'knowing' about the Cold War now that it has ended.

With regard to the coverage provided in the Lumumba part of the book, which is both detailed and varied, some of the implications of what is discovered, and their interpretation, are not approached in the same way either for the U.S., the UN, European enterprises, the former colonial powers or the new African states. The well-noted fact that the British Foreign Office, the Belgians, the CIA, and the State Department agreed that Lumumba had to be removed is not analysed in terms of the implications for an understanding of the Cold War in the Congo. Thus overall the detailed coverage of the 1960 period is interesting but mixed in terms of both strengths and weaknesses.

For the rest of the Kennedy administration, not wading through the numerous central file boxes is more noticeable and there are greater gaps in coverage. In 1961 the detail on Kitona and the two phases of fighting in Katanga involving UN troops and Tshonbe's *gendarmérie* and mercenaries are somewhat light even allowing for the way the material has had to be condensed. The paths trodden by the *FRUS* series editors may have supported a similar approach, but the consequences of the generally sparse coverage given to economics are exacerbated after 1961. Important omissions include the conference with the British and the Belgians that confirmed the irreconcilability of the British and American position in May 1962 on what was needed to reintegrate Katanga into the Congo. Primarily relying on *FRUS* and the Kennedy library has also created issues over the details of the UN Reconciliation Plan essentially drafted in the State Department. The Washington endeavours made by Kennedy and his close *confidante* Under Secretary George Ball in particular and those of Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs George McGhee in Africa to secure implementation, and the goals for the proposed U.S. fighter squadron and

³ Eyskens was the Christian Democratic prime minister of Belgium at the head of two coalitions with the right wing pro-settler liberal party from Nov 1958 until April 1961. He was then replaced as prime minister by another Christian Democrat Théo Lefèvre in coalition with the socialists under Paul-Henri Spaak. Spaak became closely involved in the Congo as foreign minister and was referred to by the Kennedy administration, because of his European policy as 'our friend'.

why it was not deployed, also could have been clarified. There is a similar lack of clarity, not present when dealing with Lumumba and his removal and death, over the events from Christmas Eve until 28 December 1962 which would have been made more comprehensive by use of cables from Elisabethville.

The events of 1963 and the problems of the Congo post-end of secession are clearly related to the precarious state of its economy made worse by the dislocation of the secession period and the denial of income from Katangan resources. There were real developmental issues of a fundamentally economic nature that now had to be solved in a unified Congo. Assistant Secretary for International Organisations Affairs Harlan Cleveland's mission after the fall of Tshombe was a developmental task not a way to reduce the U.S. presence in the Congo, which like Vietnam, was soon to rapidly increase, as new conflicts began which were never likely to enhance Soviet influence or the spread of communism, despite the failings of capitalism in the Congo to bring development. Its many-faceted problems generated enormous amounts of paper and many other resources to which any book would be unable fully to do justice. The final phase of the crisis covered here after the return of Tshombe to become Prime Minister in 1964 before being overthrown in Mobutu's second coup ironically coincides with the most active form of communist intervention in the form of the Cubans and the Chinese and more Soviet aid. In this more neglected period, the American provision of transport planes for, yes, Belgian troops to attempt a rescue of western hostages (operation Dragon Rouge) from Stanleyville is usefully covered if not comprehensively so. No mention is made of the other 'dragon' operations planned for Paulis and Bunia. In many ways it would have been more appropriate to focus on this period rather than 1960 even if the international dimensions and the direct links to colonialism were not there. The author offers more criticism here, even if the reasons as to why Kennedy fought for so long to remove mercenaries from the Congo, whereas Johnson was keen to use them, need more explaining. Yet, as the Cold War's connection to decolonisation is not treated with the depth it deserves due to the dominant orthodox Cold War-Soviet- influence- framework, there is less to regret.

The overwhelming impression left by the book is of a historical ground in which many interesting stones are turned over but it is only the Soviets who are given close scrutiny as they emerge from under them. As many other life forms crawl away without such scrutiny, the irony appears to be that the impact of the Soviets is far less important than we were encouraged to believe. The Cold War's connection to decolonisation remains somewhat obscure and the detailed operations of European capitalism in Central Africa remain largely outside the spotlight despite the impressive amount of useful research.

B *attleground Africa* is a very important contribution to our understanding of the interaction between the Cold War and African decolonisation, focusing on the Congo crisis, the hottest focus of that interaction in the 1960s. As Namikas herself suggests, one of her most important innovations is to go beyond the initial period of Congolese independence, the Katangese secession, UN intervention and the assassination of Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba. Taking the study up to 1965, to incorporate the U.S.-led intervention in Stanleyville in 1964 and the second Mobutu coup of November 1965, enables the reader to see the long-term consequences of the subordination of Congo's decolonisation process and the civil war that resulted to superpower interests, primarily those of the United States. American claims to support Congolese self-determination were trumped by the fear that self-determination in a diverse country with (initially) little sense of a common political identity or project would likely provide the breeding ground for the emergence of successive communistic threats. The United States, which sought above all to ensure unity under an acceptable (to itself) central government, had by the mid-1960s come to believe that no civilian leadership could ensure this and turned decisively to a military strongman to impose a highly centralised authoritarian system of government that made the Congolese people pay for an imposed peace by the denial of their self-determination.

