

The African Executive | US Congo Relations Unmasked

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The DRC covers an area the size of Western Europe. It is an area endowed with mineral resources like cobalt, gold, silver, uranium, tungsten, zinc, crude petroleum and diamonds. About one million square kilometers are covered with rain forests. The climate is excellent for agriculture and there is rainfall all year round.

This country has for centuries engaged western explorers and traders (European and Americans) in rivalry that had to be settled in Berlin Conference in 1884 to 1885.

The US interests and concerns on the African continent have significantly affected the Congo basin. During the cold war, the US intervened in regions which it felt were vulnerable to communist influence. Congo happened to be one of these countries. The US government then defined its intervention as containment of communism and this was a policy followed by various Washington administrations from 1960 until the end of the Cold War in 1989.

Washington's covert agenda was to control the vast resources of the Congo and thus made Mobutu Sese Seko the president. For instance, the US was interested in uranium which is abundant in Congo for making atomic bombs. They were keen on keeping Russians away from getting hold of this uranium. Mobutu was a dictator who pillaged his country's resources. Congo was dependant on loans from the Bretton Woods institutions, while Mobutu purchased villas in Europe and built himself mansions in the Congo. The last years of his reign were characterized by riots against his rule and general feeling of discontent and despondency among Congolese.

Various American governments supported Mobutu's regime. Given US claims of promoting democracy and human rights, its insistence on promoting Mobutu whose regime violated every tenet of democracy and human rights is a contradiction of its declared ideals. There must have been something precious in Congo that made US administrators to ignore Mobutu's atrocities.

According to the "Political Economy of Third World Intervention-Mines, Money and U.S Policy in Congo Crisis," David N Gibbs argues that US business interests played a crucial role in the US foreign policy during the Congo Crisis. This business concept, he explains is the business conflict model. The business model presupposes that investments by companies in the third world countries do not only benefit the core economies but also individual companies. These multinationals compete with themselves for third world investments, inevitably causing feuds amongst themselves. They hence seek support of their mother governments who in turn backs them.

Congo and US relations took a dependency angle where the US focused on wealth accumulation by the core at the expense of periphery. A component of dependency is the enclave economy. A state in the core invests capital in a state for raw material. The local periphery provides the resources, however whatever is produced goes back to the core, for sale in the foreign markets.

The local economy only benefits from taxes, and a few of its citizens gain employment. The dependency theory postulates that for dependency theory of the third world to be explained, the political and economic histories of those countries have to be understood. And this for sure explains the US Congo relations.

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