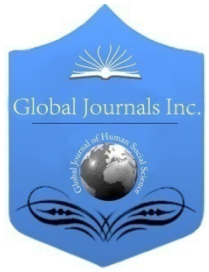
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A Happy Congolese Sisyphus? Rolling the Rock of the Conradian Project AD Vitam Eternum!

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Abstract- This paper shows that the major problem of the Congo is to move from an extractive space to a political one, that is to say, resolutely abandon the Leopoldian and colonial state model. This is the challenge facing the Congolese since independence, but it has its roots in the original strategy of political and economic organization of the Congo Basin. The magnitude of this titanic challenge was clear from the accession of the Congo to independence and to this day Leopoldian model is still very present. Getting rid of it is the task many generations of Congolese have to reckon with.

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A Happy Congolese Sisyphus? Rolling the Rock of the Conradian Project AD Vitam Eternum!

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I. Introduction

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has long stood and stands today as symbol of the antithesis of social order. Indeed, the most knowledgeable analysts note that the problems of Congo are many, deep and complex. However, few identify the real cause or source, namely the persistence, subtle or violent, of the Leopoldian project that was primarily based on the exploitation of natural resources of the Congo and is now continued by the multiple "guardians of colonial structures." The Congolese state is in fact the continuation of the colonial state, which was supposed to disappear. In this article I argue that the most urgent and challenging issue in the Congo now is to build a Congolese nation not just a vehicle for a new Leopold.

The paper will first show that the only representation of the State many Africans knew was the colonial state. In the case of the Congo the presence of abundant minerals and fertile soil made it particularly very difficult for the indigenous Congolese to maintain their independence. However, as I will show in the second part of this paper, there were many attempts in the Congo to free the country from the colonial model. Unfortunately most of them if not all of them failed. Politicians like Patrice Lumumba or Laurent Desire Kabila paid the ultimate price while trying to get rid of the neo-colonial state. In the last decades two dynamics have been observed in the Congo in response to the continuation of the Leopoldian project. On the one hand there is an internal centrifugal movement in reaction against the persistence of the colonial state. Congolese are trying to claim their destiny by rebelling against structures of outside control. On the other hand, there is an external centripetal dynamic reinforcing the neo-colonial project with the complicity of some Congolese politicians who are turned into well-paid "architects of poverty." The third part of paper will deal with the two dynamics. In conclusion, I would suggest that the new Congolese nation should be designed to focus on power as productive instead of exercising power as repression, extraction and obsession with order. The first releases the creativity and imagination, the second inhibits and controls them; the first integrates and builds, the second alienates and marginalizes. The first develops and expands, the second exploits and impoverishes.

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II. The Colonial State

Much of modern Africa has known only one representation of the State, namely, the colonial state whose exercise of power is now discredited. The typical African state is actually the colonial state transferred into the hands of new managers since independence[1]. To understand the concept of the state and the exercise of power in Africa, we must understand the colonialist project.

The colonial state was characterized by order and brutality, effectiveness and inhumanity, discipline and repression, productivity and operations. Indeed, it was not the intention of the colonial powers in Africa to build a state worthy of the name, but rather organized structures to provide the raw materials necessary for the development of Western cities.

In Africa, the Congo case is unique in that it combines the disproportionate, coercive and predatory ambition of its colonizers and the abundant riches of its soil and subsoil. No wonder that the Congo was one of the most exploited territories of colonial Africa. As Hobsbawm (1989) points out, at the Berlin Conference,

[1] According to A. Roosevelt (2011), the colonial state was not really disciplined or effective. Because it was not disciplined (drunken and lazy abusive colonials) nor effective (it could not win economically without forced labor it could not win people's adherence by reason or persuasion or benefits so had to do it by force), it was not even economically effective because it ran each successive industry into the ground and left Congo in economic trouble at independence.
Yes indeed there were roads, but these roads did not serve the country or population but just the industries and their captains. Pro-Belgian colonial apologists Van Reybrouck claim that Congo was so organized and well supplied with infrastructure at independence but it's not true. There are some interesting critiques of the late colony by some UN functionaries sent in to take over when the Belgians fled during the mutiny of summer 1960.