In her introduction, Namikas places the analysis in context via a fair-minded account of the historiography of the Cold War, particularly as applied to the non-western world. Her approach draws generally and fairly convincingly on John Gaddis's emphasis on superpower misunderstandings, to explain each other's actions and often disproportionate reactions: "What becomes clear from the new evidence is that neither adversary ever adequately understood the other's goals or the degree to which they would (or would not) defend their position in the Congo" (11). The main body of the book is, however, generally narrative in tone, with Namikas's historical judgment largely reserved for the conclusion. This is, however, severe in the way that only disillusioned liberalism allows: "Although the United States initially represented democratic values and rights to self-determination, its policies tragically betrayed these values. This betrayal, based on a relentless search for dominance over the Soviet Union, became one of the basic costs of the Cold War. ... more, equitable options for the Congo based on trust in democratic values and equitable economic practices were overlooked. Thus, the Cold War in Africa... became the focus of the crisis and for a long time delayed the progress of postcolonial Africa..." (225). There is, however, little evidence in the entire book that democratic values were of significant relevance at any stage of U.S. decision-making. Certainly, the book shows that the three presidents who oversaw U.S. policy towards the Congo during this period did not act in qualitatively different ways that meaningfully reflected their different political philosophies or declared doctrines.

The study is organised chronologically, with chapter two providing a brief but useful summary of the situation in Congo in the decolonization period. Namikas ably demonstrates the position, long established by René Lemarchand and others, that the

severe restrictions placed on indigenous political activity by the Belgian colonial state severely limited the extent of representative nationalist organisation across the vast and diverse Congolese territory.¹ Belgium's failure to prepare Congo for independence, and its deployment of political and military forces to defend its economic interests during and after decolonization, is ably demonstrated, though not in a way which adds substantively to e.g. the work of Ludo De Witte.²

It is evident that neither superpower was well informed about the political situation in the run-up to independence; the U.S. was, as elsewhere, initially dependent on its NATO allies to explain the situation in their colonies and was sometimes persuaded by them to view decolonisation from a Cold-War perspective; radical nationalists such as Patrice Lumumba might be dangerous individuals who, intentionally or not, could open Africa's door to communist influence. Namikas persuasively argues, following Thomas Borstelmann, that domestic U.S. attitudes regarding race also shaped political views of Lumumba, an upstart black leader who did not follow diplomatic conventions.³

Battleground Africa successfully deploys material from primary and secondary sources to develop a core argument which, if fairly conventional in nature, is made with greater conviction and clarity than ever before. Broadly, a series of exaggerations and misjudgements regarding the extent to which Congo might become a threat to the interests of each superpower led both the U.S. and the Soviet Union to intervene, inconsistently and incoherently, in Congolese political and military affairs in ways that, on the whole, vitiated the establishment of a post-independence political settlement that had any prospect of representing the political aspirations of the Congolese population in any meaningful way. Notwithstanding the well-proven involvement of the United States in the conspiracy to kill Lumumba, this was not based (on either side) on a clear conspiratorially minded project to impose a puppet government in Leopoldville or elsewhere. Rather, whilst a range of Congolese actors sought to inveigle one or other superpower to support their respective political projects, both the U.S. and the Soviet Union were haphazard in their engagement with Congo, which was only occasionally at the top of their in-tray.

It is salutary for Africa specialists to be consistently reminded of the marginal nature of their specialism, because it mirrors the disconnect between, on the one hand, the life-and-death struggles being waged in Congo during this period and, on the other, the extent to which these struggles only periodically attracted the attention of senior political leaders in Washington or Moscow. Because most U.S. politicians were resistant to understanding the complexities of Congolese affairs presented by more moderate State Department analysts,

¹ René Lemarchand, *Political Awakening in the Belgian Congo* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1964).

² Ludo de Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, (London: Zed Books, 2001).

³ Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

they were vulnerable to siren voices, such as CIA Director Allen Dulles, who could flatten these complexities into two-dimensional Cold War terms and offer apparently easy solutions such as the assassination of Lumumba. This waxing and waning of attention, in which short-termist crisis interventions interspersed with an unwillingness to put in the hard yards of long-term engagement, paints a picture not of a ruthless superpower able and willing to secure its carefully identified interests through Machiavellian and well-resourced means, but of an outsized toddler with attention deficit disorder, trampling across the seedlings of African political expression, able to destroy but not to build.

The study takes the reader through each of the key events of this period – Congolese independence; the secession of Katanga; Lumumba’s removal from power and subsequent murder; the events of the UN intervention and ultimate defeat of the secession; the leftist rebellions and the rise to power of Mobutu - with authority and alacrity. At each stage, Namikas provides an impressive synthesis of a vast range of evidence concerning superpower policies towards and intervention in the Congo. She reconstructs with fastidious attention to detail the decision-making processes in the White House, State Department and other U.S. government departments. The resultant narrative only occasionally becomes bogged down in this detail: generally, the book does a brilliant job in keeping this complex narrative on the road in a way that is managed by few other studies of Congo during this period. The writing is of a very high quality and virtually every judgment regarding the level of detail provided is correct.

The much-debated role of the United Nations is also very well characterised: the disproportionate influence of Washington on New York is convincingly depicted, as is the carefully periodised analysis of Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld. This successfully reconciles the Hammarskjöld who was the conservative critic of Lumumba in 1960 with the more liberal figure who made great efforts to keep Afro-Asian powers onside during actions against the Katangese secession the following year. In this as in virtually every other area of the book, Namikas carefully avoids sweeping moral judgements of particular leaders (Katangese President Moïse Tshombe is the obvious exception) and instead presents them as both shaping and shaped by the institutions they led and the events they sought, usually unsuccessfully, to control.

Namikas provides a particularly helpful analysis of Soviet policy, making excellent use of Soviet and East German archives and recent studies to argue that, in contrast to Sergey Mazov’s recent work,⁴ Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev’s rhetorical use of the Congo crisis disguised what was a relatively conservative Soviet approach to the provision of arms and other support, both to Lumumba in 1960 and to leftist rebel movements in 1964-65. She provides an impressive level of detail of particular moments of Soviet policy-making. We are nevertheless left with a distinct and convincing characterisation, that Khrushchev’s bold public statements reflected above all a desire to appear on the right side of the decolonization debate, whilst doing little of substance to counter the United States’ much

⁴ Sergey Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War: The USSR in West Africa and the Congo, 1956-1964* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

greater financial and military commitment in the Congo: a helpful balance sheet accounting exercise demonstrates this all too clearly (227).

The book also discusses the divided position of most African states in relation to the crisis and the limits this placed on their influence on the crisis, although the explanation of why they were divided is less developed. Indeed, Namikas is on less certain ground when it comes to analysing the role of Congolese actors and contexts: this is, ultimately, a study first and foremost of external interventions in Congo rather than a study from within. She certainly has an impressive command of the existing literature on Congo during this period, but she adds little to it, and at times replicates the weaknesses of interpretations such as that of De Witte or contemporary observers such as Cruise O'Brien.⁵ She fails, for example, to explain or explore the extent and diversity of internal opposition to Lumumba or the continuing rejection of successive central governments in many parts of Congo, something which was not primarily the result of external manipulation. The role of mercenary forces in both the Katangese army and the Stanleyville intervention force are discussed at some length, but not the motivations of the far more numerous African forces which fought both under and alongside them. There were never "8,000 mercenaries... in Katanga" for example (174) - most of these were indigenous troops whose motivations were very different.

As noted, Namikas captures very well the flattening effect of superpower (particularly U.S.) analyses of events in the non-western world, in which the complex and evolving perspectives and behaviour of local actors were viewed through the singular, simplifying but also distorting prism of the Cold War. She is, however, unable to overcome the limitations of the archives in which such a perspective is consistently articulated, and the book is at times something of a prisoner of these sources: this is the Cold War in Africa viewed from Washington, DC, to some extent from the UN in New York, from Moscow and Brussels, but to a much more limited extent from Leopoldville and hardly at all from Stanleyville or Elisabethville. Although brief reference is made in the introduction to the extent to which African actors were, in Zachary Karabell's phrase, "architects of intervention" or the victims of "Cold War priorities" (19),⁶ the study therefore does not wholly meet Odd Arne Westad's challenge that historians must understand the motivations and agency of local actors in shaping the outcomes of the global Cold War.⁷

In order to do this, it is necessary to capture the diversity and opposed perspectives of the main Congolese actors, who had fundamentally opposed visions for independent Congo. Patrice Lumumba, the book rightly suggests, was removed from power and subsequently murdered because he was unwilling to sublimate his radical nationalist perspective to the

⁵ Conor Cruise O'Brien, *To Katanga and Back: A UN Case History* (1962), pp. 83-9.

⁶ Zachary Karabel, *Architects of Intervention: The United States, the Third World, and the Cold War, 1947-1962* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999).

⁷ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third world interventions and the makings of our times*, Cambridge UP (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) p. 3.

aims of either superpower. But this was possible because of his many internal enemies, who were not simply the puppets of western interests. There is probably no more important figure in this story than army Chief of Staff Joseph Mobutu (later Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko), who arguably succeeded where Lumumba failed in imposing centralised rule in Congo, precisely because he was both able and willing to present the crisis to his American interlocutors and paymasters in Cold-War terms, rather than as the Congolese civil war which this crisis was, in significant part. Yet Mobutu is here a relatively shadowy figure, “discovered” by the CIA (229) but not shaping events, as he surely did in some respects.

Indeed, whilst the book pays appropriate attention to the full set of events from 1960 to 1965, the legacy of these events is not explored. The cursory attention paid to Congo’s more recent crisis (232) is a missed opportunity to consider the parallels between two periods of conflict marked by internal conflict intertwined with foreign military intervention, a deeply problematic UN ‘humanitarian’ mission, and the perennial problem faced by governments in Leopoldville/Kinshasa that are charged by an inattentive international community with imposing uniformity on diversity, with few state-building resources at their disposal.

This should not detract from the real quality and importance of Namikas’s book, which is very well presented with some excellent illustrative photographs of key actors. It is based on just the right blend of synthesis of all other important works, together with an authoritative voice that belongs to the author alone. It provides by far the best overall analysis of the international aspects of the Congo crisis in the English language. It will undoubtedly remain the standard work on Congo’s Cold War for many years to come.