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the Congo was designed as an extraction area and never as a political space. The Congo Free State of Leopold II in 1885, and the Belgian colony, from 1908, were governed by the original project of extraction and exploitation of raw materials. The network of roads and railways, the health and education system, the metropolitan administration of the colony all met the predatory logic of Leopold's project that Adam Hochschild (1998) characterized, rightly as business of barbaric plunder.

The Congo is grappling with the ideological and structural remains of the colonial state, which are expected to disappear to give rise to the birth of a true nation. In fact, the demise of the colonial state and its remains is the precondition for the emergence of the Congolese state.

Leopold's project -subtly continued today by other actors- whose purpose is not to build a Congolese nation, but to establish and maintain an extractive space, benefiting the metropole (now synonymous of capitals of economic globalization) remains the major obstacle to the emergence of the Congolese nation.

Originally organized as an extractive environment for the provision of raw materials, Congo has never become a politically stable and independent nation. Despite its independence and all successive political reform apart from the Berlin Conference, there has never been a coherent political consensus on the Congo. Congo today is a continuation of the colonial state, which has to disappear.

Thus, the major problem of the Congo is to move from an extractive space to a political one, that is to say, resolutely abandon the Leopoldian and colonial state model. This is the challenge facing the Congolese since independence, but it has its roots in the original strategy of political and economic organization of the Congo Basin. Contrary to what some simplistic analysis suggest, this challenge is not an easy task, since it requires major structural changes or, as Mudimbe said, "killing the father's smell." The magnitude of this titanic challenge was clear from the accession of the Congo to independence when in the words of Crawford Young (1965) "a colonizer who suddenly lost the deep conviction of the correctness of his policy was faced with a revolution by the colonized who lacked both the structure and ideology. Total colonialism was replaced with complete independence overnight, but the very completeness of the victory of the colonized was concomitant result of impotence which emptied the success of its substance. "

For a better perspective we should remember that Congo had a long history of rulership at all levels, and it had much better balance of powers than the Euro-imperialist model brought over from the metropole. Kings versus Queen mothers, diviners versus provincial chefs and court officials, religious societies/versus the rulers, etc. In many cases African kingdoms were very large and familiar with the provision of goods and services at supra-regional political and economic level. Industries and commercial vehicles were numerous. The colony had to use force and decrees to prevent Congolese from out-competing them. So Congolese entrepreneurs were taxed or prohibited, while colonial business were subsidized and protected by the state.

To date, the Congo is still negotiating with a limited success, trying to make viable an extractive space without a coherent political consensus. The history of independent Congo is, in fact, marked by attempts to free the country from the colonial legacy. It is true that these attempts were never completely successful, resulting in what could be called a failed state.

III. Fighting the Colonial Legacy in Independent Congo

The repeated attempts and failures to get rid of the colonial legacy have not discouraged Congolese people who are determined to get their country back. Albert Camus, the French philosopher of the absurd, suggests that we should dare imagine Sisyphus happy. Like Camus, Congolese people seek to fight the colonial legacy without abandoning their cultural values, including the principle of the "intrinsic value of human life."

The first attempts to challenge the colonial state took place in Kinshasa (Leopoldville) and in Kisangani (Stanleyville) in early years of independence movements. From January 4 to January 7, 1959, riots against colonial subjugation broke out in Leopoldville and Stanleyville.

On the January 4, 1959 at mid-day a meeting of ABAKO (Association de Bankongo) an ethnic political party led by Joseph Kasa-Vubu based in Kinshasa was cancelled at the last minute by Mr. Tordeur, the former colonial governor of Kinshasa. The information about the cancelation of the Abako meeting did not reach members gathered for the meeting who were surprised to learn that Governor Tordeur had cancelled the meeting. People began to chant and ask for immediate "independence", which triggered the three days riots in Leopoldville and Kisangani.

Abako members challenged the oppression exercised by the colonial state. The Force Public tried to squash the rebellion using violence typical of the colonial state, which resulted in multiple deaths. However the outburst forced Belgium to surrender. This riot, where people were claiming their freedom from foreign subjugation, was followed by the Round Table Conference during which the Belgians agreed to grant independence to Congo on July 30, 1960. Along with seventeen other African countries, the Congo gained its independence in the 1960s. Belgium, being a late starter in the colonial game, did not foresee the prospect of

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decolonization in good time. It had trained fewer candidates to take over as administrative officers than the other colonial powers, resulting in only three Congolese with graduate degrees in the country at the time of independence. However, its pace of mineral extraction and agricultural commercialization had rapidly created an urbanized and partially proletarianized population (Peemans 1996).This abrupt and poorly prepared departure was followed by the short-lived rise to prominence of amateurs and half-educated politicians like Patrice Lumumba among others.