With *Battleground Africa*, Lise Namikas has usefully advanced our understanding of how the Congo Crisis simultaneously shaped the Cold War and was influenced by its associated political, economic, cultural and ideological aspects. While it would be too much to ask of any book to challenge Asia's preeminent place in scholarship as the key theatre of the Cold War, *Battleground Africa* reminds us that this continent, too, was profoundly affected. The Cold War may have taken root in Africa before 1960, but the dramatic turns and at times explosive events of the Congo Crisis led many contemporary observers to conclude that they were in fact witnessing the Cold War's arrival in Africa, with the Crisis serving as its (un)conscious midwife.

Even as the Crisis was unfolding, scholars had turned their attention to it and quickly published a first generation of literature. Catherine Hoskyns, Ernest Lefever, and Alan Merriam, for instance, wrote early accounts that still provide important frameworks for interpreting events.¹ Writing from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, Stephen Weissman, Madeleine Kalb and Richard Mahoney uncovered and utilized new sources to clarify and better explain American policy in the Congo.² Then, beginning in the 1990s, as newly declassified evidence emerged, additional critical histories of the Crisis were written from the perspective of individual states. David Gibbs's insightful study of American policy comes to mind, as does Alan James's excellent history of British policy.³ Finally, with books by Larry Devlin and Ludo De Witte, attention has been refocused on the significance of Patrice Lumumba, the first Congolese Prime Minister who was assassinated during the Crisis.⁴

Namikas draws effectively on this existing body of literature in presenting this history of the Crisis, and I think it can be fairly said that *Battleground Africa* is far from a wholesale, revisionist rejection of what has come before it. By emphasizing political and ideological

¹ Catherine Hoskyns, *The Congo since Independence: January 1960-December 1961* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965); Ernest W. Lefever, *Crisis in the Congo: A U.N. Force in Action* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1965) and *Uncertain Mandate: Politics of the U.N. Congo Operation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967); Alan P. Merriam, *Congo: Background of Conflict* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1961).

² Stephen Weissman, *American Foreign Policy in the Congo, 1960-1964* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975); Madeleine Kalb, *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa from Eisenhower to Kennedy* (New York: Macmillan, 1982); Richard D. Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

³ David N. Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention: Mines, Money, and U.S. Politics in the Congo Crisis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Alan James, *Britain and the Congo Crisis, 1960-1963* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); see also Kevin Spooner, *Canada, the Congo Crisis, and UN Peacekeeping, 1960-64* (University of British Columbia Press, 2009).

⁴ Larry Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo* (New York, Public Affairs, 2007); Ludo De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, trans. Ann Wright and Renée Fenby (New York: Verso Press, 2001).

considerations, the book does have less in common with Gibbs' economic-centered interpretation of American policy. The strength and innovativeness of this monograph rests in the author's ability to weave existing literature into a narrative that integrates new archival evidence (especially Russian sources) and published primary sources (including quite extensive use of the *Foreign Relations of the United States* volumes on the Congo Crisis) to deliver a more nuanced interpretation, especially on the role of allies and their interactions within Cold War alliances.⁵

While certainly not the first to place the Congo Crisis in context by examining the colonial period immediately prior to independence, Namikas has devoted three chapters to this subject. As a result, we now have a fuller sense of the perceptions and policies that emerged at that time and that then both informed and constrained future policy formulation during the Crisis. Readers are also taken beyond the departure of United Nations (UN) peacekeepers in mid-1964, a typical terminal point for studies of the Crisis. By continuing into 1965, Namikas is able to address both the difficulties that continued in eastern Congo after the withdrawal of the *Opération des Nations Unies au Congo* (ONUC) personnel and Joseph Mobutu's second coup, two events with clear significance for the trials and tribulations faced in the Congo in the more recent past and the present.

The most important findings presented here relate to relations between states within alliances, particularly in the West. Commenting on Belgian-American relations, Namikas argues from the outset that these were not "as coordinated or as close as once believed" (13). In the pages that follow, the complex nature of intra-alliance differences are in evidence again and again. Whether examining perceptions of Patrice Lumumba, the Katangan secession, diplomacy at the UN, or ONUC's use of force, we can see that the policy objectives of Belgium, Britain, and the United States at times converged but also often diverged. In accounting for such differences, Namikas never ignores economic motivations and self-interest, but argues that conflicting views of decolonization and strategic Cold War advantage were the more important factors. This finding concurs with my own work on Canadian policy during the Congo Crisis; Canadian officials were keenly aware of differences in European and American approaches, especially in evidence during NATO meetings after President John F. Kennedy assumed office and pursued his approach to the Congo with renewed American vigor. There never was a truly unified 'Western' approach to the Congo Crisis, and for Canada, even the perception that there might be a 'NATO line' was to be assiduously avoided.⁶ By comparison, Namikas has shown that the Soviet Union ably employed its allies, especially East Germany and Czechoslovakia, to further its agenda in the Congo. The Soviets and Chinese, however, competed for ideological prestige in Africa, and Namikas's discussion of this rivalry provides new and important information (72, 194-5). Without access to Chinese sources, it may be difficult to be definitive on this, but the

⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States. Vol. XX: The Congo Crisis* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1995).

⁶ Kevin Spooner, *Canada, the Congo Crisis, and UN Peacekeeping, 1960-64* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2009).

author has certainly paved a way that others will surely follow.

Patrice Lumumba features prominently, and appropriately so given his roles in the independence movement, as the country's first Prime Minister, and as a much wider symbol of African nationalism. Namikas convincingly argues that we should recognize the "depth" of his character and discern the rational aspects of his actions (225). The author explains how President Dwight Eisenhower hardened against Lumumba in September 1960, once the Congolese Prime Minister clung to office after being dismissed by President Joseph Kasavubu, who was favoured by the Americans (99). Though Lumumba was increasingly scorned as a Communist pawn as the Crisis continued, early American assessments of his character were, in fact, mixed. Views held by William Burden, the American Ambassador in Brussels, illustrate this point well (53). Burden describes Lumumba as a shrewd and intelligent opportunist, not an ideologue. Interestingly, Namikas attributes early Soviet ambivalence towards Lumumba to a determination that the Congolese leader was quite likely playing both sides of the Cold War (51). On this, at least, the Soviets and Americans appeared to have agreed.⁷ The book's treatment of Lumumba is but one good example of how the author has effectively captured the interplay between internal political developments in the Congo and external forces related to the Cold War; this is a definite strength.

There are moments when *Battleground Africa* would have benefitted from more detailed and developed explanations of the significance of how the UN contributed, either deliberately or inadvertently, to the course of events during the Crisis. Lumumba clearly began to see the international organization as an obstacle to independence, particularly when leaders in the West, East, and in Africa variously cited their multilateral contributions to the UN as a reason not to provide the direct bilateral aid he so desperately sought. We only get some sense of this when the book addresses the break in relations between Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary General of the UN, and Lumumba (87-89). Hammarskjöld's mid-1961 decision to remove Rajeshwar Dayal, his special representative in the Congo, also deserved greater attention. While Kennedy may well have sought Dayal's removal as *quid pro quo* (145), the Congolese practically and violently hated him. Notably, Joseph Mobutu, head of the Congolese armed forces at the time, was one of Dayal's most vociferous critics. This is a point worth further elaboration. The complex dynamics at play in relation to UN schemes for retraining the Armée Nationale Congolaise (ANC) are also understated (175). Over many months, this issue was the subject of intense debate and argument in the Secretary General's Congo Advisory Committee. U Thant, who replaced Hammarskjöld as Secretary General, encountered fierce opposition to any plan for retraining that did not adequately engage African nations as partners, but was equally confounded by Congolese resistance – again mostly from Mobutu – to any scheme that included Africans. Namikas is

⁷ The Canadian Department of External Affairs had also arrived at a very similar assessment of Lumumba, drawn from both dispatches arriving from its diplomats in the Congo and also from first hand experience with Lumumba during his 1960 visit to Ottawa. It is worth noting that officials arrived at this perception of Lumumba knowing full well that he met with Soviet officials while in Canada and had secured a Soviet offer of aid. Spooner, *Canada, the Congo Crisis, and UN Peacekeeping, 1960-64*, 56-9.

correct to highlight the intersections between decolonization and the Cold War; the difficulties encountered by the UN and noted here speak directly to this. The organization was meant to facilitate independence and decolonization, but the Congolese feared (and perhaps rightly so) that elements of the Congo's newly gained independence appeared to be slipping away under UN tutelage. Many more books have examined the UN's role during the Crisis, and it is perhaps unfair to critique Namikas given that the institution is not at the center of this analysis. Still, slightly more detailed accounts of such key elements of the tale would have strengthened, and certainly not contradicted, the book's overall conclusions.

One final point to be made relates to the question of race. At the outset, Namikas remarks on the historiographical consensus that has emerged on this issue, arguing that "race unquestionably affected the foreign policy of the United States" (14). Race is an explicit factor noted several times, for instance during Eisenhower's reluctant considerations over the need to plan for a potential American military intervention in the Congo (70); in depictions and characterizations of Patrice Lumumba (82); in relation to the political engagement of African Americans, activist and Nation of Islam leader Malcolm X for instance, as they reacted to and commented on the course of events in the Congo (193); and with respect to Soviet policy (29-31). While it may not be a principal analytical thrust of the book, Namikas has wisely identified race as an important consideration. Any number of research projects could well develop from the ground broken here, particularly given the cultural turn in international history.

For all the reasons I have noted, *Battleground Africa* is an important contribution to the historiography of the Congo Crisis and the Cold War. Its very title affirms the importance of the continent as a theatre of the Cold War, and its findings helpfully remind us to be cognizant not only of the implications for the Congo of misjudgments and misperceptions made by each side in the Cold War but also of the significant differences that also existed within alliances.

Walt Whitman wrote that while books are made of words, “the drift of it is everything.”¹ In this one single line Whitman brings together authors and audience and accomplishes in a poetic way what this H-Diplo roundtable does in a practical way. Thank you to the three reviewers, Kevin Spooner, Miles Larmer, and John Kent for their thoughtful comments on *Battleground Africa*, to Andy DeRoche for his introduction, and to the editors Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse. I appreciate the attention to my work by such eminent scholars who have each written about the Congo. Kevin Spooner’s book on *Canada, the Congo Crisis, and UN Peacekeeping* has been well received, Miles Larmer has written on the complex and always intriguing topic of Katangan gendarmes, and John Kent has written the eminent book *America, the UN and Decolonization: Cold War Conflict in the Congo*.² These works have each made major contributions to the history of the Congo and international relations.