In the DRC in 1960, the very nature of the social structure and political process placed extraordinary power in the hands of individuals standing on fragile pinnacles. Simultaneously, however, the pressure pulling at this power and the social forces constraining individual actions were so strong that none of these individuals could go against the colonialists who wanted independence in name only. The neocolonialist United States hoped to gain strategic minerals from countries like the Congo and to keep those resources away from their Cold War enemy, the USSR. The US sought to promote their notion of "democracy" a little more enthusiastically than the jaded Europeans, but they were also perfectly willing to dispense with it for strategic calculations (Noyce 2001).

Five days following independence on July 5, 1960 Congolese soldiers rebelled against their European officers. This was the first crisis with which the newly independent Congolese government had to grapple. Congolese soldiers could no longer accept the racial discrimination to which they had been subjugated by their white counterparts within the army. In fact for General Jansen's the Commandant in Chief of the *Force Publique*, as he put it himself in a formula that read like, for La Force Publique, *Avant l'Independence = Apres l'Independence* (before Independence = after independence) meaning that the structure of the Congolese national army should remain the same; white officers being naturally superior to black officers.

On July 11, 1960, Katanga province seceded under Moise Tshombe. This secession could hardly be called as a rebellion against the colonial project. On the contrary the Katanga Province wanted to carry on the Leopold project the entire country was contesting after independence. Belgian officers regrouped there under their country's orders and mining companies. As he reveals in his importunate book, "I was General Janssens," he and his fellow Belgian officers had refused to Africanize the leadership and had organized a plot to remove Lumumba. It was not true that discrimination was supposed to continue, merely that that's he and the colonials wanted.

However, 20,000 peacekeepers were sent to the Congo to protect Europeans and to restore the colonial order of things. Western paramilitaries and mercenaries who were often hired by mining companies to protect their interests poured into the Congo. The goal was to keep the colonial order and ensure that raw material flow from the mines to the shores were continuing without interruption.

On August 6, 1960, only few months after Independence, Kasai announced its independence from the entire colonial monster created by King Leopold. South Kasai's secession was orchestrated by the Belgian military in Katanga and US companies.

IV. Lumumba and the Fight Against the Colonial Order

On December 1961, United Nations peacekeepers recaptured Kasai and on January 15, 1963, the Blue Helmets regained the control of Katanga. These rebel regions were joined with the rest of the state in the logic of the colonial State with its characteristics of exploitation, repression and inhumanity, and an extroverted economy.

The United States, Belgium, their NATO allies, and the UN removed Lumumba from office, but the parliament voted him back in. As both CIA and Belgian intelligence wrote home, Lumumba kept coming back after every attempt to sideline him. After a succession of failed western controlled governments, the United States put Joseph Mobutu in power after helping Belgian officials in Katanga to assassinate Lumumba.

The figure of Lumumba is one of the most known in the Congo and all over the world. However, as Anna Roosevelt points out in her article, "Behind the Veil: Culpability in the assassination of Lumumba,"

"The exact circumstances of the crime have long been hidden. Those involved concealed and destroyed evidence, falsified facts, framed others or kept silent… Though it was a capital crime in nearly all relevant jurisdictions, no police investigation nor prosecutions were held, and the case never went to a judge or jury. Despite recurrent rumors of direct US and Belgium responsibility, most official and scholarly sources attribute he assassinations to Congolese leaders and soldiers" (2011:2).

A few commissions of inquiry into the assassination of Lumumba were established in the US and Belgium. The culpability of the US and Belgium was established by these inquiry commissions. A recent inquiry launched by Belgian scholar Ludo De Witte and the Belgian parliament acknowledged that many Belgians were involved in the plot against Lumumba even exposing many scholars and journalists as undercover Belgium security agents (Roosevelt 2011).