Battleground Africa argues that the crisis in the Congo was an important global Cold War crisis that intersected with the process of decolonization. Days after the Congo’s independence on June 30, 1960 the crisis threatened another divided continent and a standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union. Both superpowers-- motivated by spheres-of-influence thinking and anti-imperialism-- agreed to the *Opérations des Nations Unies au Congo* (ONUC) to manage the crisis. The Cold War rivalry thus encapsulated the U.N. operation, changed Belgium’s role in its former colony, involved the neutral or nonaligned states in finding a solution, and helped sharpen the already fragmented Congolese domestic politics. U.S. Presidents Dwight Eisenhower and John Kennedy opposed a divided Congo that would link the United States too closely to imperialism and allow communism to gain a foothold in the heart of Africa. With this purpose in mind they justified Lumumba’s assassination in January 1961, developed plans for a national reconciliation, backed the U.N. military intervention in 1962, and ultimately also supported Mobutu’s coup in late 1965.

Spooner is gracious in his comments that the “strength and innovativeness” of *Battleground Africa* lies in its “more nuanced interpretation” of the Congo crisis, beginning with its time frame. Chronology is always important. While historians typically begin with the Independence Day ceremonies on June 30, 1960,

¹ Walt Whitman, “Shut not your doors” in *Leaves of Grass* (originally published in 1855) and retrieved from The Project Gutenberg at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1322/1322-h/1322-h.htm> (2009).

² Kevin Spooner, *Canada, the Congo Crisis, and UN Peacekeeping* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), Miles Larmer, “Local Conflicts in a Transnational War: the Katangese Gendarmes and the Shaba Wars of 1977-78,” *Cold War History* 12 (2013): 89-108, and John Kent, *America, the UN and Decolonization: Cold War Conflict in the Congo* (NY: Routledge, 2010).

Battleground Africa examines superpower expectations in the years leading up to the crisis. It also argues that the crisis should not end with the Kennedy administration in 1963 or the U.N. operation in mid-1964 but should include Army Chief of Staff Joseph Mobutu's coup of November 1965. This 'long' crisis helps put into perspective the U.S.-led western response to the crisis, including important U.S.-Belgian differences. It also enables a fuller perspective on the Soviet role and its long-term objectives in building a sphere of influence in Africa.

Patrice Lumumba, Congo's first prime minister who was ruthlessly assassinated six months after he was elected, features prominently in the book, as Spooner notes. The West's opposition to him was not a direct result of his communist beliefs or of any confirmed Soviet manipulation. In fact, new documents show just how far Moscow kept Lumumba at arm's length. Lumumba's fierce independence and the nature of Congolese politics combined to sharpen the response to him as a radical nationalist. Neither Washington nor Moscow liked the way he tried to play one superpower off against the other, and both sought to block this Cold War form of nationalist expression. Lumumba approached problems with a carrot-then-a-stick, seeking negotiation and if the results were unfavorable, retaliating however he could. *Battleground Africa* brings a human side to the Congo's first Prime Minister and the responses to him.

The United Nations operation in the Congo guaranteed the international attention and commitment to finding a solution to the crisis. Although *Battleground Africa* integrates the role of the United Nations into its account of the crisis, including the origins of the operation, and the negotiations of 1961 to the U Thant Plan that ended in military intervention, Spooner suggests that the U.N. contribution to "the course of events" could have been covered more thoroughly. He makes a good point both generally and on the question of the *Armée Nationale Congolaise* (ANC) retraining. The question of who was in control of the Congolese armed forces and of what direction its reform would take are critical to understanding the crisis. President Joseph Kasavubu, for instance, called for UN-sponsored ANC retraining on September 5, 1960 a time when Mobutu's influence was clearly on the rise (97). The Soviet Union deeply opposed any retraining and urged African states not to leave ONUC since that would free the West to reorganize and 'neutralize' the ANC, which Moscow rightfully deemed meant take control of the Congo (137). Retraining, as Spooner notes, was particularly important during the time of the U Thant plan and continued after the reunification of Congo (175). It became important again during efforts to quash the rebellion of 1964-1965. The struggle to manage the ANC is a thread that runs throughout the crisis and deserves greater attention.

Miles Larmer appreciates the book as "the best overall analysis of the international aspects of the Congo crisis." *Battleground Africa*, he notes, argues that "exaggerations and misjudgements" pervaded the halls of the White House and the Kremlin and led each superpower to become more entangled in the crisis and in finding a political settlement than might otherwise have been the case. Larmer's own keen knowledge of Africa brings him to note how the CIA "could flatten"

Congolese complexities into “two-dimensional Cold War terms” to offer “apparently easy solutions” such as the assassination of Patrice Lumumba.

Larmer compliments the book on moving through the material “with authority and alacrity” to offer an “impressive synthesis” of superpower policies. He picks up on the careful characterization of Dag Hammarskjold and the fluctuations in how the U.N. Secretary General managed his relationship with Washington. Hammarskjold became the defining force behind the United Nations in the Congo despite a clear dependence on the United States. Many scholars have called ONUC a U.S. foreign policy tool which predominantly served Washington’s interests. This is true only to a point, as *Battleground Africa* illustrates. Hammarskjold was not so easily malleable. He wanted the United Nations to serve as a bridge for decolonization, but his relationship with Lumumba quickly soured. He intrinsically understood when it was to the benefit of ‘his’ organization to align itself with the United States (which did foot most of the bill), when he could break away, and when he needed to assuage growing third world sensibilities.

The policy of the Soviet Union contributed to uncertainty in the crisis. Larmer notes the important contribution the book makes in discussing Soviet policy and Nikita Khrushchev based on new Russian archival material. Khrushchev, for instance, chose not to come to the defense of Lumumba in the aftermath of his dismissal in September 1960. From a larger Cold War perspective this is understandable since it would have required a go-it-alone stand against the United Nations. But when more African states began to oppose U.N. actions in the Congo in the aftermath of Lumumba’s assassination, (and in the process, make some of China’s criticisms very real), Khrushchev again offered aid to Antoine Gizenga, Lumumba’s Vice Minister, and began to reevaluate the alternatives.

For Larmer the book remains a study of external interventions. He suggests that it does not take into account the “extent and diversity” of Congolese opposition to Lumumba. Congolese domestic politics is a truly fascinating and challenging subject. Larmer makes a good point and much could and should be written on this topic. In particular, Larmer notes that the book does not account for the continuing rejection of successive central governments which he suggests “was not primarily the result of external manipulation.” Congolese grass-roots politics is important, but the division between the internal and the external is often hard to make in Congo. It is true that the Congolese, in the end, failed to rally behind Prime Minister Cyrille Adoula. But Adoula hung onto power for three years (August 1961 to June 1964) while being constantly overshadowed by Mobutu. The subsequent Prime Minister Moïse Tshombe leaned on mercenary force and failed to garner much support outside of Katanga. Similarly the CIA backing of Joseph Mobutu as he seized power in November 1965 seemed to bear out the importance of power rather than the people.

Larmer argues that Mobutu remained a “relatively shadowy figure” in the book, despite his importance and his obvious influence on shaping events. I would agree,

and more could have been included on him. *Battleground Africa* argues that Mobutu's rise to power after his first coup was not as inevitable as has often been suggested. Kennedy was publicly ambiguous toward Mobutu in early 1961 and the famous picture of Mobutu at the White House was not taken until 1963 when the two met. Hopes during this time remained with Adoula. Kennedy was particularly frustrated with the question of ANC retraining and what he thought to be Mobutu's reluctance to accept American recommendations to undertake greater reform. Partly too, Mobutu kept his role intentionally unclear, and while he was ambitious, the fact that he did remain behind the scenes for so long is hopefully a topic on which the opening of U.S. and Belgian archives will shed light.

In many ways John Kent would have preferred to have read a different book. *Battleground Africa* is not about the "detailed operations of European capitalism in Central Africa" as his final comment presents. Many of his critiques reflect back to this position. Kent takes issue with the book's emphasis on Cold War politics as the underlying causal factor behind events. He suggests that the book largely ignores the decolonization process and instead "has the aim of fitting the Congo into what is largely a conventional Cold War focus and interpretation" rather than looking at the impacts of decolonization and the Cold War together. *Battleground Africa* does not simply default to a "conventional" approach, "ignore" alternatives, or follow "paths trodden" by *Foreign Relations of the United States* editors. The book was crafted to explore the Cold-War concerns which dominated the responses of American foreign policy makers including Presidents Dwight Eisenhower, John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson as well as Soviet foreign policy makers, particularly Nikita Khrushchev. The book acknowledges the challenges posed by the decolonizing world, and shows how the presidents worked to prevent an anti-western, anti-imperialism from taking over the Congo. For Eisenhower this was much more important in the early days of the crisis before he fixated on the 'Lumumba problem' and for Kennedy, his anti-imperialist visions encouraged his appeal to African nationalists via the United Nations and his efforts to bring an end to the secession. In any case, *Battleground Africa* argues that the over-riding goal of the presidents was not to 'cloak' what Kent calls "a neo-colonial enterprise" but to use their anti-imperialism as a way to limit communism and establish a stronger position for themselves in Africa.

Kent is right that *Battleground Africa* does not give equal space to the process of decolonization. I respect Kent's argument here. As mentioned, Kent himself has written a valuable account on this topic. Part of the difference lies in the ambiguity inherent in the term decolonization. The crisis in the Congo began as a crisis in the Belgian transfer of power and its subsequent decision to support the Katangan secession. But it was in fact the U.S. and Soviet response to, and ultimately rejection of, the secession that was central to the international component of the crisis. Where decolonization ends and the Cold War begins is blurred by the complexities of Congolese politics. Both superpowers agreed that the secession and Belgian support of it would result in a costly Cold War division of Africa. *Battleground Africa* shows how the Belgian role in the January 1960 Round Table, its clumsy handling of the actual transfer of power in July 1960, and its plotting to 'eliminate' Lumumba

sometimes complimented U.S. Cold War interests and sometimes worked against them. The reviewer's comment that the book does not analyze the U.S.-Belgian-British desire to see Lumumba removed in terms of "the implications for an understanding of the Cold War in the Congo" and his charge of omission of the May 1962 Belgian and British conference despite the mention of the British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's letter to Kennedy on this very point, (160) simply don't seem to reflect the work at hand. More material, certainly, could have been included on the Belgian ending of its colonial relationship with the Congo. Although it was beyond the scope of this work, it is certainly worthy of a book in its own right.