Lumumba was fighting against the repressive, exploitative and discriminatory Leopoldian State incarnated by the Belgian colonial State. His assassination translates the fierce resistance of the Corandian project to this day.

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Most of Congo still supported the independent government and by 1964, a closest aid of Lumumba Simba rebelled against the Congolese government. Simba's rebellion had engulfed half of the country. Simba did not only oppose the Mobutu government in Kinshasa which symbolized the continuity of the Leopold project, but also the underlying aim of the project where the economic trajectory remained the same as during the colonial subjugation. Once again Western troops from the US, Belgium and European mercenaries were sent to establish order, which trapped the Congolese under colonial control.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 a series of domestic protests took place in the Congo in the hope of getting rid of the colonial project, which has been perpetuated by the "gatekeepers of the colonial structures." In 1991 Congolese people protested against unpaid wages by looting all the oligarchs of the regime who upheld the Leopold project. To counter these actions, 2000 French and Belgian troops were deployed to Kinshasa to evacuate foreign nationals and indeed protect the regime of "gatekeepers".

In 1991 the Congolese decided to legally confront the Leopoldian State and get rid of it during a Sovereign National Conference. More than 2000 representatives from various political parties gathered in Kinshasa under the leadership of Bishop Monsengwo to reimagine another future for the Congo outside the Leopold project. However these attempts failed because European handlers helped Mobutu to divide the congress and keep power until his removal by Laurent Desire Kabila with the help of Rwandan and Ugandan national armies in May 2007.

V. Laurent Desire Kabila and the Fight against the Conradian State

Although welcomed by many Congolese, who let his military coalition pass almost unobstructed through Congo, Laurent Kabila is a mysterious presence in the history of Congo. Was he a true relic Lumumbist or an affiliate of western interests? Sometimes he acted like the one and sometime the other. In the beginning he seemed to pursue the country's independent interests, but by the end he was handing out obscene concessions for Congo's riches to murky foreign corporations with little controls. He became the son Mobutu did not have. In 1960s, the Americans imposed favorite candidate Joseph Desire Mobutu, proved to be powerful enough to nearly destroy the whole country over the next thirty-five years. Mobutu's corruption lasted until he was ousted in 1997 by Laurent-Desire Kabila with the help of Rwandan and Ugandan soldiers (Wrong 2000:3). Kabila was the neo-Mobutist solitary dictator who transformed the world's most attractive minerals market into a buccaneer industry enriching himself and his family network at the expenses of the Congolese people. Kabila was later assassinated by one of his bodyguard in January 2001. His son Joseph rules in a manner perceived by outsides as better suited the dictum of "good governance" and responsible economic management, yet the country remains "war-torn," and example of a "failed state". (Morre 2001, 2004, Clapham 2002, Duffield 2000; Ottaway 2002)

However, in some of his lucid moment, Laurent Kabila was aware that the main struggle was against the colonial State Lumumba fought for. Unfortunately at the end of his regime he behaved like the Leopold's heir.

VI. Two Dynamics: Centrifugal and Centripetal.

Observers of the political life in the Congo in the last two decades could see that the country was housing two dynamics. From inside, some regions have expressed the desire to delink with the central government of Kinshasa, which symbolizes the colonial project. This movement of pulling over from the center has sometimes taken on the form of a rebellion where a group of people decide to deprive the government from its claim to a monopoly of violence. This resistance is also against the type of state Kinshasa perpetuates, the colonial state. All the rebellions from the 1960s to the series of rebellions we have today, could be understood as internal attempts for these groups to dissociate from the colonial Leviathan. Some groups have had some success. The Rally of Congolese for Democracy (RCD), a Rwandan backed rebel group took control of part of North Kivu and has managed to extend its control to the entirety of South Kivu from 2000 to 2003. In 2006, a dissident general of the Congolese army, M. Nkunda Batware also rebelled against the government and threaten to capture the city of Goma and its hinterland in 2006. More recently a movement named after the March 23, 2006 agreement between Nkunda'a group and the Kinshasa government, the M23 briefly took control of the city of Goma in November 2012. Kinshasa was obliged to negotiate with the rebels. Even today many local rebel groups still fight the government in order to control their own region and to pull out of the colonial state.

This centrifugal movement confronts centripetal tendencies emanating mostly from outside players and foreign interests. The Congolese structure today is a reproduction of colonial one, but with local managers. Those who benefit from the continuation and the maintenance of the colonial state characterized by exploitation and repression, brutality and obsession with order, are also fighting to keep the status quo. The Kinshasa government receives foreign aid to better control the country, it buys weapons to ensure that it reinforces its claim over the monopoly of violence and oppresses and destroys those who will not follow. This centripetal dynamic is sustained by outside interests for their foreign policy goals with the complicity of local

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leaders. Following the aftermath of the Twin Tower attacks in New York, in the name of the war on terror, the Congo was given aid by the US to strengthen its unity and to keep its uranium out of the hands of the Al-Qaida. In the 1960s, the neo-colonial Mobutu government was supported in order to keep Congo's minerals out of the hands of the communist USSR and the oppressive and exploitative structure continued unabated. The 20,000 peacekeepers based in the Congo are there to ensure that the extraction continues uninterrupted and not to support claims for the just redistribution of resources. The UN seems to be another sort of 'state,' or part of an emerging 'global state,' that does not work very effectively at keeping the peace, but does certainly help a few people to accumulate wealth? On the side. Of course, it is ostensibly creating a peace that will help big capital make a cleaner sweep. This is the primary role of global military governance. By giving former colonial powers such as France power over its forces, the UN continues the neo-colonial project. For example, it was French and Belgian officers who supported, armed and directed the disruptive Rwandan genocide forces into eastern Congo.

VII. A Relatively Successful Case of Centrifugal Community: The Nande

The Nande community of Northeast Congo is known for its entrepreneurial spirit (MacGaffey 1991, Vwakyanakazi 1991, Mirembe 2005, Raeymaekers 2007, Kabamba 2013). But what distinguishes them from other groups is the desire to invest in their local milieu. Contrary to other groups like Luba (Kabamba 2011; Petit 2000) the Nande invest the profits of their gold trade back into Beni and Butembo where they were produced. They consider the State to be a parasite (MacGaffey 1991). Mobutu sent his republican guards into Butembo to collect money while leaving the businessmen alone. Today, an alliance between businessmen, church officials and multiple formations of militia have given the Nande community the freedom to distance itself from the neocolonial government in Kinshasa. Joseph Kabila who behaves as a monarch, a Leopold heir, collects money from the Nande for his elections, but for the businessmen the message to Kabila is clear: "leave us alone!"

Using the entrepreneurial spirit, and their relative success in transnational trade of gold, the Nande have built a social cohesion in a chaotic DRC. The reason of this success is the community's effort to insulate itself from the Leopoldian project maintained by the Kinshasa regime. However, the Nande case is part of the centrifugal movement, which is strongly opposed by the violence of the neocolonial State and its beneficiaries engaged in the centripetal maintenance of the Congo. This movement seems infinite because the more the neocolonial state is fought against the more it keeps coming back. It is the Sisyphus fate of rolling the rock on the mountain. The Congolese are rolling the rock of the Leopoldian State over and over on the mountain of human history. Albert Camus tells us that one should imagine a happy Sisyphus or happy Congolese.

VIII. Conclusion

Indeed, Congo has known only one representation of the State, namely, the colonial state whose exercise of power is now discredited. The idea that power is the monopoly of the state which exercises it from the top-down is increasingly challenged in our time where networks powered by interactive decision making processes typically include non-state actors. Theoretically, power understood as potential, that is to say, the elemental power by which humans deploy their productive capacity and their creative possibilities, is probably prior to power understood as potestas, that is to say the obsession with order which often proves repressive. However, Congo, defined as a symbol of the antithesis of the social order, has all the signs of the decay of power as potestas. In fact, a critique many students of political science have of the Congo is not so much the absence of the state (which is undeniable) but the necessary decline in my opinion of the colonial state or of power as potestas, leaving the field open to opportunistic powers. However, the demise of the colonial state and its remains is the precondition for the emergence of the Congolese state.

As the case of the Nande shows and many studies of the kingdoms and chiefdoms show, Congolese are perfectly able to organize and govern themselves and perfectly able to cohere into large political entities. The key is to remove the stranglehold of outside institutions to let the country roll under its own power.

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