It is worthwhile emphasizing that *Battleground Africa* makes an important argument about the secession of Katanga. Scholars have traditionally suggested that the United States, especially Eisenhower, preferred to see Katanga as informally independent rather than reunited with an unreliable but unified government in Leopoldville. However, *Battleground Africa* argues that neither the Eisenhower nor Kennedy administrations accepted the secession of Katanga, rather, they understood that the reunification of the Congo was necessary to ensure future stability. While one wishes for more material to be released on the nature of U.S.-Belgian relations, the evidence that we do have suggests that American foreign policy makers were not completely informed of the Belgian role in Katanga and were never entirely sure of the exact intentions of their allies. Based on this evidence, *Battleground Africa* suggests that the Congo crisis added significant tension in U.S.-Belgian relations. Kent argues that the discussion of Katanga's secession should have included more on Belgian efforts to undermine the new state and suggests that I merely refer to them (Belgian leaders) as "insensitive" in this regard. The book, however, illustrates the implications of the Belgian role in the Katangan secession and manipulation of elections in July and August 1960, and includes the influence of UMHK, especially during the negotiation and implementation of the U Thant Plan. In this sense, Belgium and Katanga fuelled the crisis, but they were not the crisis (and thus the analysis did not center on (neo-) colonial enterprises).

The policy of the Kennedy administration in the Congo is multi-layered. Again there is much room for scholarly debate. Kent prefers an "alternative approach" which would see Kennedy "focusing on the dangers of communism because of the need for political and economic development." Kent's own larger work has made this argument, and here he cites the New Frontier's more dynamic approach to Africa based on the influential work of Walt Rostow (in his book *The Stages of Economic Growth*) as a 'key component' of U.S. policy and the Cold War.³ *Battleground Africa* argues instead that Eisenhower and Kennedy's goals in the Congo were guided by Cold-War concerns and American traditions of anti-imperialism (6). The Kennedy administration rejected a divided Congo, akin to Korea and Vietnam, and instead

³ Walt W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

supported, or rather imposed, unity. Sometimes this unity reflected American (anti-imperial) experience, such as the constitution included in the U Thant Plan for National Reconciliation that, as Undersecretary of State George McGhee succinctly said, paraphrased the U.S. constitution (164). At other times, notably in its support of Mobutu in September 1960 and afterwards, the United States did not want to leave so much to chance. The historian Steven Weissman has helped reveal the CIA role in the Congo and the importance of covert policy which, again, was devised with clear Cold War, anti-communist intentions.⁴

Kent's comments raise another key issue regarding Soviet policy and 'however important or unimportant' it was in defining the crisis. *Battleground Africa* argues that superpower behavior and perceptions during the crisis brought each power to misunderstand the intentions of their rival. Until the recent opening of the Russian archives, western sources, American and British in particular, were all that was available. The material on the Soviet role shows a small glimpse of what U.S. policy was constructed against and helps us understand superpower behaviors. That is why it is important. There was no plan to take over Africa, as Sergei Mazov has also illustrated,⁵ but neither was there a blind Soviet concession that the Congo had fallen into the western sphere. In a slight aside, *Battleground Africa* also argues that although the Soviet presence was heavily outweighed by American influence, the Soviet Union returned again and again to the Congo, most notably in 1964 and 1965. While still not reaching anything close to U.S. levels of involvement, its renewed interest suggested that it did see potential to foster some improvement for the Soviet position in Africa. Ironically, the Belgians were also returning, this time on U.S. planes to rescue hostages. The events of 1964 and 1965 most assuredly deserve more attention, although it is unclear why Kent suggests a focus here would have been "more appropriate." The operations planned for Paulis and Bunia are mentioned in the book (206). Still, there is much to learn about Johnson's approach to Congo. Reviewers will always rightfully find areas where more attention is needed, but the bigger picture presented by *Battleground Africa* is one of its main contributions to better understanding this slice of post-1945 international relations.

There is much we do not know and much yet to research on the Congo. It is a critically important topic now, and for the future. A greater understanding of the crisis, how it defined the Cold War in Africa, the role of the CIA, how the crisis changed the United Nations and peacekeeping, and its larger impact on the Congo, are all topics beckoning attention. As several of the reviewers noted, the comprehensive and multi-layered approach of *Battleground Africa* brings many strands of the crisis together. The book uses new archival sources to offer important

⁴ Steven R. Weissman, "An Extraordinary Rendition," *Intelligence and National Security* 25:2 (April 2010).

⁵ Sergei Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War: the USSR in West Africa and the Congo, 1956-1964* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center and Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

new findings on the goals and intentions of the superpowers and their leaders, the role of allies and bloc members, peacekeeping and the United Nations' role along with the importance of the non-aligned (or so-called 'third' world) states, and the intersection of Congolese domestic politics. The Congo crisis thus becomes more understandable in view of a multi-layered international analysis and ultimately deserves greater attention as a major Cold War crisis.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 United States License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/us/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA.