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QUEST FOR POLITICAL CHANGE:
POPULAR STRUGGLES
FOR
REGIME TRANSITION
IN FORMER ZAIRE

Submitted by
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ABSTRACT.

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This thesis investigates the process of regime transition that led to the fall of the Mobutu regime in Zaire in 1997. The study contends that the type of regime in Zaire influenced the path of transition upon which the country embarked in the 1990s. It believes that the neopatrimonial and institutional characteristics of the Mobutu regime facilitated transition by way of a National Conference set up to negotiate political change. It further argues that the nature of the regime contained within it the seeds of its own destruction; therefore, this thesis seeks to understand the "why" and the "how" of events leading up the overthrow of the regime. It asks: "What made the political environment conducive to transition struggles in the early 1990s and subsequent regime change in 1997?"

Chapter one is devoted to building a theoretical foundation for the study of regime transition and change in Zaire. It covers definitional issues, a review of the literature and key debates, a general survey of contending perspectives and most importantly, an explanation of the framework and approach to be used in this particular study. This chapter presents a case for the implementation of a "structured contingency" approach that emphasises on the one hand, structural precedents and institutions and on the other hand, contingent factors of political relations and group mobilisation.

Chapter two explores the political-historical background of politics in Zaire, paying particular attention to the neopatrimonial nature of political authority in addition to the actors and events. It traces the political experience in Zaire through an emphasis on the main variables in this study: regime type, neopatrimonialism, the structure of political relations, group mobilisation processes, and regional conditions. Linked together, these factors set the stage for political transition to unfold in the 1990s.
Chapter three presents a comprehensive analysis of regime transition in Zaire by examining the essence of the process, including the "phases" through which the transition passes, the phenomenon of a national conference, the implications of the neopatrimonial government structure on the negotiations and patterns of group mobilisation, and the influence of regional factors. The discussion in this chapter illustrates the strength of the leading argument: Regime transition and change were significantly influenced by the nature of the Mobutu regime.

Chapter four examines the final months of the transition struggle in Zaire prior to the overthrow of the Mobutu regime in May 1997. It introduces a major new actor in the Zairean polity - the Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre (AFDL) - and follows the progress of the AFDL coalition in its military advance across Zaire. The thesis concludes with some general observations about what this study reveals in terms of understanding the relationship between regime type, transition processes, and political regime change.

Supervisor: Dr. Thiven Reddy
For my parents, Raymur and Viola.

Your steadfast love and support have been my inspiration.

*Merci. Merci « mingi » pour tous que vous m'avez donnés. Je vous aime avec tout mon coeur.*
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ACRONYMS.

ABAKO  Alliance des Ba-Kongo (Ba-Kongo Alliance)
ADP    Alliance Démocratique du Peuple (People's Democratic Alliance)
AFDL   Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre
       (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire)
ANC    Armée Nationale Congolaise (Congoese National Army)
ANEZ   Association Nationale des Entreprises du Zaïre (National Association of
       Zairean Businesses)
AZADHO Association Zairoise des Droits de l'Homme (Zairian Human Rights
       Association)
CND    Centre National de Documentation (National Records Centre)
CNL    Comité Nationale de Libération (National Liberation Committee)
CNR    Conseil National de Résistance (National Resistance Council)
CNRD   Conseil National de Résistance pour la Démocratie (National Resistance
       Council for Democracy)
CNS    Conférence Nationale Souveraine (Sovereign National Conference)
DSP    Division Spéciale Présidentielle (Special Presidential Brigade)
FAR    Forces Armées Rwandaises (Rwandan Armed Forces)
FAZ    Forces Armées Zairoises (Zairean Armed Forces)
FDU    Forces Démocratiques Unis (United Democratic Forces)
FLNC   Front pour la Libération Nationale du Congo (Front for the National Liberation
       of the Congo)
FODELICO Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo (Democratic Forces for the
         Liberation of the Congo)
FPC    Forces Politiques du Conclave (Political Forces of the Conclave)
FPR    Front Patriotique Rwandais (Rwandan Patriotic Front)
GECAMINES Générale de Carrières et des Mines du Zaïre
HCR    Haut Conseil de la République (High Council of the Republic)
IMF    International Monetary Fund
JMPR   Jeunesse du Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (Youth Wing of the Popular
       Movement of the Revolution)
MARC   Mouvement d'Action pour la Résurrection du Congo (Congo Revival
       Movement)
MNC    Mouvement National Congolais (National Congolese Movement)
MNC-L  Mouvement National Congolais - Lumumba (National Congolese Movement -
       Lumumba)
MPLA   Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (Popular Movement for the
       Liberation of Angola)
MPR    Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (Popular Movement of the Revolution)
MRLZ   Mouvement Révolutionnaire pour la Libération du Zaïre (Revolutionary
       Movement for the Liberation of Zaire)
PALU   Parti Lumumbiste Unifié (United Lumumbist Party)
PDSAC  Parti Démocratique et Social Chrétien (Democratic and Social Christian Party)
PRP    Parti Révolutionnaire du Peuple or Parti de la Révolution Populaire (People's
       Revolutionary Party or Popular Revolution Party)
RCP    Rassemblement des Congolais Progressistes (Progressive Congolese Union)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RDR</td>
<td>Rassemblement des Démocrates pour la République (Union of Democrats for the Republic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPF</td>
<td>Rwandan Patriotic Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARM</td>
<td>Service d'Action et de Renseignements Militaires (Military Action and Intelligence Service)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNIP</td>
<td>Service National d'Intelligence et de Protexion (National Intelligence and Protection Service)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDI</td>
<td>Union des Démocrates Indépendants (Union of Independent Democrats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDPS</td>
<td>Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social (Union for Democracy and Social Progress)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UFERI</td>
<td>Union des Fédéralistes et Républicains Indépendants (Union of Independent Republican Federalists)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UGEC</td>
<td>Union Générale des Etudiants Congolais (General Union of Congolese Students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNITA</td>
<td>União Nacional para Independência Total de Angola (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNTC</td>
<td>Union Nationale des Travailleurs Congolais (National Union of Congolese Workers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USOR</td>
<td>Union Sacrée de l'Opposition Radicale (Sacred Union of the Radical Opposition)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Map of ZAIRE.

Map 1: Zaire, taken from 'Zaire: The Crisis Continues.' (1993: 1).
INTRODUCTION.

The events are familiar in both cases. Soldiers of the national army mutiny, European foreign troops are dispatched, and the circumstances surrounding the political conflict are highly charged. As in the "Congo Crisis" of the 1960s, the events of the 1990s in Zaire\textsuperscript{1} were pitted against a dying regime. Only this time, the regime was none other than that governed by the man who had led the national army in the earlier case - Mobutu Sese Seko. The fall of the Mobutu regime in May 1997 came as a surprise both to observers outside and participants within Zaire, despite a general consensus that Mobutu's removal was essential to political reform in the country. From foreign governments to political and social scientists to "experts" of Zairean studies, from internal opposition groups to the local populations and Zaire's expatriate community, no one predicted the ouster of President Mobutu by a previously unknown coalition of groups in an armed political struggle that lasted less than a year. Two concurrent questions are raised in most minds: What factors explained the fall of the Mobutu regime? Why in May 1997 and not earlier? An investigation into these questions constitutes the special focus of this project.

This thesis examines how the nature of the Mobutu regime in Zaire influenced the processes of political transition in the 1990s that in turn, facilitated regime change in 1997. The type of regime institutionalised in Zaire was characterised by neopatrimonial policy and structure. In a context of personalised rule, then, processes of political change that threatened the existence of the Mobutu regime had never been accommodated. In fact, one implication that stemmed from the neopatrimonial nature of the regime was the systematic removal of all challenges to the Zairean state. Another implication of neopatrimonialism was reflected in the inability of the incumbent leader (Mobutu) to extricate himself from the political arena, even after the transition process began in 1990. In an era of political transformation, liberalisation, and democratisation in Africa, it is noteworthy that the negotiations between the urban-based opposition and the ruling elite for transition to a new regime failed. Instead, a political vacuum was created in which no single group involved possessed the power to change the situation. The country spiraled into political collapse, anarchy, and violence until unrelated events in eastern Zaire dramatically altered the political landscape. Even more striking, though, is how rapidly the breakdown of the Zairean state occurred once the balance of political forces tipped in favour of a military solution.

\textsuperscript{1}With the overthrow of the Mobutu regime in Zaire in May 1997, the new government changed the name of the country back to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It gained independence from Belgium in 1960 as the Republic of the Congo. The 1964 Constitution added the term "Democratic" to the Republic of the Congo. "Zaire" was the name given to the country in 1971 as part of President Mobutu's authentïcïté campaign. In this project, I will use the country name Zaire unless specified otherwise, as it reflects the time period under analysis.
This thesis approaches the study of transition processes and regime change in Zaire from a perspective that links different ideas from a few established theories. It contends that no existing theory adequately answers all questions of "who, what, why, when, and how". Instead, particular elements of the various arguments are extracted for their usefulness to the investigation in this thesis. In essence, the following factors represent the main variables: regime type, neopatrimonialism, structure of political relations, group interaction and mobilisation, regional conditions, and transition processes. The task of relating these factors in an analytical framework which supports the arguments of the thesis was facilitated through a "structured contingency" approach to the Zaire case. It embraces the divergent factors above in a comprehensive, interesting, and unique study to explain the dynamics of regime transition and change.

The methodology used in this thesis is structured according to the theoretical case-study format. It involves the examination of one case - Zaire - in "an intensive (in-depth and at length) fashion" with the foremost objective an analysis of "one or more theoretical questions explicitly and systematically" in order to suggest a hypothesis (Andriole and Hopple, 1984: 29). The hypothesis contends that the type of political regime has a major impact on the type of transition process. Still, in a field of study where the popular methodology is comparative analysis, why choose a single case for examination? There are valid reasons, one of which is that I was able to engage in a much more thorough analysis in the space and time allotted for the project. Further, the research that resulted in this thesis confirmed the age-old argument that what happens in Central Africa's "giant" affects the entire region. A Zairean scholar remarks: "It was Frantz Fanon who said that Africa was shaped like a firearm whose barrel pointed towards South Africa, and whose trigger was in the Congo [Zaire]. He was dead right, except that...Zaire has failed to play the dynamic role cut out for it, as the trigger of change in Africa" (Mbaya, 1993: 358). Whether a "giant" or a "trigger", Zaire is an important country in sub-Saharan Africa whose tentacles reach far and wide.

There is one other reason to focus on this particular country. In its time, Zaire exhibited several characteristics typical of postcolonial African countries, including the nature of its political administration, the tendency towards personalised rule, low levels of political participation, a dependence upon external assistance for economic development, wide disparities in levels of access to government-controlled resources, and the alienation of the rural areas from the urban areas (Mvuluya, 1993: 43). Hussein Solomon, a research scholar with the Institute for Security Studies, expresses the importance given to a study of Zaire's transition struggle in the following way:

Zaire is arguably the quintessential example of the current malaise affecting Africa. In Mobutu's vast empire are reflected all the symptoms and more - from corruption, nepotism and kleptocracy to ethnic conflict and an absence of democracy, from economic stagnation and environmental
degradation to foreign intervention. It is for this reason that it is so important to understand the unfolding crisis in the Zairean state: to understand Zaire is to understand Africa (1997: 91).

With that in mind, the interest and need for inquiry, not only into the causes and conditions of the current plethora of regime transition and change in Africa but more specifically in Zaire, makes this project a timely one.

As recently as mid-1996, Zaire's political struggles were part of a continent-wide movement towards an as yet undetermined form of democracy. With the symbolic fall of the Berlin Wall in eastern Europe in November 1989, processes of regime transition took fruition in more than half of the African continent's countries, especially those characterised by their common predisposition towards neopatrimonial government systems. Since 1990, the mobilisation of new groups in the political arena has precipitated many efforts at regime transition and change in Africa. In countries as regionally diverse as Gabon and Madagascar, Algeria and Zaire, incumbent regimes were openly and repeatedly challenged by opposition movements riding the waves of the democratisation process that had begun in eastern Europe. Opposition groups gained the support of the masses and organised demonstrations, strikes, and riots that targeted government corruption, mismanagement, single-party rule and a lack of free elections (Bratton and van de Walle, 1992: 27-38).

This thesis appeals to the importance of regime transition and change in the context of regional studies, either by reference to the external factors that influenced political developments in Zaire or based upon the recognition that many African countries have undergone similar transitional experiences and struggles for regime change due to their shared heritage of neopatrimonial government styles. Significantly, the fall of the Mobutu regime was precipitated not by the collapse of political institutions in Kinshasa (although their collapse certainly affected the situation), nor by the failures of the opposition movement to negotiate political change, but rather by a localised rebellion in eastern Zaire sparked by external, regionally-based elements.

Conflicts in Central Africa have always had the tendency and capacity to fester, then surprise the rest of the world with their violence and destabilisation. The rebellion that began in October 1996 in eastern Zaire was no exception. What set this rebellion apart, however, from other regional conflicts was how quickly it changed in nature from a localised reaction against racist ethnic policies to a national movement to overthrow the Mobutu regime. The coalition of political groups

---

2 The concept of democracy will be examined in an upcoming section. Given that it is a complex and contested term, it cannot merely be defined; some discussion as to the debates that surround it, especially in the African context, should accompany any attempt to define the term.
that called themselves the *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre* (AFDL) led the political struggle which brought together diverse interests, opportunities, and organisation in a common cause against the Mobutu regime.

The thesis comprises four chapters that cover (a) broad themes of regime theory and subsequent approaches to the study of regime transition and change in the African context; (b) the political historical background of Zaire prior to the 1990s; (c) the progression of regime transition through the 1990s that culminated in (d) the final political struggle for regime change which formally took place in May 1997. Of particular importance throughout the chapter discussions will be the analysis of the relationship between regime type - in the Zaire case, neopatrimonialism - and the path of transition that led to regime change. The structural precedents of neopatrimonial authority influenced the political institutions of government and impacted the behaviours, decisions, and interaction of political actors and groups. Together, they constitute the single most important argument or hypothesis to retain through the course of the study.

Chapter 1 addresses several theoretical issues related to regime transition and change in Africa. Its main objective is to present the analytical framework and approach used in this thesis. It opens with a discussion of key definitions and conceptual parameters relevant to the study. It then launches into a brief review of the literature and major debates found in the field of regime transition. An introduction of several established approaches to the study of regime transition is a necessary "next" step. They are evaluated insofar as their arguments relate to the Zaire case. Following the general survey of contending perspectives, the unique approach developed for this study is explained. The types of regime found in Africa are highlighted in the fourth section with an emphasis on the peculiar nature of neopatrimonial regimes. Specifically, the structural precedents and institutions that govern the regime are explored. In the final section, contingent factors such as group interaction and mass mobilisation are examined through a presentation of two theoretical constructs: the polity and the mobilisation models. An application of both models in the remaining chapters will enhance our understanding of the link between regime type, transition processes and political change in Zaire.

Chapter 2 begins the application of regime transition theory to the case of Zaire. The provision of a political historical background to Zairean politics is the main objective of the chapter. In fact, the most essential prerequisite for a better understanding of the causes and conditions that influenced transition processes and change in the 1990s is a systematic, albeit limited, analysis of politics in Zaire since independence. The chapter therefore pinpoints key events, actors, and circumstances that have shaped the Zairean political experience. It focuses upon an analysis of the main variables
that have primacy in this study - as stated earlier: regime type, neopatrimonialism, power structures, group mobilisation, political relations, regional factors, and so forth. To do this, a chronological map traces a brief history of Zaire from the colonial era through to the struggle for independence, then from the "Congo Crisis" (1960-1965) to the height of President Mobutu's power in the 1970s, and finally, to the growing anti-Mobutu movement and public appeal for regime transition and change that characterised the 1980s. Each time period under examination was instrumental in the "big picture". Together, they illustrated how the Mobutu regime was able to slowly but thoroughly institutionalise neopatrimonial political authority. While unaware at the time of what it was doing, the Mobutu regime in fact set the stage for its inevitable demise. Why? Neopatrimonial regimes contain within themselves the seeds of their own destruction. This is but one observation Chapter 2 intends to make in preparation for the onslaught of regime transition and change in the remaining two chapters.

Chapter 3 focuses on an analysis of the circumstances that fueled Zaire's political transition struggle in the early 1990s. It begins with a discussion of Zaire's opening to a multiparty political forum. In 1990, amidst mounting pressures for political change from both domestic groups and the international community, President Mobutu grudgingly relented to public appeals and abolished the single-party Second Republic. With this opening, Zaire's opposition movement expanded, gaining widespread support for its efforts to transform the political landscape that had, up until that point, been dominated by Mobutu. The opposition called for a National Conference to guide the transition process. The bulk of this chapter explores the progression of regime transition through its various "phases", taking into account the structural factors of neopatrimonial regime type and the contingent aspects of political group relations. A combination of circumstances and interests - in part unique to Zaire and in part characteristic of other contemporary transition struggles in neopatrimonial regimes - determined the type of transition that unfolded and its rate of success. Several issues will therefore be addressed, including the structural implications of neopatrimonialism, the growth of the opposition movement, and the role of the incumbent regime. Chapter 3 concludes with a short examination of the regional environment in order to illustrate the significance of external forces in the final struggle for regime change.

Chapter 4 details the transition struggle for regime change in Zaire from the point at which the nature of the struggle assumed the qualities of an armed political movement. This occurred in October 1996 with the emergence of the Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre (AFDL). One of the central objectives of this chapter points out the severe climate of political exhaustion, economic collapse, and social decay in Zaire, all of which made possible the birth of new opportunities in the Zairian quest for political change. The AFDL advanced across
Zaire with remarkable speed. In contrast to the opposition movement that had been working to negotiate political transition in Zaire since 1990, the AFDL had the means with which to enforce transitional change. The struggles that ensued progressed through eight months of strategic armed offensives until the final moment when the Mobutu regime was overthrown. The chapter explores the immediate roots of ethnic conflict that engendered the rebellion in eastern Zaire and then necessarily launches into an in-depth discussion about the AFDL coalition, its origins, mobilisation, and political objectives. The military strategies adopted by the AFDL coalition forces in their march across Zaire are assessed and played against the weaker government counter-initiatives. The chapter wraps up with the overthrow of the Mobutu regime on May 17, 1997. The final conclusions are drawn: the nature of the Mobutu regime indeed influenced the processes of transition and regime change in significant and history-changing ways.

The theoretical questions addressed in this thesis, in addition to the actual Zairean political experiences to date, suggest that there is much that is fragile in analyses of regime transition. As is the case in all recent struggles for regime change, the ultimate outcome and/or success of the transition process and regime change are difficult to predict in advance. While new vistas are opened, they are subject to formidable constraints which make the future course of many countries, including Zaire, highly unpredictable. Less than three years have passed since the overthrow of the Mobutu regime, and the country remains embroiled in intense political and ethnic violence. That being the case, this theoretical study is confined to events that took place prior to the ouster of the late President Mobutu.³

³Mobutu Sese Seko died of terminal cancer in September 1997, less than five months after his forced removal from the presidency of Zaire.
CHAPTER 1: POLITICAL REGIME TRANSITION IN ZAIRE:
Analysis, Theory, and Approach.

1.0: Introductory comments.

In 1990, President Mobutu formally ended Zaire's single party state and announced an opening to multiparty politics. For the next few years, processes of transition dominated the political arena with the foremost objective to remove the Mobutu regime from power. Even so, attempts by the urban-based opposition to effect regime change resulted in a stalemate. The neopatrimonial nature of the Mobutu regime was deeply embedded within Zairean politics; it influenced the transition environment in significant ways, one of which was the refusal of the incumbent to relinquish his power to a transitional government. Thus, a political vacuum was created in the capital, Kinshasa. Meanwhile, eastern Zaire was subjected to increasing ethnic violence that sparked an armed rebellion in October 1996. The coalition of groups responsible for the rebellion gained support as a national movement with political objectives and overthrew the Mobutu regime in less than a year. By May 1997, the Mobutu regime had fallen. The longest-surviving African dictator, President Mobutu, fled Zaire and a new government was installed in the newly renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The following chapter provides a theoretical background for an examination of regime transition and change in Zaire. It explores a broad range of political themes relevant to the Zaire case, and covers a vast amount of literature, debate, and theory in a considerably limited amount of space. The objective of the chapter is divided into three parts: (a) to build the theoretical framework for regime transition and political change in Zaire; (b) to explore the notion of regime type, in particular its manifestation as "neopatrimonial"; and (c) to emphasise the role of groups and patterns of mobilisation within the framework of transition and change. From regime theory to transition literature, regime type that includes neopatrimonialism, and a structured contingency perspective that incorporates group-conflict theory, this chapter will extract the means with which to develop a unique framework and approach to the examination of regime transition and change in Zaire.

To these ends, this chapter is organised in the following sequence. First, conceptual issues and broad themes of regime theory will be revealed through several debates. Included in the discussion is a short literature review in the form of a series of debates. Following that, the various approaches used to study regime transition will be presented, with the aim to develop an appropriate, unique framework for the analysis in the Zaire case. In the third section, the diversity
of regime transitions will be examined through a discussion of types, paths, and "phases". Further, the type of regime plays a crucial role in shaping processes of transition and will be discussed at length in the fourth section. In particular, the nature of a good portion of African regimes is revealed as predominantly neopatrimonial; this lends itself to certain precepts that merit explanation. In the final section, a preliminary look at two models that trace patterns of group mobilisation and political conflict will facilitate a more thorough analysis of regime transition and change in Zaire. The subsequent challenges of this thesis, then, are to fuse the theoretical ideas set forth in this chapter with the practical events and actors in Zaire in the remaining chapters.

1.0.1: Defining some terms: what are the basic units of analysis?

Before proceeding to the first section, there are a few terms frequently encountered in this thesis that require definition and contextual location within this particular analytical framework of regime transition and change. The definitions that I initially propose are working definitions in that their development will expand as the research progresses. At this point, the intention is to present only the key terms that specifically comprise the units of analysis - namely regime, government, and state. While every concept involved in a study of transition and regime change will not be dealt with at this early stage, these essential ones will be identified.

Considerable debate surrounds questions as to the appropriate unit of analysis in studies of regime transition: Should the state, society, individuals, or groups serve as the unit? Moreover, should interpretations of regime transition be based on ethnic, cultural, or class perspectives? And finally, should macro levels of analysis (global) or micro levels of analysis (African, case-specific) be adopted in the study of regime transition? These are critical questions to address. In this thesis, the emphasis is on regimes and groups as the units of analysis. Zairean politics is interpreted through a perspective that gives primacy to structural and contingent factors to explain the relationship between regime type and transition processes. The level of analysis is micro in that the study is exclusively on Zaire and does not engage in significant comparative or global analysis. Moreover, given the nature of the Mobutu regime as a highly personalised government system, the project will include some analysis of individual players in the political arena - namely Mobutu and the leaders of the political and armed opposition.

At least three concepts in political studies are used interchangeably, although this does not necessarily mean that they refer to the same set of ideas. Indeed, government, state, and regime are related concepts. However, there are also important differences between them. Political transitions that involve regimes usually include their governments. The state is perhaps the most constant of the three in that it prevails as a state regardless of the government or regime in power. For instance,
the Zairean state will continue to exist in some form unless its territorial integrity is questioned or somehow dramatically altered. Even so, the state as a political phenomenon is under continuous transformation - either towards development and modernisation, as in the case of Namibia or Ghana, or towards collapse and internal political chaos, as African countries such as Sierra Leone and Angola have demonstrated.

Briefly then, a government is defined as "an organisation which controls the principal concentrated means of coercion within the population" (Tilly, 1973: 437). The state, for purposes of this thesis, is defined as "a set of relationships and interactions among social classes and groups that is organised, sustained, and regulated by political power" (Sangmpam, 1994: 3). Moreover, a government is a state "...to the extent that...[it] is formally coordinated, centralised, differentiated from other organisations, and territorially exclusive" (Tilly, 1975: 502). I have borrowed the definition of regime from the various works of Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle.4 According to these two analysts, a regime is a set of "political procedures - sometimes called the 'rules of the political game' - that determine[s] the distribution of power. These rules prescribe who may engage in politics and how" (1997: 9). Pearl Robinson adds that these rules link the main political institutions of the regime and may either be formal or informal (1994: 40). Given that regimes are comprised of varied combinations of political institutions, it seems only appropriate to define the term "institution". Douglass North defines an institution as a set "of constraints on behaviour in the form of rules and regulations; a set of procedures to detect deviations from the rules and regulations; and finally, a set of moral, ethical, behavioural norms which define the contours that constrain the way in which the rules and regulations are specified and enforcement carried out" (quoted in Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 40).

Of the three terms - government, state, and regime - the regime is the political phenomenon to which most of the attention is given in this thesis. One of the main premises proposes that the neopatrimonial nature of Mobutu's regime influenced the process of transition and predisposed the regime's inevitable breakdown. Nonetheless, all three concepts are relevant and necessarily distinguishable in the case of transition in Zaire. In sum, a useful article on definitional issues of government, state, and regime by Robert Fishman further clarifies the differences between the three terms:

Regimes are the formal and informal organisation of the center of political power, and of its relations with the broader society. A regime determines who has access to political power, and how those in power deal with those who are not... Regimes are more permanent forms of political organisation than specific governments, but they are typically less permanent than the state. The state, by contrast, is a (normally) more permanent structure of domination and coordination including a coercive apparatus and the means to administer a society and extract resources from it (1990: 428).

Having established some definitional issues concerning the basic units of analysis, we can proceed to an introduction to regime transition and change.

1.1: Regime theory and transition literature: the debates.

From the anti-colonial struggles that depicted the 1950s to the revolutionary crises and coups d'état of the newly independent countries in the 1960s, from the trends of autocratic rule that characterised most African countries in the 1970s to the "quasi-permanent military" and dictatorial regimes that were the norm for Africa in the 1980s, political regime transition and change has been widespread and extremely diverse. However, the 1990s experienced the most far-reaching shifts in African politics since the era of independence. It was indisputably the decade of political regime transition. In an attempt to understand why transition processes became so prevalent in the 1990s, major debates have ensued between contending schools of political thought. An awareness of these debates in the literature constitutes the main objective of this section.

By no means do I provide an all-inclusive presentation of regime theory and transition literature. Still, it is necessary to present a brief review of the literature to isolate the main themes and debates. The literature on regime theory is enormous (see among others Bienen and Herbst, 1991; Bratton and van de Walle, 1997; Chabal, 1986; Collier, 1982; Decalo, 1992; DiPalma, 1990; Ergas, 1987; Huntington, 1991; Karl, 1990; Lemarchand, 1993; Linz, 1978; O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Schatzberg, 1993; Snyder, 1992; van de Walle, 1994; Wiseman, 1995; Young, 1994; and Zartman, 1995). As a result of this plethora of available material, I have withdrawn elements of regime theory and transition literature that are useful to the analysis of events in Zaire.

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5 For an interesting discussion and breakdown of political upheaval in Africa since the decade of independence (1960s), see Decalo (1989).

6 There are several contending perspectives on how to study African politics, including modernisation (Huntington, 1968, 1991) and dependency-underdevelopment (Wilbert, 1973; Cohen and Daniel, 1981) theories, statist and state-society approaches (Rothchild and Chazan, 1988; Midgal, 1988), governance (Hyden and Bratton, 1992), prebendalism (Joseph, 1987; Bayart, 1993), rational choice (Chazan et al., 1988), developmental democracy (Sklar, 1991) and civil society (Harbeson et al., 1994; Osaghae, 1994) perspectives. This extensive number of different approaches partially explains why major methodological issues of how to assess African politics remain contested and unresolved.

7 For complete information, see Bibliography.
The first requirement, however, is to provide a working definition of regime transition. Not only does this facilitate an examination of transition processes and political change in the context of Africa, but it will also open the discussion on existing debates.

1.1.1: What is regime transition?
Transition implies change. Regime transition therefore denotes a change from one regime to another. Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle argue that regime transition represents a shift from one set of political procedures to another; it is "an interval of intense political uncertainty during which the shape of the new institutional [administration] is up for grabs by incumbent and opposition contenders" (1997: 10). When a regime is in transition, struggles develop between competing groups, including the government, for access to political power, resources, and a chance to establish the rules of the political game.

In most African cases, the regime in question has instituted authoritarian practices that have hindered the capacity for mass political participation and competition. Notwithstanding high levels of government political repression, popular pressures for political reform have manifested themselves in different forums, including national conferences and provisional governments. The incumbent regime becomes increasingly susceptible to attempts made by the opposition movement for political change. The regime transition process rarely unfolds smoothly. On the contrary, the process is frequently subjected to manipulations, blockages, deviations, and setbacks - mostly at the hands of the incumbent leader who refuses to relinquish political power. Given the authoritarian nature of most regimes in Africa, the general motivation for political change has been a move towards a system that incorporates the (Western) ideals of democratic government. In fact, most studies in regime theory assume that the ultimate end of political regime transition is Western democracy.  

1.1.2: Key debates in the study of political transition and regime change.
There is little accord among political analysts and acclaimed scholars regarding the best methods with which to examine the phenomena of political transition and regime change. The available literature presents several ongoing debates, only three of which are outlined in this section. An entire study could be devoted to an examination of the existing debates on regime transition; that challenge is simply not forthcoming in this thesis. However, there are some critical areas in which scholars frequently contend. These areas include the debate surrounding questions of "why, when,

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8The merits of the argument that proposes Western democracy as the ultimate political goal of regime transitions in Africa will be discussed shortly.
and how" transitions occur, the debate on Western democracy in Africa, and the debate on
democratisation versus liberalisation.

Most political analysts have contributed in varying degrees and diverse ways to the literature on "democratic" regime transition. Theoretical and methodological approaches have been assorted. That there are so many different perspectives and arguments has caused potential confusion among those with an interest in transition literature. However, what has linked scholars in the study of transition has been their concerted effort to both understand and explain problems associated with democracy and political change, and offer solutions to the problems in the existing context. However, rarely do they agree on the problems and solutions. Nevertheless, their efforts should not be ignored.

A few scholars in particular have engaged in ambitious attempts to enhance the study of transition politics. Among them are Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, Samuel Huntington, Juan Linz, Adam Przeworski, Larry Diamond, Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle. Contemporary studies of regime transition grew out of a need to understand the changing political environment in countries located in Latin America and southern Europe. They expanded to include studies of transition politics in all regions of the world. Of the scholars mentioned above, Bratton and van de Walle have focused most of their research efforts on the African region. For that reason, their combined works are relied upon extensively. More importantly, as the research for this thesis progressed, I discovered that many of the questions raised with respect to the Zaire case were questions that had also been asked in various studies by Bratton and van de Walle. Their approach to the study of regime transition was especially useful, as was their emphasis on regime type and neopatrimonialism in Africa. Consequently, if this thesis could claim that one study impacted the development of the arguments more than others, it would have to be Bratton and van de Walle's excellent book, Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective (1997).

1.1.2.1: Transition processes: questions of "why, when, and how".

One of the central debates focuses upon the related questions of "why, when, and how" transitions occur. Why do transitions occur? Some studies (O'Donnell and Schmitter, Przeworski) contend that political tensions, or "schisms" develop between "hard-liners" and "soft-liners" within the elite structure of the regime. Other studies (Bratton and van de Walle) note the role of the masses and

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9In no way is this list of contributors complete; in fact, the list of noteworthy contributions to the study of transition is exhaustive. I have merely selected those that featured prominently in the research I conducted for this thesis. See Bibliography for complete details.
the opposition groups in producing anti-regime sentiment which in turn, instigates a process of transition. Still others (Huntington) insist that transitions are caused by such diverse conditions as problems with political legitimacy, the effects of economic growth, external influences, changes in religious and political doctrines, and so forth.¹⁰ In any case, another question arises from the first: What factors should and do contribute to the unfolding process of transition? Transition processes are influenced by countless variables and usually occur under certain conditions. The relative weight attached to the factors is partially dependent upon the perspective from which the scholar writes. For instance, economic approaches will contend that economic factors play an important, primary role in the transitional game. In contrast, international perspectives will argue that the external environment and global/regional conditions have a predominant role in transition processes. Every political theory, then, approaches the study of regime transition with certain preconceived notions.

The "why" question is important for another reason. The research question of this thesis asks why the Mobutu regime fell in Zaire. Concomitantly, it asks why the Mobutu regime fell in 1997. Why not earlier? Przeworski (1991) writes that the timing of transitions is critical to an understanding of why they occurred in the first place. He rightfully claims, "[I]t is easier to explain why communism had to fall than why it did. ...[T]he response to the question 'Why did communism collapse?' is not the same as to 'Why did it collapse in the autumn of 1989?'" (1991: 1). Yet, most studies fail to take into account the subtle differences in these two questions. Even Przeworski falls short of delivering a concrete answer in his work. This thesis takes up the challenge to address the timing question in the Zaire case. Indeed it is significant that the Mobutu regime fell in 1997 and not in 1996 or 1998, for that matter. Gerardo Munck contends (and this thesis concurs) that "what is needed [to explain the timing of transitions] is an in-depth analysis of both the characteristics and contradictions of the ancien régime and the formation and activities of opposition groups" (1994: 359). The nature of the regime in Zaire is examined extensively, much as is the role of the opposition throughout the "Transition" years.

How transitions occur is another part of the above debate. Given that transitions are complex political processes, the ways in which they unfold vary. Transitions can either unfold in a relatively smooth manner (Spain, Brasil), through the defeat of a regime (Portugal, Argentina), or amidst pressure, chaos, and violence (Zaire). Even so, every transition unfolds in a unique way as a result of its special circumstances. Further, a transition often combines different modes and "phases". As a result of these and other factors, most studies attest to a series of modes and paths that transitions

¹⁰See HUNTINGTON (1991), especially Chapter 2.
follow from their inception to their outcome. One question of particular importance in this thesis is associated with the "how" debate: Do differences in regime type account at a general level for different types of transition? Juan Linz (1990, 1993) contends that they do. One of the main premises of this thesis argues that the neopatrimonial nature of the Mobutu regime had a significant impact on the transition processes of the 1990s; the mode, path, and "phases" of transition in Zaire were all dependent to an extent on the regime's predilection towards neopatrimonialism. This link between regime type and transition process is discussed at length by Huntington (1991) and Bratton and van de Walle (1997). Scott Mainwaring (1992) highlights another important variable in the "how" equation: "the degree of control over the process by the authoritarian powerholders [in this case, Mobutu's ruling elite] and their ability to impose conditions on the opposition" (quoted in Muncy, 1994: 358). The predisposition towards neopatrimonial rule in Zaire had several implications - one being that the incumbent leader was unable to extricate himself from the political arena.

An excellent source of key debates and African scholarly views on regime transition, liberalisation, and democratisation in Africa is compiled in a book-study entitled *Democratisation in Africa: African Views, African Voices* (1992).\(^{11}\) The book comprises the results of three workshops held in Africa (Bénin, Ethiopia, and Namibia) to discuss relevant issues and challenges surrounding contemporary African transition processes. The participants in the workshops were predominantly African scholars, politicians, and professionals. There was general agreement at the workshops that democracy in Africa must be homegrown. Carlos Lopes refers to "homegrown" democracy as the "Africanisation" of democracy whereby democracy is contextualised, or "Africanised" to reflect the unique cultural, social, economic, and political identities that exist (1996: 139-53). The workshop participants also agreed that democracy in Africa must also be built from the bottom-up, despite trends that portray government-initiated democratic reform. Further consensus was achieved on the idea that political liberalisation and democratisation should be kept as separate notions, despite the tendency to equate one with the other. This substantiates the argument I will make in an upcoming section that political liberalisation was the primary goal in Zaire's opening to transition politics.

1.1.2.2: Regime change: the debate on Western democracy in Africa.

In several African cases such as Bénin, Cameroon, and Sénégal, regime change was associated with a move towards Western democratic ideals such as representative government, open elections, and basic civil liberties. Even in Zaire, the move from single-party rule to multiparty politics in

\(^{11}\)This book was edited by Sahr John KPUNDEH (1992); see Bibliography.
1990 was seen as a major step in the direction towards democracy "de l'Ouest". Given the global distribution of power predominantly in the hands of the Western countries, it is not surprising that the rest of the world desires access to that power and envisions one method to gain access through the adoption of Western government styles. After all, the logic follows (albeit simplistic) that the Western nations must be doing something right if they have hegemony over the global distribution of power. The idea of Western democracy merits further discussion, then, especially since the Zairian opposition groups sought a regime change that would supposedly embrace this type of democracy.

If regime transition in recent years has come to be seen as a process of political change in which authoritarianism is traded in for the Western ideals of democracy, then democracy needs to be defined. Unfortunately, democracy itself is a contested term, with no general consensus as to its various meanings. The etymology of the term reveals its roots: demos (the people) and kratia (authority). In other words, democracy implies rule by the people. What then is Western democracy? Simply put, it is a form of democracy exported by member countries of the Western community, including the United States, Great Britain, and France. This form of democracy ranges from "a distinctive set of political institutions and practices, a particular body of rights, a social and economic order, a system that ensures desirable results, or a unique process of making collective and binding decisions" (Dahl, 1989: 5). More to the point, Western democracy can be defined as "a set of institutions that permits the entire adult population to act as citizens by choosing their leading decision makers in competitive, fair, and regularly scheduled elections which are held in the context of the rule of law, guarantees for political freedom, and limited military prerogatives" (Karl, 1990: 2).

A major debate has been waged for decades between scholars of the "North" (Western) and those of the "South" (in this case, African) concerning appropriate analyses of African politics. Much of the literature on Africa prematurely assumes that Western conceptions of democracy are what Africa needs. Yet is that in fact the case? Enormous contention surrounds this question and others concerning the suitability, feasibility and desirability of Western democracy for Africa. Scholars from the Western tradition, especially those in the United States, have long analysed African politics through "so-called universalist referents" based on Western political experience.

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12Robert Dahl (1971) provides a more complex version of the above definition of democracy that is useful. He defines it as "a set of institutions that permits the entire adult population to act as citizens by choosing their leading decision makers in competitive, fair, and regularly scheduled elections which are held in the context of the rule of law, guarantees for political freedom, and limited prerogatives" (quoted in Karl, 1990: 2).
democracy, and modernisation theory (Osaghae, 1995: 183). Western scholars claim that their approach to studies of African politics is based on scientific and empirical analysis. In the past, Western scholarship dominated the field of African studies, but that is changing. More recently, American and European scholars have been subjected to scrutiny and criticism for their decidedly developmentalist, Westernised approach to African politics. They are criticised for their ideological biases and the fact that their findings serve "the hegemonic interests of Western capitalism" (Osaghae, 1995: 183). African scholars claim that one root cause of political conflict in Africa stems from the inability to appreciate the differences between traditional African politics and Western democracy. In particular reference to the study of regime transition, African scholars have accused Western analysts of treating the African realities as secondary to their study.

At the other end of the spectrum, then, what do African scholars claim as the right way to analyse the "realities" of African political life? On behalf of African scholarship at large, Eghosa Osaghae argues that the politics of Africa need to be analysed with a "contextual and problem-solving" approach. He claims that the democratic precepts and institutions encouraged by Western scholarship are not necessarily suitable to the African political experience. Osaghae further observes that as a direct response to the Western schools of political thought, the African perspective "approaches African politics from its historical, material and structural contexts and emphasises the need to combine theory and praxis" (1995: 183). Moreover, African scholars (Nzongola, 1987; Osaghae, 1995) emphasise the importance of viewing current regime transition from a perspective that takes into account earlier experiments with regime transition, regardless of their success or failure to entrench democratic systems of government. Previous experience with regime transition has demonstrated that ousting an authoritarian leader, such as Hastings Banda of Malawi, does not automatically imply that authoritarian practices are replaced with more liberalised and democratic principles.

Unfortunately, this thesis will not engage in strenuous analysis of the pros and cons of Western democracy in Africa. I do believe though, that a strong case could be made to combine the best of both worlds, so to speak. I concur with Carlos Lopes (1996) that perhaps we could draw upon the positive Western experiences with democracy and simultaneously remain sensitive to the basic differences in Africa as partially evidenced by the economic and political crises that plague the continent. In fairness, however, I also agree with René Lemarchand in his observation that "the propriety of such [Western] models for Africa is for Africans themselves to decide; and so, also, are the alternative forms of democracy which might best be suited to the needs and conditions of

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13 For further discussion of this and other debates, see OSAGHAE (1995).
particular [African] societies" (1992: 179). Africans need to invent credible alternative models to the Western version of democracy. They must take the lead in developing transition theories appropriate to their circumstances. In sum, while Western approaches to the study of African politics are useful, African perspectives are more critical for an understanding of regime transition in Africa.

Therefore, the position of this paper does not necessarily concur with the standard arguments for Western democracy in Africa per se. However, nor do I propose alternative political ends. Arguably, the efforts of the African masses to find ways to hold their leaders accountable for providing for their basic needs represent the collective and innovative pursuit of some form of democracy. Moreover, it would seem that most Zaireans in this case-study envisioned a new government system that allowed them basic freedoms and the chance to have a say in the politics of their country. Clearly these political aspirations constitute some of the basic civil rights that Westerners take for granted.

1.1.2.3: Political transition: liberalisation vs. democratisation.
Still, the hesitation with which issues of democracy are discussed lies in another related argument that I support. This argument originates from the debate on notions of democratisation and liberalisation. The primary emphasis in transition theory should be placed upon political liberalisation, not democratisation. Both are complementary processes of political change that occur either sequentially or simultaneously. However, they are separate processes of political change; the analysis in this thesis intends to reflect this autonomy.

Liberalisation is a political process in which restrictions are loosened, the fear of repression is relaxed, and constitutional guarantees of a range of political freedoms are given along with expanded individual and group rights (Keller, 1996: 203; Lewis, 1996: 123). Liberalisation as a pattern of regime change appears more feasible in the short-term than does democratisation, especially in light of the legacy of a colonial "anti-democratic ethos" that was projected forward to postcolonial African regimes (Young, 1994: 283). Democratisation involves more than the mere expansion of political rights; it generally refers to "the development of more egalitarian social relations and the elimination of autocratic authority structures" and the acquisition "of democratic participation and...leadership styles" (Keller, 1996: 204).

Why is this debate relevant to a study of regime transition and change in Zaire? The main reason stems from my contention that many of the recent studies on Zairean politics make the erroneous assumption that the essential struggle in Zaire during the 1990s was in fact for democratisation.
The political struggles that characterised Zaire's landscape in the 1990s concerned several objectives, but "democratisation" as such was not explicitly one of them, at least in the short-term. Again, the very concept of democratisation is rooted in Western political ideology and indirectly suggests that the Zaireans were unable to determine for themselves what it was that they wanted from a change in regime. So they opted for democratisation. But how can we talk about democratisation when the Zaireans had yet to experience any genuine liberalisation? Democratisation cannot occur without liberalisation. On the other hand, Bratton and van de Walle observe correctly that "liberalisation can occur without democratisation" (1992: 34). Witness Zaire. Throughout this thesis, then, I attempt to disprove the arguments that convey processes of political transition in Zaire as democratisation rather than liberalisation.

In the Zaire of the 1990s, some political liberalisation took place in that opposition groups were given the opportunity to press their claims upon the Mobutu government for political reform. Yet the transition process leading up to regime change was repeatedly blocked by the incumbent regime. Thus, efforts to democratisate failed. In fact, it is unlikely that a genuine attempt at democratisation was even forthcoming, regardless of the stated intentions of government leaders to implement democratic institutions and free elections. Larry Diamond observes, "It is unrealistic to think that countries in Africa can suddenly reverse course and institutionalise stable democratic government....If progress is made toward developing democratic government, it is likely to be gradual, messy, fitful and slow, with many imperfections along the way" (1992: 28).

The controversial issues that have been discussed thus far reveal three large debates on studies of African politics in general and African regime transition in particular. It was logical that they be contextualised prior to a closer examination of regime transition in order to create an awareness of the "big picture" in which African politics is portrayed. In the next section, I will continue this discussion on main themes and debates with a new objective in mind: to develop a theoretical framework and approach to the specific study of regime transition in Zaire.

1.2: Approaches to the study of regime transition in Africa.

Most studies of regime transition specify a relationship between a set of conditions and the occurrence of transition and regime change. However, the nature of those conditions, the combination of factors that influence them, and the perspective from which they are examined vary according to the theoretical background of the approach. In light of these challenges, a general survey of contending approaches is useful and necessary. With that in mind, two questions are asked: What do I want to gain from this survey of the various approaches to study regime
transition? More importantly, based on what has already been researched in the Zaire case, what does this study hope to illustrate about why events happened when they did? To put it differently, this thesis needs an approach with which the research can be organised and explained in a systematic, convincing series of arguments.

There are certain variables that must figure into the analysis. For instance, the regime in Zaire was characterised as a neopatrimonial system of government. In turn, the neopatrimonial regime influenced the political processes and interactions that took place within the Zairean polity. More specifically, the neopatrimonial nature of the regime affected the type of transition that unfolded in Zaire. Further, a national conference was set up to guide the transition process. On the one hand, these are undisputed facts. On the other hand, developing an approach that takes into account these facts and other questions is a challenge that will undoubtedly involve some contention. The reasons for a survey multiply.

1.2.1: A survey of contending approaches.
If the brief literature review and the debates already discussed are any indication, regime theory offers a wide array of competing approaches for the study of regime transition and change. From political to economic accounts, from social to anthropological chronicles of an African nature, there appears to be great interest and diversity surrounding explanations of regime transition and change. In this thesis, I do not purport to present and discuss the full range of perspectives that one might use in trying to understand regime transition. Instead, the degree of diversity in theoretical approaches to regime transition and change is revealed through more ongoing debates. Briefly, I will mention three. The purpose in so doing is to further acknowledge the challenges inherent in studies of regime transition and change while at the same time defining some of the theoretical parameters of this project.

To that end, I have selected from the various approaches that which is most useful to my study. To put it differently, I propose an eclectic approach that works interactively with a conjunction of factors that, in turn, stem from the different perspectives. I will argue that a combined approach is more powerful than any single approach in terms of analysis because it incorporates the strengths of each of the contending perspectives. Given that no existing theory can possibly explain the "big picture", the next-best solution is an approach that incorporates the diverse range of elements

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14I am grateful to the writings of Bratton and Van de Walle (1997) for summarising the debates in a concise manner, especially in Chapter 1.
involved. What follows, therefore, must be seen as a provisional framework, subject to further refinement as the thesis proceeds.

1.2.1.1: Global vs. domestic approaches.
To what degree is regime transition determined by internal factors rather than external conditions? The debate surrounding this question is at best understood in terms of whether or not one is engaged in macro or micro levels of analysis. Both international (Munslow, 1993; T. Young, 1993) and domestic (Smith, 1986; Bayart, 1993) approaches have their strengths and weaknesses. Both figure into the equation of regime transition and change. Regimes do not exist in isolation; they interact with other regimes on a regular basis. The external environment influences the internal political operations of the regime.

The interaction of regimes within Africa is noteworthy, especially if the "domino theory" advocated by some scholars (Huntington, 1962; Mazrui, 1969; Rothchild, 1986) has any validity. One consequence of regime transition in Africa is that it frequently instigates conflicts in neighbouring countries. Claude E. Welch, Jr. (1967) concurs that the successful overthrow of a government in one country may precipitate a series of political upheavals in other countries. For example, the genocide in Rwanda (1994) was precipitated by events in Burundi.\textsuperscript{15} Conflict in Liberia upset the balance of power in neighbouring West African countries. The Zanzibar revolution (1964) was followed by political turmoil in Tanganyika (present-day Tanzania) and Uganda. The compulsive power to imitate, Ali Mazrui notes, flows from the demonstration-effect which suggests that "occurrences [of political violence] in one African country can give rise to imitative tendencies elsewhere on the continent" (1969: 94).\textsuperscript{16}

All the same, while the intention is not to underestimate the importance of external forces with respect to Zaire's quest for political regime change, it is impossible to do full justice to their relative weight in the process of regime transition without compromising the primary focus on domestic politics. As Bratton and van de Walle propose, it is the internal actors, organisations, and political institutions that determine the prospects for regime transition and change (1997: 31). Laurence Whitehead concurs: "Internal forces [are] of primary importance in determining the course and outcome of...[regime] transition, and international factors play a secondary role" (1986: 4). In my view, these analysts are correct in their assertion that domestic political processes and

\textsuperscript{15}For further discussion, see LEMARCHAND (1994); EVANS (1997); and NZONGOLA-N'ALAJA (1996).
\textsuperscript{16}The demonstration-effect, otherwise known as the violent contiguity model, is a thesis developed by Ali MAZRUI (1969).
actors serve as the primary factors and units of analysis that shape struggles for political regime change.

Tony Smith (1986) makes a case for the "domestic" argument. He argues that the prospects for political change in African countries are determined by the organisation of the states, the strength of the elite ruling class, and the autonomy of their political institutions...and not by external forces (1986: 38-9). Even during the prime years of the colonial period, Smith argues that "natives invariably wielded significant power...[to form]...constellations of interest in accommodating or opposing foreign rule that made for many of the significant differences in the patterns of postwar decolonisation" (1986: 39). In the early postindependence period, new African countries formed indigenous governments founded on "local traditions and institutions" as well as colonial policies that relied heavily on patronage systems. In this way, the domestic political environment led to the institutionalisation of authoritarian regimes (Smith, 1986: 45).

1.2.1.2: Political vs. socioeconomic perspectives.

The field of political economy attempts to bring political and economic perspectives together to demonstrate their integral relationship - a relationship that will admittedly not be fully explored in this thesis. Undoubtedly, economic explanations for political change in Africa are popular, given the overlap between economic crises, politics, and structural adjustment programmes. African scholar Wilfred Ndongo argues that "the political fragility of the continent [i]s compounded by its economic...decay" and African leaders should address economic reform alongside political transition and change (1996: 376). Support for an economic approach is further engendered by the fact that regime transitions are often set in motion by protests against inadequate, corrupt government economic policies. The demand for political change, the late Claude Ake argued, "draws much of its impetus from the prevailing economic conditions within" Africa (1993: 239).

Even so, proponents of approaches that give primacy to political factors argue that "economic explanations [for regime transition] should not be dismissed; instead, they need to be integrated within a political economy approach in which politics is in command" (Bratton and van de Walle,

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17While economic factors figure into this analysis of regime transition and change in Zaire, they do so indirectly. The intention is therefore not to negate their value; rather, a detailed examination of the relationship between the economic and political realms is simply unnecessary for my purposes. Moreover, engaging in such analysis reaches beyond the scope of this project. For further discussion of economic approaches, see Huntington (1968); Ake (1993); Widner (1994); Nelson (1990).

18René Lemarchand (1992b: 182-84) offers some valuable insights into the relationship between processes of transition in Africa and the effects of the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). He comments on the debate between those who see SAPs as a good idea for the success of African regime transition and those who contend that the effects on the transition process are negative.
1997: 37). To put this debate differently, should politics be the dependent variable or the independent variable in studies of regime transition? Bratton and van de Walle argue, "Differences of opinion on this issue do not deny the utility of the interdisciplinary study of political economy but highlight the question of whether politics or economics is in command" (1997: 20). This thesis contends that although the two arenas - political and economic - are inextricably linked, prioritising political change ahead of economic reform in the long-term will develop a political system in which the economy can flourish.

Political approaches "place analytical primacy on the institutions that allocate power" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 37). Political institutions, political traditions, and the political nature of regimes have a profound impact on transition processes. Some studies have argued in fact, that the inherent weaknesses of formal political institutions in African (especially neopatrimonial) regimes explain the lack of authentic transitions to more liberalised government systems. Transition processes in Africa are "problematic because of the absence, weakness, or politicisation of key institutions, which are a legacy of past practices" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 40). If that is the case, then any approach to regime transition in Africa needs to take into consideration the special ways in which the political legacies of previous regimes have impacted the success of transition politics. In conclusion, this thesis concurs with the argument that "it makes sense to believe that these [political] institutions cannot recover easily from past repression and that in the meantime their absence or debility marks politics on the continent" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 40-1). To this end, political factors have primacy over economic or other forces that influence regime transition and change.

1.2.1.3: Structuralism vs. contingency.

This debate is captured in two questions borrowed from the work of Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle. They ask:

Are regime transitions a function of underlying preconditions at the level of the deep formations of economy and society? Or does political change depend on the preferences and choices of leaders and on their skills at mobilising resources, counteracting opponents, and taking advantage of opportunities (1997: 19)?

Proponents of structural theory (Lipset, 1960; Moore, 1966) contend that the structural formations that are embedded in politics and society shape the course of political change in any given situation. On the other hand, contingency theorists (Linz, 1978; O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; DiPalma, 1990) insist that political change is dependent upon the decisions and behaviour of key political actors. The tendency of this thesis is to balance the observations between structuralism
and the contingency school of thought. I do not deny the usefulness of the structural approach in its argument that the current structures of political institutions were founded in past regimes. Moreover, the political "patterns, once forged, often persist beyond their original conditions" (Rueschemeyer et al., 1992: 7). Clearly, political structures embedded in the past are crucial to understandings of the nature of regimes in the present.

Nonetheless, nor do I reject the contingent approach. One stated interest of this project is to correlate the nature of the Mobutu regime with the struggles for political regime change by observing how groups interact and mobilise in the transition process. The idea that individuals and groups are goal-seekers and behave rationally is a key component in this particular framework of regime transition. In fact, one strength of the contingent approach is its relationship to rational-choice theory. Bratton and van de Walle observe that proponents of rational-choice theory have not spent as much time studying regime transition as other theorists, in particular the modernisation and dependency school theorists. "[F]ew efforts have been made in studies of African politics to account for political behaviour explicitly in terms of rational-choice precepts" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 25). This seems odd, given that contemporary processes of regime transition and change are largely influenced by the interactive struggles between the regime in power and the opposition groups attempting to induce political reform. This thesis is sensitive to the apparent gap in the literature and approach to studies of regime transition. Thus, it is equally challenged to incorporate aspects of rational-choice theory in the approach to regime transition and change in Zaire.

1.2.1.4: Developing an approach to regime transition in the Zairean context.

Having outlined a general survey of contending approaches, the question remains: What approach should this thesis use to study regime transition and change in Zaire? Every approach mentioned above has its strengths. The answer, then, depends on two related observations. First, there is no single approach available that explores all the different angles and complexities of the existing processes of political regime change in Africa. With that in mind, this thesis will develop its own approach by extracting from the contending perspectives several elements that provide insight into the Zaire case. Second, the content of the larger research question is integral to the development of an appropriate framework. In review, this thesis asks: How did the nature of the Mobutu regime influence political transition and regime change in Zaire? This question must also serve as a guideline in the following discussion.

In addition to its strengths, every approach has its weaknesses. Indeed there are several improvements that could be made to current studies of regime transition. Perhaps a good place to
begin the process of developing a framework in the Zaire case is with an awareness of the areas in which other approaches are weak. One analytical work of Eghosa Osaghae (1995) is helpful. Osaghae points out some flaws found in current approaches to the study of regime transition:

One such [flaw] is the 'periodic' conception of transitions which accounts for the discontinuous manner in which they are studied. This conception erroneously assumes that democratic [regime] transitions are a new experience, and underplays the benefit of insights from previous experiences. Another [flaw] is the failure to adequately reflect African conditions in the comparative frameworks of analysis derived from Western, Latin American and Eastern European experiences and informed by the foreign policies of the U.S. and other Western powers (1995: 184).

These observations merit further explanation because they tie in to the earlier debate concerning the imposition of Western democratic styles in Africa. Regime transitions are not a new experience, even though the overwhelming incidence of transition in the 1990s might suggest otherwise. Several contemporary studies, particularly from the West, have tended to downplay the record of earlier transitions because they did not produce genuine democratic systems. Their lessons are important, though. Failed transitions of the past can be examined for their usefulness in determining why they failed and how the failures might have been reversed (Osaghae, 1995: 195).

In a similar vein, other approaches have wrongly placed emphasis on the form of democracy when the more significant matter should be whether or not that form is suitable in the first place to the country undergoing transition. These challenges correspond with what is referred to as "the prolonged search for appropriate democracy in Africa" (Osaghae, 1995: 188). In this thesis, I try to avoid falling into these potential problem areas by actively choosing to focus on the immediate challenges of political liberalisation in Zaire - not democratisation nor any form of imported democracy from the West.

How then, might the flaws pointed out earlier be corrected in the approach of this thesis? First, the Zairean historical experience, including the heritage of colonialism, needs emphasis as a precursor to political processes within the contemporary regime. The experience of previous regime transitions in Zaire elicits important information about the nature of transition processes in the 1990s. Moreover, rather than adhering explicitly to the more narrow approaches to regime transition discussed earlier, this thesis will focus on a holistic, multidisciplinary approach that includes various ingredients of domestic, political, economic, and regional persuasions. All the same, the strengths of these "narrow" approaches will be incorporated in the approach.

19One recent study that makes a serious attempt to overcome these flaws is Michael Bratton and Nicholas Van de Walle's book, Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective (1997). It is a well-researched and thorough study that presents an excellent account of the problems encountered in African politics and regime transition.
To recap, international and economic approaches enter the analysis only insofar as they influence the political choices and events of regime transition and change, although regional conflict has an important role in the latter stages of Zaire’s struggle for regime change. The domestic and political approaches are relied upon more heavily given that this study is rooted in political theory and domestic political experience as they relate to the Zaire case. Finally, the structural approach is useful in its emphasis on past political experience and institutions. As is argued throughout this thesis, political change through regime transition is in part determined by the legacy of previous regimes and in the case of Zaire, a neopatrimonial structure. Contingent approaches are equally valid in their focus on rational-choice that emphasises the role of actors, their decisions, events, and group interaction in the power struggles that comprise transitional processes.

Consequently, the approach used in this thesis focuses on the structural and contingent factors that shape processes of transition and change, taking into account their domestic and political dimensions. I concur with political analyst Terry Lynn Karl in her observation that regime theory should be developed in "an interactive approach that seeks explicitly to relate structural constraints to the shaping of contingent choice" (1990: 1). In essence, the approach concentrates on the notion of "structured contingency" that is argued by Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle in their extensive research and writings. They argue that structured contingency is "[a]n approach that is neither overly deterministic (structural) or excessively voluntaristic (contingent)...[and therefore] seems the most defensible position" for analyses rooted in the social sciences (1997: 45).

In an earlier work, Bratton and van de Walle assert, "[W]e think that the institutional characteristics of the preexisting political regime impart structure to the dynamics...of political transitions. Regime type provides the context in which contingent factors play themselves out" (1994: 485). The neopatrimonial nature of the Mobutu regime is therefore an important variable to consider in the analysis of regime transition. The structures of neopatrimonial political institutions impart shape to the processes of transition. The behaviour of political groups, including the government, and their interactions with one another are also woven into explanations of Zaire’s regime transition and change during the 1990s.

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Bratton and van de Walle propose a structured contingency approach that "...allows, on the one hand, that structural precedents impart shape to current events and, on the other, that today's private decisions change even durable public institutions" (1997: 45). This approach is useful in the arguments put forth that the nature of the Mobutu regime impacted upon the methods of transition and the actions of the incumbent leader (Mobutu) were crucial in the failure of the regime transition but the success of the regime change.
For purposes of this study, then, I have combined elements from different schools of political thought that emphasise the nature of groups within the Zairian polity. As a result, not only is my interest in regime theory and its structural explanations of political transition and change, but I am also convinced that explanations that incorporate group-conflict analysis provide compelling arguments for the case of regime transition in Zaire. Group-conflict theory incorporates a contingent approach. In fact, one of the factors that sets the approach in this thesis apart from other standard approaches is its use of group-conflict theory to assess regime transition and change. Group-conflict theory assesses the interaction among groups that contend for political power and change by gauging the mobilisation and resources that groups have in their possession. In other words, the leading group-conflict theorist, Charles Tilly, argues that it is the struggles for power that explain processes of political transition and regime change.

A structured contingency approach developed from the debate between theorists who advocated studies that focused on "prerequisites for democracy" and those who followed a "process-oriented approach" that employed contingency theory. Over time and given the more recent experiences of transition in Latin America, eastern Europe, and Africa, there has been a marked shift from support of the former theorists to the latter. The reasons stem in part from the failure to identify clear prerequisites for regime transition in a changing political environment. More importantly, the shift away from prerequisites occurred because it was discovered that the conditions for democracy - whatever they are determined to be - should rather be studied as the products of democracy (Karl, 1990: 5). As a result, new emphasis was placed on "the strategic calculations, unfolding processes, and sequential patterns that are involved in moving from one type of political regime to another" (Karl, 1990: 5).

The essential characteristics of a structured contingency approach include an "emphasis on intermediate institutions that shape political strategies, the ways institutions structure relations of power among contending groups in society, and especially the focus on the process of politics and policy-making within given institutional parameters" (Thelen and Steinmo, 1992: 7, emphasis in original). One obvious strength is the acknowledgment that those in power will seek to change the rules of the political game in their favour so as to remain in power for longer periods of time. President Mobutu's ability to manipulate government policy to extend his term in office, from an initial 5 years to 32 years, proves the point.

The structured contingency approach does not exist without criticism. Both structural and contingent theorists - in their respective approaches - have lamented the inevitable problems associated with mixing the perspectives. How can one argue for structural precedents while at the
same time boast the importance of contingent factors in explanations of regime transition? Bratton and van de Walle counter by questioning why it is so important to keep the explanatory frameworks separate. They defend the structured contingency position:

We accept that certain explanatory factors might rise and fall in importance as transitions unfold. But to acknowledge that regime transitions are highly contingent processes is not to accept that they are entirely unstructured or that different phases of transition are unstructured to the same degree. ...We think that such a mixed perspective is well suited for viewing the panoramic drama of political actors who are both the agents and objects of history (1997: 45, 47-8).

In sum, though, the structured contingency approach is a viable framework in which to study regime transition and change in Zaire. Its strength lies in its ability to combine the impact of preexisting political structures with the influence of present-day political actors and institutions. Structured contingency also works well with particular interests in this thesis that include an historical account of regime transition in Zaire, the role of groups in politics, and the importance of regime type in the overall picture of transition and change.

1.3: The diversity of regime transition.

Recall that the central question of this thesis asks how the nature of the Mobutu regime (a) influenced the path that the transition process took and (b) shaped the events that resulted in the fall of the regime in 1997. Four variables are recognised: the type of regime, the type of transition, the path that transition takes, and the "phases" through which it develops before its outcome. Regime type acts as the independent variable while the other three variables are dependent. Consequently, a separate section (1.4) is devoted to a discussion of regime type. The following section presents the theoretical construction of the three independent variables.

1.3.1: Types of regime transition.

The process of regime transition is usually initiated in one of two ways. Transitions either begin "from above" or "from below". On the one hand, regime transitions from above take place when incumbent regimes respond to crises, particularly of the economic variety, by initiating political reforms towards a more liberalised government and economy. The incumbent rulers, Terry Lynn Karl contends, "remain in control, even if pressured from below, and successfully use strategies of either compromise or force - or some mix of the two - to retain at least part of their power" (1990: 9). On the other hand, regime transitions from below occur when mounting popular pressures from the masses result in "national conferences, popular revolutions, coups d'état, or pact formations, all with the goal of moving toward a more [liberalised] society" (Kpundeh, 1992: 14).
Is one type of transition better or more durable than the other? Not necessarily. Both involve some negotiation between the government and the opposition groups. Both also stress the crucial role of the incumbent leader in determining whether or not transitions unfold successfully. Moreover, transitions that begin from above often develop into transitions from below and vice-versa. Most African cases of regime transition include elements of both methods of transition. However, it is more common for transitions to originate from below as opposition groups and the masses protest against the political and economic crises that the regime introduced and perpetuated over the years.

Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter (1986) insist that previous transitional experiences of several authoritarian regimes, particularly in Latin America, demonstrate the inability or unwillingness of the incumbents to liberalise unless they are forced by the combined protest and escalation of the crisis to proportions that necessitate action. In this way, the incumbent regime is "awakened" to the need for political reform by the ordinary masses. The process of transition that unfolds typically "involves...a crucial component of the mobilisation and organisation of large numbers of individuals" (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986: 17). In the case of Zaire, President Mobutu initiated political reforms and a process of transition in 1990. However, his actions were in direct response to mounting criticism and economic protests against the regime.

1.3.2: The paths that regime transition might take.
Once the process of regime transition begins, whether instigated from above or below, it generally develops along one of four modal paths.²¹ Briefly, the four modes include managed transitions, national conferences, rapid elections, and pacted transitions.²² The path taken by a country is determined to a large extent by the nature of the regime and its pre-existing political institutions. For instance, because the incumbent leader plays a huge role in the process of transition in highly personalised regimes such as the Mobutu regime, the two paths commonly chosen are managed transitions and national conferences. In contrast, countries that have some experience with democratic principles typically choose rapid elections or pented transitions, witness Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa. All the same, we will not dwell on an in-depth discussion concerning the influence that regime type has on the paths of transition until an examination of the former is conducted.²³

²¹The four modal paths are not developed at any length at this point. The national conference path will be discussed in Chapter 3. For an excellent breakdown of these four methods of transition, see Bratton and van de Walle (1997: 169-179).
²²For obvious reasons, coups d'état, political revolutions, and civil war do not belong in this category of regime change.
²³A discussion of regime type occurs in Section 1.4.
However, we will briefly catalogue the diversity of transition paths in Africa. The table below is therefore useful. One has merely to glance at the table to acknowledge the widespread phenomenon of regime transition. Not every transition listed below was successful. In fact, if the countries in the column on the far right were the only ones that experienced "democratic transitions", then Africa's record was dismal. The point I want to make with this table is that efforts to engage in regime transition occurred in more than half of Africa's countries.

**The experience of transitions in sub-Saharan Africa, 1994**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precluded Transitions</th>
<th>Blocked Transitions</th>
<th>Flawed Transitions</th>
<th>Democratic Transitions</th>
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|                       |                     |                    | São Tomé               |
|                       |                     |                    | South Africa           |
|                       |                     |                    | Zambia                |

*Table 1: Transition outcomes, adapted from Bratton and van de Walle (1997: 120).*

Clearly, the record of regime transition in Africa was high, regardless of its outcome. Bratton and van de Walle discovered in their findings that "the most common path of regime transition was liberalisation without democratisation...In these countries, the old regime experienced political openings following popular protests but failed to consummate a democratic transition via free and fair elections" (1997: 119, their emphasis). Zaire belonged to this group of countries, as did the others under "blocked transitions". The incumbent leaders, like President Mobutu, had no intention of relinquishing their power and merely made overtures for plans to democratise and hold elections. The countries that had "flawed transitions" actually had elections. However, the elections were usually rigged and manipulated by the incumbent ruler such that he was able to remain in power,

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witness President Moi of Kenya. Liberia and the Sudan had "precluded transitions" that came to a dead end. In other words, "political conditions were so un conducive to the construction of any kind of functioning form of governance...[largely the result of]...endemic civil war" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 119).

1.3.3: The "phases" of regime transition.
Several studies have suggested a set of "phases" through which regime transitions unfold.25 The comparative study of African regime transition by Bratton and van de Walle (1997) provides a breakdown of transition phases that correlates so well with political events in Zaire, one might initially assume their findings were based on Zaire's experience alone. Although that is not the case, in light of the analytical depth and accuracy with which these authors portray processes of regime transition in neopatrimonial regimes, I have selected parts of their theory to explain the transition process in Zaire.26 The practical application of transition phases to the Zaire case will be done at length in Chapter 3. For the time-being, the discussion remains at the analytical level and uses the scenario in Zaire as a case in point.

Following Bratton and van de Walle's formulation, eight phases of regime transition are identified. The first phase of regime transition that sets the process in motion occurs with "a crisis of legitimacy" whereby the masses lose faith in the ability of the government leaders to provide for their basic socioeconomic needs. Rodney Barker provides a useful definition of legitimacy: it is "the belief in the rightfulness of a state, in its authority to issue commands, so that the commands are obeyed not simply out of fear or self-interest, but because they are believed to have moral authority, because subjects believe that they ought to obey" (quoted in Monga, 1997: 168-9).

In Zaire, the predominantly authoritarian government style no longer instilled in the people a sense of stability or hope for their political and economic future. The Mobutu regime's promises of grand development gave way to the harsh realities of poverty and corruption. Initially, mass grievances were not expressed or acted upon without the fear of government repression and violence. However, the tensions were further complicated when the Zairean masses "attribute[d] their material hardships to the mismanagement of public functions by incompetent and unresponsive

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25 Another recent analysis presented by the African Governance programme of the Carter Centre of Emory University develops a useful agenda (similar to that of Bratton and van de Walle) that records the progress of African states as they move towards more liberal and participatory forms of government. See RILEY (1991) for a breakdown of Carter Centre's version of the "phases" of the transition process.

26 For a complete discussion of the phases of regime transition according to BRATTON and VAN DE WALLE, see Chapter 3 of their book, Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective (1997).
leaders," especially President Mobutu (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 100). Consequently, collective decisions by the urban-based opposition groups were made to actively protest, regardless of the reaction of the regime. The Mobutu regime found itself politically isolated.

This leads to the second phase of regime transition: the rise of economic protests. Prior to 1990, popular protests against many of the African regimes were rarely aimed at political goals. Rather, protests arose in recognition of worsening economic conditions, such as salary cuts, price increases on basic consumer goods, a lack of medical infrastructure, and so forth. However, the "democratic" winds of change that swept across Africa in the late 1980s also changed the nature of popular protest movements. In Zaire, no longer was the citizenry content to endure the economic hardships placed upon them while Mobutu's ruling elite grew wealthier. Diverse groups and associational organisations - including university students and trade unions - with equally diverse agendas coalesced in an attempt to influence the government and its reform policy. Thus, the Mobutu regime found itself under increasing pressures from below and was forced to take action of some sort. This led to the third phase.

The mounting pressures placed upon the regime elicited the first round of government reforms. Typically, regimes responded with a mixture of facilitation (rewards), repression (threats), and toleration (compromise). In some instances, the government relaxed restrictions. In the case of Zaire, Mobutu opened the political forum to multiparty politics in what was a crucial turning point in Zaire's transition process. Afterwards, dozens of political groups appeared. The Mobutu regime tolerated the growing opposition movement to an extent. However, the stronger the movement became, the more likely the government would use indiscriminate repression as the means through which to control the process of political change.

Even so, government repression did not prevent the growth of the opposition movement. On the contrary, the fourth phase of transition witnessed the politicisation of demands for political and economic change. "For the first time," Bratton and van de Walle assert, "narrow economic interests [a]re superseded by widespread calls for the ejection of national leaders and the reintroduction of plural politics" (1997: 104). In other words, no longer were the Zairean masses simply demanding that their particular situations be improved. Now they were calling for the resignation of the government leaders (particularly Mobutu), accusing them of corruption and mismanagement, and acting in collective ways to influence the political situation. The Zairean opposition movement had encouraged the development of a political agenda to see regime transition through to, at the very least, the removal of the incumbent leader and at the most, a complete change of the political regime.
The fifth phase of the transition process typically began with the second round of government-initiated political reforms. These reforms were usually carried out reluctantly and haphazardly by the incumbent regime, witness Zaire. The genuine desire to liberalise the political system was missing. Instead, Mobutu struggled "to belatedly legitimate [his] rule without tightening controls over lax administration, endangering economic privileges, or surrendering political power" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 108). Restrictions were further loosened on the opposition forces, although political competition remained problematic. As tensions escalated, the Mobutu government increased its levels of repression and violence. At the same time, the opposition groups stepped up their willingness to engage in political violence, especially when their every move was met with government repression. The most volatile groups were the student unions; they attended every public rally and demonstration against the Mobutu regime.

The next phase of the transition process was one of uncertain political agendas. Bratton and van de Walle call it the "one step forward, two steps back" phase of transition (1997: 110). On the one hand, the Mobutu regime could no longer afford to sustain an even minimally liberalised political economy without jeopardizing its power. On the other hand, the opposition movement had become too strong to ignore. It devised methods to hold the government system accountable through the Zairian press and human rights' watchdogs such as AZADHO, or the Association Nationale des Droits de l'Homme. However fragile these attempts were in the short-term, the opposition's persistence led to a point at which political struggles intensified, necessitating further action (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 111).

The seventh phase of the transition process was a period in which progress was seemingly made towards regime change. The defining feature of this phase was constitutional reform. The National Conference and a provisional government was set up with the idea that the Mobutu regime might finally give way to a genuine multiparty political forum. The Zairian citizenry began to fervently hope for and pursue political change. Unfortunately, rarely did the efforts to reform the constitution and other political institutions play out the way the opposition and the masses had envisioned. Instead, Mobutu's incumbent regime was able to maintain its stronghold on political power. The transition process was blocked.

The final phase of the transition is the implementation of open elections where the masses are given the opportunity to vote their leaders in office. This phase only occurred legitimately in a handful of African cases, as shown earlier in Table 1. It did not occur in Zaire. Although clearly simplistic, this identification of transition "phases" is helpful. The process of regime transition is much more
volatile and complex than Bratton and van de Walle's preliminary findings would suggest. For one, the lines are not delineated between one phase and the next; they overlap and intertwine. However, it was not their intention to make assumptions about the transitional experiments of African regimes, nor were they seeking merely to lump countries together in different categories. Rather, the discussion of phases is intended as a guideline with which to monitor transitional experiments and perhaps draw some tentative conclusions.

Every African case of regime transition is different. Yet, while the uniqueness is highlighted, we are also able to expose similarities in relation to the continent at large. For instance, the nature of the regime impacts on the transition process as do the levels of oppositional organisation. In the case of Zaire, we briefly noted that several of the phases took place, although not necessarily in sequential order nor distinctively marked from other phases. But the transition never reached its end goal, thanks in part to the neopatrimonial nature of the Mobutu regime, the weakness of formal political institutions, and the incumbent's skills at co-optation and stalling aimed at the opposition. Instead, the efforts of the opposition were blocked until 1996 when the political landscape was dramatically altered with the emergence of the AFDL rebel coalition.

By way of conclusion, David Mason (1990) makes a poignant summary about the diversity of regime transition in Africa. He writes that the extensive analysis of regime transition and change derives in part from the many forms that the process of transition assumes, the wide variety of forces that appear to be at work during transitional periods, and the equally diverse array of approaches used in studies of regime theory (1990: 30).

1.4: The "structure" in structured contingency.

With the discussion of theoretical debates and perspectives completed, it is important to outline in more detail the framework for the analysis of regime transition and change in the remaining chapters. Countless studies have recorded and analysed the continent's vast experience with political regime transition and change from various perspectives. All in all, they have helped to clarify the complex relationships between politics, economy, and society, organised political groups and ethnic communities, public participation and government repression, and so forth. Even so, this thesis has already determined that a structured contingency approach will be used to study regime transition in Zaire. This section, therefore, seeks to explore further the ideas and writings that support the position from which the central argument is made. Again, the central argument suggests that Zaire's transition and regime change were significantly influenced by the nature of the Mobutu regime and its institutional heritage. Accordingly, this section will examine regime type
and the notion of neopatrimonialism as the "structural" components of the structured contingency approach.

1.4.1: The nature of regimes in Africa.
According to several studies (Lancaster, 1991; Collier, 1982; Bratton and van de Walle, 1994, 1997), the nature of a regime has important implications that affect the type of transition and the likelihood of regime change. The logic of the framework I have given to study regime transition proposes neopatrimonialism as a key political phenomenon that embraces the diverse range of several regime types in Africa. The ideas expressed behind questions and debates on how African politics should be studied were already mentioned - albeit in simpler terms than is perhaps warranted - to build an awareness that regimes, politics and the relations between are complex forces of analytical controversy. These controversial issues should not be ignored, yet nor can I give them full attention in this paper without compromising the particular areas of interest, namely regime transition and political change in Zaire. In the approach to the study of Zaire's political situation, then, I frequently ask:

Are there any forces in this particular country that impact upon its capacity for regime change, shape the dynamics of transition processes, or increase the potential for the mobilisation of the masses against the political regime?

In this context, the study of processes, structural precedents, and the conjunction of contingent factors becomes critical to the examination of political change and conflict in Zaire. This thesis plans to illustrate what political, structural, and domestic forces make Zaire's case unique on the one hand, and similar to other African cases on the other.

Another related question consistently arises in discussions of regime transition: Is regime transition in Africa different from regime transition in other parts of the world? Western scholars typically argue that African countries represent a unique case for regime transition. On the one hand, that more than 50 countries on the African continent, not to mention the surrounding island nations, can be lumped together in one common "case" is debatable and lacks much validity. On the other hand, African countries portray many similar characteristics that could arguably be used to make a general "case" of regime transition. As though this controversy were not enough, some African scholars contend that the West has merely super-imposed its model of (democratic) regime transition upon African political situations rather than fostered a genuine belief that the African experience of transition involves qualities that do not exist elsewhere. Furthermore, they complain that Western scholarship does not include analysis of the potential similarities between African
transitions and other transitions but instead focuses upon Africa's problems. I believe "Afro-pessimism" is the term commonly employed. Should African politics be treated and therefore analysed differently from politics in the rest of the world?

For purposes of this thesis, I contend that the nature of many of Africa's regimes is significantly different from those found in other parts of the world. However, in no way does that imply that the regimes are the same. In fact, never is the obvious intention of this thesis to generalise about the whole of Africa; if and when generalisations do occur in an inappropriate context, it is an error on my part. Just the same, there are some common traits that African countries share as a result of their unique heritage that should not be ignored. For instance, the era of colonialism in Africa was a formative experience for most African nations. Indeed, the legacy of colonialism impacts upon today's political institutions and actors in many diverse ways. The most significant impact of colonial policy upon many contemporary African regimes is manifest in their very nature as neopatrimonial government systems. Where else in the world is the experience of colonialism combined with the traditional cultures of the African peoples? Where else was the concept of patrimonial authority implemented to such a degree that after more than 40 years of independence, countries are still reacting and struggling with the same political and institutional responses?

That is not to say that notions of patrimonial authority were non-existent in precolonial African society. On the contrary, anthropological studies have illustrated that many of the larger tribes in Africa were ruled as patriarchies prior to European colonisation. The colonialists merely adapted their methods of administration to those found in Africa; those methods by nature were patrimonial. Either way, Bratton and van de Walle point out that neopatrimonialism has become "[t]he institutional hallmark of politics in the ancien régimes of postcolonial Africa" that separates Africa from the rest of the world (1997: 61, emphasis in original). This thesis more or less concurs with their observation as it applies to the case of Zaire.

Africa's era of colonial domination in the first half of the 1900s set the precedent for political exploitation, corruption, and the use of force within the institutions of authority. The European colonial administrations' mismanagement and maltreatment of the African peoples were handed down to many of the postindependent leaders and governments (Chabal, Gordon and Gordon).

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27Bratton and van de Walle contend that more than 40 regimes in Africa are variants of the neopatrimonial model of government. In their major study, they present substantial case evidence to back up their arguments. See BRATTON and VAN DE WALLE (1997: 77-82).

28The term "neopatrimonialism" will be defined and discussed in the following section.

29For further discussion, see CHABAL (1996); and GORDON and GORDON (1996).
Subsequently, many of the struggling new leaders mismanaged their own governments and economies and treated their populations in harsh ways. Nzongola observes that one of the main features of political life in postcolonial Africa has been the government leaders’ use of state machinery to further their own interests while undermining the basic rights of their people (1994a: 9).

The frequency with which regime transition occurs in Africa is facilitated in part by a general absence of entrenched political institutions and a basic lack of political participation and competition. Another legacy of the colonial era (especially in the Belgian Congo, or Zaire) was that local participation, leadership, and education were discouraged out of fear that the masses - should they become politically educated - would rise up against the colonial administrations. The process of independence from the colonial powers was a traumatic occurrence for many African nations simultaneously undergoing transitions to independence. When the European powers embarked upon plans to relinquish their responsibility to and administration of the colonies, the withdrawal of European colonial officials and support was rather abrupt, particularly in Zaire under Belgium. The Zaireans, with a mixture of euphoria and apprehension, were left to install their own government with little guidance - a challenge to which they had not been prepared. Unsurprisingly, they implemented a government system based on what they knew of the previous colonial regime and their own traditional practices. It is in this way that neopatrimonialism grew as the predominant nature of the Mobutu regime.

1.4.2: Regime variants in Africa.

Bratton and van de Walle (1997) identify five modal regime variants predominant in Africa (see Table 2).30 Military oligarchies, plebiscitary one-party systems, and competitive one-party systems represent regimes in which neopatrimonial rule is dominant. They include most of sub-Saharan Africa's political regimes. According to Bratton and van de Walle, "They are distinguished by whether the strongman's following is broadly or narrowly mobilised (participation) and by the plurality of political association within governing institutions (competition)" (1994: 472).31 The other two variants, multiparty systems and settler oligarchies, are less common in Africa and will

30Each of the modal regime variants will not be developed in detail in this study. For further information, see Bratton and van de Walle (1997: 77-82). These categories and labels build on existing typologies; See Ruth Collier (1982) who identifies military, multiparty, plebiscitary and competitive one-party systems and Sam Huntington (1991) who distinguishes personal, military, and one-party regimes in addition to South Africa's special case of racial oligarchy.

31For a useful discussion of the notion of a "strongman" regime, see Ng'ethie (1995). He argues that the nature of a strongman regime is a major contributing factor to regime transition and change. But even before pressures for transition and change come to the fore, the strongman regime contributes to the collapse of the state.
not be examined. The figure below explains the breakdown of the regime variants according to their levels of political participation and competition.

### Regime variants according to political competition and participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competition Level</th>
<th>Exclusionary Democracy</th>
<th>Inclusionary Democracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Multiparty System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Settlement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oligarchy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Competitive One-Party System</td>
<td>Plebiscitary One-Party System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Military</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oligarchy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Exclusionary Authoritarianism</td>
<td>Inclusionary Authoritarianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Dictatorship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1**: Political competition and participation describe regime type, taken from Bratton and van de Walle (1994: 471).

A brief explanation of this figure follows:

Competition and participation may vary independently of each other. We use these two dimensions to construct a schema of political regimes in Africa... The axes of the figure depict the extent to which a regime is competitive (along a scale from authoritarianism to democracy) and participatory (along a scale from exclusiveness to inclusiveness). ...At the four corners lie four ideal regime categories. ...Actual regimes occupy real-world locations within the space bounded by the idealised extremes. The specific coordinates of actual regimes derive from the extent to which they are more or less competitive and participatory (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994: 470).

Clearly, the figure above shows six different types of regimes instead of the five I mentioned earlier. In another study (1994), Bratton and van de Walle did indeed identify six modal regimes. The contrast is mentioned now for one reason: the sixth regime type that was eliminated in the later study was the personal dictatorship. Those countries, including Zaire, that were personal
dictatorships were incorporated into the other regime variants of neopatrimonial rule. If the Mobutu regime could be placed in the figure, it would fall somewhere between personal dictatorship and pleiscitary one-party system. In this thesis, I will draw more frequently from the argument that Zaire under Mobutu was a personal dictatorship. In any case, it was an authoritarian government system, with limited political competition and minimal levels of authentic political participation. Bratton and van de Walle and other scholars including Crawford Young and René Lemarchand argue that the most illegitimate regimes are those under personal rule; the Mobutu regime was one of the most illegitimate regimes in Africa.

The dynamics of regime transition are heavily contingent upon the role of the incumbent leadership - President Mobutu in Zaire's case. Whether an individual or a group governs, whether the government is military or civilian - these are important distinguishing factors to note. When Mobutu took office in 1965, he installed a military system in which he was the leader. However, in an attempt to civilianise and legitimise the regime, Mobutu created the Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (MPR) and abandoned his military rank in favour of political partisan leadership. Political participation was regulated and political competition was nonexistent.

For the time-being, Bratton and van de Walle define the pleiscitary one-party state as a "civilian (or civilianised military) one-party regime in which there [is] little or no competition within the single party but which exhibit[s] all the trappings of participatory electoral politics such as mass rallies, regular elections, and referenda" (1997: 173). In Zaire, Mobutu regulated political participation and loyalty through the use of state resources and his reliance on patron-client networks. The Mobutu regime tolerated a considerably higher degree of political participation than was the norm for other personal regimes; however, it was controlled through the institutions of the state party. Opposition activity was banned until 1990, yet the Zairean masses were encouraged to participate in the political activities of the state party. They engaged in "symbolic rituals of endorsement for the personal ruler, his officeholders, and his policies" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 78). For example, a portrait of Mobutu in the workplace was seen as a sign of respect for and pride in his leadership. Moreover, businesses were treated favourably by the government forces when they adhered to the policies of the state.

However, the Mobutu regime did not allow any political competition. In the early decades, opposition groups with forced to go underground or into exile. In the 1990s, competitive politics emerged formally, yet the regime managed to manipulate the political processes of transition and co-opt numerous opposition groups. In conclusion, Bratton and van de Walle concede that "transitions from pleiscitary one-party regimes hinge on the issue of political competition and tend
to come to a head when a national conference asserts rules that challenge the long-standing political monopolies enjoyed by incumbents" (1994: 486). This hypothesis will be tested in Chapter 3 when Zaire's regime transition process is examined.

The regime types are broken down below:

### Types of regime in sub-Saharan Africa, 1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plebiscitary one-party systems</th>
<th>Military oligarchies</th>
<th>Competitive one-party systems</th>
<th>Settler oligarchies</th>
<th>Multiparty systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>Botswana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Gambia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Côte D'Ivoire</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sénégal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gabon</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Guinea *</td>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea-Bissau</td>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equatorial</td>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>Malawi *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea *</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>São Tomé</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaziland *</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaïre *</td>
<td></td>
<td>Togo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Countries that were categorised as personal dictatorships in the first study (1994).

Table 2: Regime types, adapted from Bratton and van de Walle (1997: 79).

In the personal dictatorship, the leader rules by decree in an exclusionary environment that allows no political competition and limited amounts of political participation. In other words, "institutions of participation exist in name only and cannot check the absolute powers of the chief executive. The regime disallows even a semblance of political competition, for example, by physically eliminating or indefinitely incarcerating opponents" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994: 474). It is these governments that are most unstable and thus easily toppled by persistent efforts for regime change (Colburn, 1994: 36). The Mobutu dictatorship provided the "quintessence" of personal rule.

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32See Bratton and van de Walle (1994: 474-7) for a thorough discussion of the personal dictatorship and its impact upon regime transition processes.
There are four ideas concerning personal rule that merit further attention, although the purpose at this stage is merely to acknowledge their influential existence rather than explain it (the explanations will come when transition processes in Zaire are examined exclusively in Chapter 3). The first is that transitions in personal dictatorships tend to emerge "from below" as a result of popular demands for change from domestic and external groups. Rarely does a personal dictator take upon himself the task of initiating the process of transition. The second idea suggests that "real political change is unlikely as long as the ruler remains, since he has made all the rules" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994: 475). It follows, then, that the removal of incumbent regimes becomes a protracted and painful struggle that the opposition is ill-equipped to manage. Finally, the weakness of the opposition results in part from the frailty of the political institutions. There are few methods in place for negotiations between groups for political power.

In sum, Bratton and van de Walle claim that "transitions from personal dictatorships are driven by spontaneous street protests, focus on the fate of the ruler, and, in the absence of effective political institutions to channel political participation and contestation, tend to dissolve into chaotic conflict" (1994: 485). This hypothesis will be tested in Chapter 3, just as that on transitions from plebiscitary one-party systems mentioned earlier. Regime transition in Zaire was influenced from both structural regime types. Furthermore, the Mobutu regime was the epitome of a neopatrimonial system of government.

1.4.3: A further glance at neopatrimonialism.

The term "neopatrimonial" occurs throughout this thesis in reference to the type of regime that Mobutu inherited and implemented over the course of his personal rule. Neopatrimonial regimes are dominated by a single leader and his patronage. Classic examples of neopatrimonial regimes outside of the African continent are Iran under the shah, Cuba under Batista, and the Philippines under Marcos. As we have seen within Africa, more than half of the countries have a predisposition towards neopatrimonialism. Zaire under Mobutu was no exception.

The concept of neopatrimonialism is derived from the Weberian notion of patrimonial authority whereby one individual, rather than an office, maintains a personalised rulership. The ruler's authority is built on at the very least the pretense of rational-legal forms of institutional legitimacy, although the ruler himself is above the law (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 62). The ruler does not distinguish between personal and state property, however, hence the altered term "neopatrimonialism". Thus, neopatrimonial regimes are "hybrid political systems in which the customs and patterns of patrimonialism co-exist with, and suffuse, rational-legal institutions"
Neopatrimonialism is a phenomenon that has been studied under different, although closely related, theoretical labels, including "personal rule", "patronage", "rent-seeking", "prebendalism", and Jean-François Bayart's "politics of the belly". 34

1.4.3.1: Informal political institutions.

One of the most important characteristics of a neopatrimonial regime is its predisposition towards informal political institutions in place of formal institutions, hence complaints of the latter's "inherent weaknesses" in some studies of African regime transition and change. It will become apparent as we examine the institutionalisation of neopatrimonialism in the Mobutu regime (Chapter 2) that in fact, the real political institutions in Zaire are the informal networks of patron-client relations between the incumbent ruling elite and its loyal supporters. Bratton and van de Walle allege that the unwritten rules of neopatrimonial informal institutions determine the behaviour of political actors - especially the ruler - and the performance of the administrative infrastructure in its provision of the basic needs of the population (1997: 44).

Three informal political institutions that are valued in neopatrimonial regimes are identified: presidentialism, clientelism, and the use of state resources. 35 The institution of presidentialism is referred to as "the systematic concentration of political power in the hands of one individual, who resists delegating all but the most trivial decision-making tasks...[and] consolidate[s] power by asserting total personal control over formal political structures" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 63). Political power in an informal presidential system is absolute in the sense that there are no checks and balances to regulate executive decisions. In addition, the legislative and judicial branches are accountable to the president's office. The president - as personal ruler - is above the formal codes of law, as are his closest associates and kin members. The small ruling elite is basically free to do as they please. They "please" to construct complex patron-client networks, which leads to the second informal institution of clientelism.

Neopatrimonial rulers sustain their power through the system of patronage whereby they award personal favours in exchange for support and obedience. Nicholas van de Walle observes of the contractual character of patron-client relations that "in exchange for being allowed to steal a little from the public till, the client does not steal too much and looks after his patron's interests" (1994: 13).

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33 For a good discussion on patrimonialism and neopatrimonialism, see EISENSTADT (1972) and CLAPHAM (1985).
34 See BAYART (1993) for an excellent study of the state in Africa. Jean-François Médard reviews and compares the different terminology and concludes that the theoretical differences are trivial and semantic; see MEDARD (1994).
35 For an analytical explanation of each, see BRATTON and VAN DE WALLE (1997: 63-8).
134). One of the results of clientelism is the frequent intervention of the regime in the operations of the economy. Given that access to resources and power are critical for a regime's survival, the regime becomes the most active participant in the economy, alternating between nationalisation and privatisation policies applied to various industries (depending upon the personal needs and whim of the incumbent ruler). Clientelist practices led the way to the indiscriminate use of state resources for personal gain.

The use of state resources as an informal political institution has been a bone of contention for decades, especially from the perspective of opposition movements. That government leaders dip into the state treasury as though it were their own bank account has been at the center of many national conference debates. One consequence of the use of state resources is the lack of development. To put it differently, "the constant redistribution of state resources for political [and personal] purposes led to endemic fiscal crisis and diminished prospects for sustained economic growth" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 67). Pervasive corruption and in the case of Zaire - blatant kleptocracy - facilitated economic decay, enormous debt, state collapse, and the loss of political legitimacy.

The formal political institutions that exist in most neopatrimonial regimes are deeply penetrated by the informal personal networks that have been institutionalised, marking a striking contrast from the authoritarian government systems in other parts of the world. A "distinctive set of opportunities and constraints for political reform" is created through the primacy placed upon ethnic and patronage relations that in turn corrupt the "bureaucratic operations of formal-legal institutions" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 42). Due to the vibrancy of these three informal political institutions, the process of transition in neopatrimonial regimes typically developed along lines significantly separate from other transitional experiences across the globe. The following section explores this contention.

1.4.3.2: What characterises transition processes in neopatrimonial regimes?

This thesis argues that processes of regime transition in Africa differ in significant respects from other world regions. For the most part, processes of regime transition reflect characteristics founded on the special nature of neopatrimonialism. On the one hand, these characteristics represent the shared legacy of colonialism and its impact upon contemporary African politics. On the other hand, the diversity found in African neopatrimonial regimes that results from the influence of individual strongmen must also be taken into account. Thus, it is important that the neopatrimonial nature of regimes be discussed in the context of both its commonalities and its variations. In any case, transition processes in neopatrimonial regimes have several characteristics
that are noteworthy for their peculiar departure from the norm of political transition. These traits are again highlighted in the various works of Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle (1994, 1997).36

Transitions from neopatrimonial regimes typically begin with politicised economic protests from the masses. Faced with declining levels of economic growth, worsening living standards, and systematic clientelist practices that encourage corruption and decay, a population rarely remains calm. Mass popular protests against the neopatrimonial structures of the regime result in escalated tensions and political violence. Yet incumbent rulers resist the pressure for political change, because it is not in their nature to encourage political competition or participation. A second characteristic of transitions from neopatrimonial regimes, then, hinges on the role of the incumbent ruler. As long as he controls the process, genuine political change is unlikely to occur. Consequently, "the demise of personal dictators is usually protracted and painful, with incumbents tenaciously clinging to power. At worst, the most stubborn incumbents [Mobutu is a classic example] may even allow the destruction of their nation's economic and political structures as a cost of personal political survival" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 85).

A third characteristic of transitions from neopatrimonial regimes in Africa is the breakdown of clientelist institutions over elite struggles for access to resources. As the elite ruling class fractures over increasingly scarce rewards from the system of patronage, the internal political system that sustains the incumbent in power begins to crumble. The ruler finds himself under pressure not only from opposition forces, but also from within his own elite government. To accommodate these pressures for change, the incumbent reluctantly initiates some reform measures aimed at pacifying the opposition and simultaneously recentralising power in his hands.

As political openings are created and the opposition negotiates for political regime change, the central motivation becomes the removal of the incumbent and the establishment of new political and legal rules with which to govern the system. Every opposition member has a stake in the transition process and seeks to gain as much leverage as possible. The position of the opposition movement is strengthened when middle-class elements of society join the ranks of protest against the regime. Potential leaders are most likely to come from the middle-class. Therefore, that the middle-class chooses to align with the opposition is a significant departure from other experiences.

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36For a complete discussion of these characteristics of regime transition in Africa, see Bratton and van de Walle (1997: 82-9).
of regime transition whereby the middle-class views the incumbent regime as "the protector of property rights...[and] private capital" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 89).

All of these characteristics bear testimony to the pervasive effects of neopatrimonialism in the politics of many African regimes, especially regimes subject to a personal dictatorship such as Mobutu's in Zaire. Transition processes, much as any other political processes, are bound to be influenced by the neopatrimonial practices of the incumbent ruler and the government political institutions. In sum, these are distinctive features that cannot be ignored in the study of regime transition and political change in Zaire.

1.5: The "contingent" factors of structured contingency.

The approach in this thesis to the study of regime transition and change in Zaire is centered on the combined influence of structure and contingency. The impact of structural precedents and formations on contemporary processes of political change was discussed in the previous sections. In particular, the type of regime was shown to bear significant weight in the unfolding processes of transition and regime change. The neopatrimonial nature that characterised the Mobutu regime was emphasised for its determining role on the stage where Zairean politics is played. This section departs from the above and addresses the aspects of contingency theory that contribute to the study in this thesis.

In review, a contingent perspective focuses on the behaviours and decisions of political actors in their interactions with one another. It assumes a rational-choice position in that agents of political change tend to act on behalf of their own self-interests and the interests of their particular group. Consequently, the interaction of groups and the power struggles that ensue, like the structural components of the regime, influence the transition process and its outcome. In this thesis then, the contribution of group-conflict theory to an analysis of political regime transition in Zaire is an essential part of the argument and its approach.

1.5.1: Group-conflict theory.

To enhance the analysis of regime transition using group-conflict theory, this section will examine certain elements of a contingent approach to group-conflict politics developed by Charles Tilly in his various works, in particular the landmark study From Mobilisation to Revolution (1978). Tilly's theory is one of collective action. As a result, the discussion that is forthcoming is functional rather than all-encompassing. Moreover, the discussion is strictly theoretical and abstract at this point for a reason: the practical application of contingency theory to the Zaire case will come in the
next few chapters. Not only is Tilly’s large theory extremely complex, but its overall emphasis departs from regime studies and transition literature to focus upon the study of revolution.

However, Tilly develops some useful arguments that offer one explanation of processes of political change. In that regard, I am interested specifically in two models of group interaction that Tilly employs to evaluate the political processes. The polity model and the mobilisation model discuss group interaction and political conflict. They are introduced as a means to an end: an understanding of how group interaction influences regime transition and change in Zaire. It is one of the contentions of this thesis that unless people belong to at least minimally organised, potentially mobilised groups that either already have routine access to resources and political power, or make new claims to the regime in power for that access through processes of transition, they will not engage in action against the regime for political change.

1.5.2: The polity model.
There are two basic presumptions in the polity model. First, most political situations can be viewed as struggles for political power among groups. Second, political groups use violence as a means to achieving their goals on a regular basis. Violence is therefore not "abnormal" in the interaction of groups in politics. Obviously, group interaction is the key to explanations of politics in the polity model. The issues that matter include the identity of the groups interacting, the number of groups involved, and the objectives of these groups. In other words, opposition groups relate to a government and to other contending groups in pursuit of collective interests and claims to political power. Three ideas are revealed: (a) a government is a contending group like any other; (b) group interaction is about struggles for power, and (c) groups are made up of rational, goal-seeking people.

The main elements of the polity model include a population, a government, a polity, and one or more opposition groups. A population can be defined in any way we choose, according to its relevance to the analysis. That is, perhaps the interest is in a population of a particular province or country. Tilly provides useful definitions for the other elements in the polity model:

37 Tilly uses the term "contender" or "contending group" to refer to groups opposed to the government or regime in power. I prefer the term "opposition group". "Contender" implies that a group has a real chance at obtaining political power. Yet in neopatrimonial regimes, political power is closely guarded by the incumbent. Moreover, rarely are groups given the opportunity to contend unless the regime initiates political reform. Even then, as long as the regime controls the reform process, genuine contention is hard to obtain. All this to say, the term "opposition groups" will be used more frequently than "contending" groups in this thesis.
A government is an organisation which controls the principal concentrated means of coercion within the population; a contender for power is a group within the population which at least once during some standard period applies resources to influence that government; and a polity is the set of contenders which routinely and successfully lays claims on that government (1973: 437).

For the time-being, Figure 2 illustrates the components of the polity model in a simple diagram borrowed from Tilly's work:

The polity model

* A member group has routine access to government resources. A challenger group does not.

Figure 2: The polity model, taken from Tilly (1978: 53).

This model provides a simplified, if not somewhat static, two-dimensional explanation of political group-conflict. Nonetheless, its basic function is to outline the importance of viewing regime transition using groups as the unit of analysis and their interaction as one of the determining factors of regime change.

1.5.3: The mobilisation model.

The central focus in the mobilisation model is on a single group's collective political action. The parts that make up the mobilisation model together explain a group's behaviour and the patterns of collective action it will adopt as it interacts with other groups in the polity. Briefly, the parts include organisation, interests, mobilisation, and opportunity. For the immediate purposes of the thesis, I am primarily interested in explaining the different parts of the model.
1.5.3.1: Organisation.

The organisation of a group reflects a common identity and unifying structure among the group members. It is "that aspect of a group's structure which most directly affects its capacity to act on its interests" (Tilly, 1978: 7). In Tilly's discussion of the organisation element of the mobilisation model, he borrows from the research of a fellow theorist, Harrison White, to explain the epitome of organisation. In simple terms, White maintains that there are categories of people that share something in common and networks of people who are linked together by a specific bond. When a group of people share both a category and a network, the combination is referred to as catnet, or "groupness" (Tilly, 1978: 62-3). Thus, Tilly argues that:

\[
\text{CATNESS X NETNESS} = \text{ORGANISATION} \quad (1978: 63).
\]

In addition to using "catness" and "netness" as indicators of an organised group, there are also structural features of a group to take into consideration, such as its efficiency and its effectiveness. An effective group accomplishes what it sets out to do while an efficient group "gets a large return relative to the means at its disposal" (Tilly, 1978: 116). An organised group is only created with time and careful planning. Organisation implies that there exists a standardised method for conducting activities within a group. It reveals that within an organised group there are people with responsibilities for specific tasks. For instance, there must be a leadership core - that is, one individual or a set of individuals in control, managing the organisation of the group and making the decisions that dictate its actions. If the level of organisation is low, the group is not as equipped to manage its interests and mobilise collectively. Organisation is thus necessary to the survival of a group as it interacts with other groups and presses for political change.

1.5.3.2: Interests.

In the analysis of group-conflict theory, Tilly defines interests as "the gains and losses resulting from a group's interaction with other groups" (1978: 7). A group's interests provide clues as to why it behaves as it does. For instance, it matters why one group mobilises and another does not. Furthermore, it is important to understand what interests drive one group to mobilise while another demobilises. The interests of a group are as varied as the individuals that make up the group. Combined however, they determine a group's agenda for political action and influence its interaction with other groups, especially the government.

How are a group's interests identified? Tilly considers two options: "We can...infer the interest from the...[group's] own utterances and actions" or we can assess the interest "from a general analysis of the connections between interest and social position" (1978: 60). Both options have
drawbacks. The first because it is rare that a group actually articulates its shared interests. In the second instance, suggesting that we know better than the group itself what its interests are resonates with arrogance (even if the first option does hold true and the group is unaware of its own interests). The solution is to rely upon the group's notion of its own interests in the short run and, whenever possible, use tested "predictors" of common interests that a group pursues in the long run (Tilly, 1978: 61). In other words, a group's interests in the short run are what it says they are whereas in the long run, a group's interests are determined by its "real" agenda: a position within the polity that enables the most access to resources and power.

1.5.3.3: Mobilisation.
Mobilisation occurs when a group's character changes from passive to active in its public life. It is defined as "the process by which a group acquires collective control over the resources needed for [political] action" (Tilly, 1975: 503). In any given political situation, collective action will not occur unless there is some degree of group mobilisation, whether the group is attempting to protect the resources it owns, or to compete for more resources.

Tilly borrows from another theorist, Amitai Etzioni, who gives a classification of resources in his own study The Active Society (1968).38 Resources are divided up into three categories: coercive, utilitarian, and normative. Examples of each include weapons, machines, armed troops, nuclear technologies (coercive); money, supplies, information services, communication lines (utilitarian); and loyalties, knowledge, obligations (normative) (Tilly, 1978: 69). Other theorists have improvised upon Etzioni's original categorisation of resources to include political resources (authority and legitimacy) and status resources (leadership).39 As a group increases its access and control over any combination of these resources, it is mobilising. The capacity for control over any of the above resources measures the power of a group. Any change in the capacity to control these resources has significant repercussions on the group and its interactions with other groups. Thus, a group's ability to mobilise is affected by several factors: the organisational structure of the group, the political environment, and the resources already in the group's possession (Tilly, 1975: 504-5).

For a moment, the notion of power requires some attention. The term "power" is a difficult concept to define, due to its relative and ambiguous nature, and its subjection to numerous interpretations, none of them agreed upon by all theorists. How is power measured? In determining the power of a group, we are reminded that power is relative to a specific party, its interests, and its interactions.

38See the results of the study in ETZIONI (1968).
For instance, a jury in a courtroom has the ability to determine the future of an accused individual based on evidence presented by the defense and the prosecution, yet that same group of people outside of the courtroom and the label "jury" have no control over the future of the accused. The jury is powerful in the court system, but powerless outside of it.

Throughout the process of regime transition, all political groups including the government struggle for power. For an opposition member of the polity, the primary goal is to remain in the political game of transition while simultaneously preventing others (challengers) from accessing the contested government resources. For a challenger group, clearly the objective is to enter the political game so as to gain access to government resources and have a stake in the outcome of regime transition. When these arguments are tested in the analysis of transition in Zaire, we will learn that the opposition coalition in Zaire had membership in the Zairean polity while the AFDL coalition was initially a challenger group. A polity consequently develops tests of membership, the most prominent test being the capacity to mobilise large groups of people. One of the keys, then, to understanding regime transition is through an examination of the conflict that develops between and among groups as they struggle for power.

1.5.3.4: Opportunity.

An examination of the opportunities of one group involves an analysis of its interaction with other groups. It also involves gaging the strengths and weaknesses of each group in order to determine the opportunities available to any one group in particular. Opportunity is about costs and benefits. In other words, group interaction can be broken down to "a series of responses to changing estimates of the cost and benefits likely to result from..." these interactions (Tilly, 1978: 99). In conclusion, the summing up of these costs and benefits is best explained by assessing two main features of opportunity in turn: opportunity/threat and repression/facilitation.

1.5.3.4.1: Opportunity/ threat.

In Tilly's group-conflict theory, there are two faces of opportunity: opportunity itself and threat. On the one side, opportunity for one group is "the extent to which other groups, including governments, are vulnerable to new claims which would, if successful, enhance the [first group's] realisation of its interests" (Tilly, 1978: 133). Threat is the reverse side of the coin. It refers to the

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40 The tests of membership into the polity vary depending on the status of the group. TILLY (1973) outlines these tests further in his work; he also develops explanations of membership tests in his book, From Mobilisation to Revolution (1978, especially Chapter 4).

41 Tilly (1978) provides a useful diagram of threats and opportunities in relation to collective action.
extent that other groups' claims would, if successful, threaten the first group's realisation of its interests.

How do the opportunities of an opposition group develop? Changes in the relationship between the opposition groups and the government can either threaten the interests of a group or allow the group new opportunities to advance its interests (Tilly, 1978: 7). These changes could be internal or they could be the result of external factors. An opposition group that suddenly acquires a significant increase in its resources, for example a new cache of weapons, is presented with new opportunities. On the other hand, these same "new" opportunities threaten the existing opportunities of all other groups, including the government. Consequently, an opposition group watches closely the responses of the government not only to its actions, but as well to the actions of other groups. It follows that opposition groups "resist changes which would threaten their current realisation of their interests even more than they seek changes which would enhance their interests" (Tilly, 1978: 135). When we explore the interaction between the opposition coalition and the AFDL coalition in Chapter 4, this will become apparent. Groups do not want to lose power. They are always looking for ways to increase their power and resources. The government, as a result, develops a combination of repressive and facilitating methods to ensure its own majority access to resources and power.

1.5.3.4.2: Repression/ facilitation.

What role does repression play in group-conflict theory? Repression occurs when one group makes the costs of political action too high for another group. Typically, the first group is the government. Thus, the role of the government is central to the development of opportunities for group mobilisation. Governments are most commonly the agents involved in repression, hence the term political repression. A government's capacity to repress is not a matter of more or less; instead a government is selective in which groups it represses (Tilly, 1978: 106). For example, a government may accept the actions of a group gathered at a soccer field to enjoy the sport while it may violently repress that same group in a different situation at the same soccer field, perhaps in a meeting to discuss political elections.

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42There are two ways that a government can apply its repressive measures. In the first, it can act directly on the opposition group's mobilisation. For instance, the Mobutu government increased the costs of collective political action by (a) making it difficult for opposition groups to communicate and build support, or (b) arresting the leadership of the group. The second type of repression acts directly upon the political action of a group. An example of this kind of repressive measure occurred when the Mobutu government established penalties for certain actions carried out by the opposition, such as banning the organisation of public rallies and coming down with force should the masses engage in public demonstrations in the streets. See Tilly (1978: 100-1) for further explanation.
The opposite of repression is facilitation, which implies the lowering of the cost of collective action for one group due to another group's action. Facilitation is usually instigated by a government's weakening ability to repress the growing number of opposition groups within the population. In sum, repression and facilitation have two connected effects: "depressing or raising the overall level of collective action,...[and]...altering the relative attractiveness of different forms of collective action" (1978: 114). A combination of political repression and facilitation is usually effective in manipulating the political actions of the opposition.

Briefly, it is necessary to comment on the prevalence of political violence in the upcoming explanations of regime transition and change in Zaire. Government repression tends to be accompanied by political violence. The notion of political violence is an integral piece of Zaire's transition puzzle. Yet, the nature of violence is difficult to grasp because it is arbitrary. In essence, three ideas are involved: (a) violence implies the use of physical force, (b) it is a human action that destroys persons or property, and (c) it grows out of interactions between two or more opponents (Tilly, 1978: 174-5). Ted Robert Gurr, in his influential book Why Men Rebel (1970), develops a typology of political violence and change that is useful. He uses an ordinal scale that combines processes and degrees of violence with the length of time it takes to produce a particular form of political violence.

For purposes of this thesis then, political violence refers to "all collective attacks within a political community against the political regime, its actors - including competing political groups as well as incumbents - or its policies" in which "persons or objects are seized or physically damaged in spite of resistance" (Gurr, 1970: 3-4; Tilly, 1975: 513). There are essentially three forms of political violence reflected through situations of turmoil, conspiracy, and internal war. In Zaire's

43In the next two chapters when I examine repression and opportunity in Zaire, this discussion will be taken up in considerably more detail.
44The introductory chapter to Ted Robert Gurr's Why Men Rebel (1970) is informative as an analysis of violent change. He reviews explanations of political violence and elaborates upon the different aspects of political violence, ie. magnitude, sources, and forms.
45In a turmoil situation, spontaneous violent action manifests itself in public events such as riots, demonstrations, and strikes. Violence is widespread in that it involves large numbers of people, yet it rarely lasts more than a few hours. The changes are minimal. Higher up on the ordinal scale of political violence is conspiracy. Conspiracies are typically more organised than turmoil activities. In a conspiracy situation, political participation is limited to small groups and violence tends to last only a few days. More common conspiracies include mutinies and coups d'état against the government in power. The changes brought about by a conspiracy usually appear in the form of new policies and personnel. The third form of political violence is internal war. Generally, a situation of internal war is characterised by widespread participation and a high level of organisation. The violence is extensive and prolonged, often taking place over several months, possibly years. There is usually a concrete political objective: to overthrow the
"Transition" years, turmoil was a consistent feature of political processes and struggles for power. Conspiracy and internal war were not so obvious, although the final stages of the transition in which the Mobutu regime was overthrown resemble to a point a revolutionary experience.

According to Bernard Nkemdirim (1977), two thoughts emerge from this hypothesis of political violence when applied to most African case-studies. He states that political violence is most likely when:

(i) the steady pace of national centralisation and unification at all levels, political as well as economic, has made it progressively more difficult for some groups to get into power without the use of violence; and (ii) the arbitrary use of force by the holders of power tends to discredit its constitutional distribution between the contending groups (1977: 78).

Therefore, the common response of a neopatrimonial regime to mounting opposition pressures for change is one of two broad strategies. It can either agree to implement some institutional and economic reforms in an attempt to restore mass public opinion or it can attempt through repression to remove oppositional elements altogether and instill fear into their support structures (Mason, 1990: 32). The incumbent leadership often applies a combination of rewards (facilitation) and repression, although the tendency is to lean towards the latter strategy - witness Zaire. It is suggested that the ability of the regime to institute a program of reform is hindered by the sheer lack of "redistributable resources, institutional machinery, and political will"; therefore the regime resorts to repressive measures (Mason, 1990: 33). The indiscriminate use of repressive violence, however, in time has the opposite effect, as we will observe in the upcoming chapters. It stimulates rather than deters support for the opposition.

Group-conflict theory deals with questions of what, why and how political violence occurs. The forms that violence can take, as well as the determinants of the extent of violence factor into the political equation. The notion that political violence is a normal feature of group interaction is a central tenet of group-conflict theory. Tilly argues that nonviolent action must be understood

government in power. The changes that occur as a result of internal war are more drastic than in turmoil and conspiracy situations. Two classic examples of internal war are civil wars and world wars. See Gurr (1970) for further elaboration, particularly Chapter 1.

46See NKEMDIRIM (1977) for an explanation on the link between political process and political violence.

47T. David MASON (1990) devises a comprehensive framework for examining the dynamics of revolutionary change, both at the state and individual levels. He incorporates the arguments of major revolution theorists, including Charles Tilly, Ted Robert Gurr, and Theda Skocpol, in a theoretical assessment of the indigenous factors that are necessary for revolutionary change.

48According to Charles TILLY (1978), the opposite of repression is facilitation. In essence, a government facilitates when it perceives a lowering of the cost of collective action for the opposition contender/s. Facilitation is usually instigated by a government's weakening ability to repress the growing number of opposition groups in the polity.
before we can begin to understand its opposite, violent action (1978: 182). In addition, he suggests "[t]here is an intimate dependency between violent and nonviolent forms of collective action - one is simply a special case of the other" (1974: 283). Two related questions arise: At what point does political action become violent political action? Likewise, is there a pattern that exists whereby a nonviolent action becomes a violent one? Only a small part of political action is actually violent in nature. Indeed, the reason that political violence attracts so much attention is due to its rare and unexpected occurrence. In addition, "the immediate costs to the participants [of political violence] tend to be greater, more visible, and more dramatic" (Tilly, 1978: 183).

In conclusion, on the assumption that political conflict is present at any given time in any given location rests the corollary that the bulk of this conflict revolves around the interactive struggles between political groups. Each group, including the government, competes with other groups in pursuit of its interests. With this in mind, the models of contingency - policy and mobilisation - will be contextualised within the Zairean framework in the remaining chapters.

1.6: CONCLUDING COMMENTS.

This chapter has introduced a significant amount of information in a limited amount of time and space. It would not have been possible to launch into an analysis of regime transition and change in Zaire without first covering some basic territory concerning theory, debate, approach, conceptual issues, and contextualisation within Africa. As a result, several objectives were met through the course of the chapter.

One objective was to examine regime transition and change in Africa. It was shown that contemporary regime transition in Africa has characteristics that are unique to its particular set of circumstances, primarily due to the neopatrimonial nature of the majority of African regimes. Many African regime transitions reflect simultaneously the regional contrasts of the continent with the similar experiences of colonialism, independence struggles, and development. Given the overwhelming number of dictatorships and military regimes in Africa, transitions to transform the political landscape tend to be quite common. By contextualising regime transition and change in Africa, an understanding (albeit limited) of the precarious balance between neopatrimonial legacies and regimes in power was developed.

Another objective was to discuss the contending perspectives on regime transition in Africa in order to develop an approach for the Zaire case. The chapter examined domestic and international perspectives, political and economic views, and structural and contingent theories. Then, an
approach was presented that combined the structural and contingent theories with an emphasis on political and domestic factors to explain regime transition. Structured contingency makes a powerful argument for regime transition in Zaire. The approach focuses upon the structural heritage of neopatrimonial practices in shaping the transition experience while it simultaneously allocates the importance of group interaction and patterns of political behaviour in contemporary Zairean politics. The institutions - formal and informal - that characterise the neopatrimonial regime type were explored. In addition, it was shown how to identify groups and their patterns of interaction using the polity and mobilisation models. The level of group organisation, the interests that drive a group, the resources available to a group for mobilisation purposes, and the opportunities that present themselves through interaction with other groups are variables that determine the dynamics of transition processes.

As this thesis wrestles with the content of regime theory from a structured contingency perspective, the challenges are enormous. One example: Zaire had an opposition movement from the mid-1960s onwards, but it was largely ineffective in its influence upon the Mobutu regime until the early 1990s. What explains this lack of authentic political activity? This question and many more will be raised throughout the thesis in an attempt to understand the complexities of regime transition and change in Zaire and the important role that regime type had in the process. Investigating the reasons for the fall of the Mobutu regime is no small feat. The challenge has barely begun.
CHAPTER 2: AN OVERVIEW OF POLITICAL HISTORY IN ZAIRE:
The colonial era, independence (1960), and the following 30 years.

2.0: Introductory comments.

The first chapter focused on broad themes of regime theory, transition literature, issues of regime type and group-conflict politics. In particular, I reviewed the central debates and aspects of regime transition and change, developed an approach to the analysis of regime transition and change in Zaire, and discussed the phenomenon of neopatrimonialism. In order to provide an understanding of regime transition and change, mobilisation processes, and struggles for political power as they evolved in Zaire, an analysis must be firmly grounded in the historical context from which the impetus for regime transition and change emerged. To that end, the intention of this chapter is to provide a background to Zairean politics that facilitates the purpose of this thesis. That is, to examine the long-term and immediate causes and conditions of regime transition and change in Zaire using a structured contingency approach that incorporates neopatrimonial structure and contingent group-conflict relations.

Hence, I propose a chapter plan with two broad objectives. The first is to explore the development of a neopatrimonial regime in Zaire. To do so, I will trace the colonial history of Zaire in order to link the creation of Zaire's neopatrimonial regime with the legacy of colonial patrimonial institutions. Following that, a discussion of the years following independence (1960) will enable an analysis of (a) the major events and actors in Zairean politics, and (b) the links between the nature of the Mobutu regime, the structures of power, and the political processes that led to regime transition and change in the 1990s. The second objective is to employ a structured contingency approach that supports political analysis of Zairean politics through an examination of groups in the Zairean polity.49

In brief, one of the challenges of this thesis was to use an approach that took into account my interest in historical precedents to explain present-day politics in Zaire and simultaneously enabled an analysis of how political groups interact with one another. In other words, I concur with Douglass North who insists that "history matters...because the present and the future are connected to the past by the continuity of today's institutions. Today's and tomorrow's choices are shaped by the past" (1990: Preface, vii). At the same time, I agree that "the actors, organisations, and

49In this particular framework, I am interested in the theoretical models developed by Charles Tilly that were outlined briefly in the first chapter.
institutions that inhabit the national arena" interact with one another and this interaction shapes the dynamics of politics (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 31). These two contrasting arguments are combined in a structured contingency approach that holds that (a) structural precedents from the past influence the present-day political institutions of Zaire through the legacy of neopatrimonialism, and (b) the political decisions and group interaction also affect the political institutions of present-day Zaire. As a result, I want to encourage an awareness of the nature of Mobutu's regime through its link with the previous (colonial) regime and an understanding of the dynamics of group interaction during the first 30 years of independence. In sum, the chapter's function is to serve primarily as an informative reference for the analysis that follows in the next two chapters on Zaire's political change in the 1990s. Therefore, an introduction to Zairean politics is the objective, rather than an exhaustive historical-political survey.

To move beyond mere description and encourage an analytical study, it will be helpful to identify some questions that pertain to the nature of the regime and the development of the Zairean polity. The questions are as follows:

1. How does the domination of a single leader (Mobutu) in a neopatrimonial regime affect the interaction of groups and the patterns of mobilisation?
2. What groups in this era were contending with the government for political power?
3. What was the nature of these opposition group/s? What claims did they make upon the government? Did they have the ability to mobilise resources to their advantage?
4. Why did political protests escalate?
5. What was the response of the government to oppositional forces during these years (1965-1989)?

These questions help to clarify this chapter's objectives. The organisational structure of the chapter follows. First, I will briefly review Zaire's colonial era to demonstrate the impact of the patrimonial policies of the Belgian administration upon the Mobutu regime. Next I will highlight some of the key events and actors in Zaire's early troubled history from 1960 - 1965. Following that, an analysis of the institutionalisation of neopatrimonialism in the Mobutu regime is given. Then, the latter half of the chapter explores the origins of an opposition movement in Zaire from the time Mobutu entered office in 1965. And finally, a brief discussion of how the Mobutu regime endured in the troubling 1980s will prepare us to study political regime transition and change in the 1990s. The structured contingency approach focuses on the domestic and political factors, symptoms and conditions that influenced the events of the 1990s. Political processes, neopatrimonial structural precedents, patterns of group mobilisation, power struggles, and government repression constitute other related ideas that will be developed.
2.1: Colonialism in the Congo sets the precedent for personal rule.

Extensive research on the political history of Zaire both during its colonial domination and since its independence (1960) has been heavily documented. For this purpose, what this chapter does not do is delve into too much descriptive detail. Noted Western scholars and their significant works on Zaire provide an extensive library of information and research; they include Lemarchand, 1964; Young, 1965; Callaghy, 1984; Young and Turner, 1985; Schatzberg, 1988, 1991; MacGaffey, 1987, 1991; and Leslie, 1993. Prominent Zairean scholars include Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1986, 1994; Kabue, 1975; Kanza, 1972; M'Baya, 1993; Kabwit, 1979; Lumumba-Kasonga, 1992; Mvuluya, 1993; and wa Mutua, 1992. Given this plethora of available scholarship, interested parties are presented with numerous resources with which to explore Zaire's rich history.

2.1.1: Pre-1960: Zaire's colonial heritage.

There can be no question that colonialism influenced the dynamics of most contemporary political environments in Africa. Arguably, the impact of colonialism upon modern African political affairs is far greater than any other combination of relations, ideologies, policies, group interaction, and events. The colonial experience of the Belgian Congo is relevant to this project for several reasons, including its link to (a) the nature of politics in post-colonial Zaire, (b) the type of regime installed under President Mobutu, and (c) the levels of group mobilisation. While the intention in this section is not to detail, critique, or analyse the era of colonialism, some understanding of its impact on contemporary Zairean politics is useful and necessary.

In the next few pages, I will provide a synopsis of Zaire's colonial history. Two objectives are pursued. The first is to address the basic type of colonialism practiced in the Belgian Congo. The second is to discuss two sets of policies that clearly portray Belgium's predilection towards a patrimonial system of colonial administration.

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50 Aside from the work of scholars listed above, several additional works are equally valuable. See among others, Willame (1972); Verhaegen, 1966, 1969, 1978; Gran (1979); Gould (1980); and Braeckman (1992).

51 In this section (2.1) on the historical background of Zaire, I will use the appropriate country name according to the time period in question. In Section 2.2 and from that point onwards, 'Zaire' will be used again.

52 There is an enormous body of work on colonialism in Africa for further analysis of its impact in contemporary African studies. A critical review of the literature is not undertaken in this thesis for the simple reason that there is not enough time that can be properly devoted to such an endeavor.

53 Ample historical and political material on the impact of colonialism in present-day Congo-Zaire is available for further study. For further analysis, see Slade (1962); Lemarchand (1964); Young (1965); Anstey (1966); Gran (1979); Jęsiewicki (1979); and Leslie (1993).
One presumes that most scholars and other interested individuals concede to the negative effects of colonialism which accentuated and acted upon the absurd notion that the Africans were less deserving of humanity than the Europeans. Zairean scholar Kankwenda M’Baya summarises what countless studies will show: "The overriding concern of colonialism was the domination and exploitation of human beings, their lands, and their underground resources" (1993: Preface, xiii). In a similar vein, Crawford Young (1994a) advocates that the politics of present-day Africa are characterised by an institutionalised "anti-democratic ethos" founded on the principles of African subjugation during the colonial era. He further contends that the coercive practices - a key variable in this study - of the colonial regime were transferred to the postcolonial state. Moreover, "its structures, its customary routines and practices, and its more hidden normative theories of governance..." bear testimony to the legacy of colonialism in most African countries, including and especially Zaire (Young, 1994a: 283).

2.1.2: Belgium’s preferred type of colonialism.

The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 institutionalised the colonisation of Africa by carving up the continent for designated European powers. The Congo Free State (as Zaire was first called) was formally recognised under the personal ownership of King Leopold II of Belgium in February 1885. Included in the agreement was the clause that "Leopold was obliged to keep this vast area open to the trade of all nations, ...and to confine the activities of his association to the administration of the new independent black African state" (Forbath, 1977: 362). Even so, under the pretext of opening up to civilisation Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, the enterprise that Leopold first envisioned in the 1870s had very little to do with the noble ambition of 'civilising' the natives. Rather, King Leopold claimed the Congo Free State as his personal overseas empire. I must emphasise what a unique and incredible arrangement this was; in no other African region was a territory created for the exclusive ownership of one individual. The Belgian king had every intention, too, of retaining his sovereign ownership. He was even quoted: "My rights over the Congo are to be shared with none; they are the fruit of my own struggle and expenditure.... [T]he King was the founder of the state; he was its organiser, its owner, its absolute sovereign" (quoted in Forbath, 1977: 362). In other words, he was the patron and patrimonialism would become his policy of administration in the Congo Free State.

54For an insightful comparative study of the impact of colonialism in Africa, see Young (1994a).
55Prior to the Berlin Conference, numerous expeditions - the most famous those of Henry Stanley and David Livingstone - were organised to delineate boundaries between colonies. For original texts, see Livingstone (1872); and an unedited text written by Stanley (1874-1877).
It is not difficult to understand the reasons why Leopold was so anxious to become involved in Central Africa. For one, the geographical map revealed areas overflowing with valuable mineral resources including gold and copper. Leopold perpetuated the sole raison d'etre of the colony: the extraction of minerals and resources, both of which it had in abundance. Under the guise of wanting to "civilise" the people there was a pronounced trend towards their exploitation. The welfare of the people was expendable as long as rubber quotas were met (rubber, at the time, being the most important commodity). A second motivating factor was that Belgium had not participated in the colonial exploits of other European powers. Since no one had claimed the vast territory in Central Africa, Leopold saw an opportunity to jump on the bandwagon of Europe's "global" colonisation. Explorer Henry Stanley became Leopold's personal agent assigned the task of developing the Congo's free international trade. Other reasons, such as the fact that Central Africa provided a huge source of cheap human labour, prompted Leopold's desperate efforts to play in the "big boys" game of colonisation.

King Leopold's personal ownership of the Congo Free State did not last more than 25 years. The treatment of the native peoples was harsh. People died by the thousands at the hands of the his appointed colonial administrators, aided by disease and bad working conditions. Atrocities against the local peoples escalated to such proportions that they triggered a wave of indignation and disapproval in Europe. In 1908, under diplomatic pressure from other Western powers, particularly Great Britain and the United States, King Leopold II reluctantly relinquished his personal dominion of the Congo Free State and handed official possession of the colony to Belgium. Thus the colony became the Belgian Congo, administered anew by the Belgian government.

Under the Colonial Charter of 1908, the Congolese were excluded from engaging in any political activity or participation in the government of the colony. Peter Forbath writes that the Charter "expressly denied them [the Congolese] the rights of meeting and assembly, the freedoms of press and speech, effectively outlawing the formation of political parties, the staging of political rallies and the publication of political periodicals" (1977: 388-9). The administration of the Belgian Congo was strictly bureaucratic; there were no elections and no Congolese representatives. The argument put forward by Juan Linz (1975) suggests that the experience of one regime era has a lasting impact on political affairs well beyond its own life. That being the case, the history of

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56 Two excellent books, one a recent publication, write about the years of Leopold's domination in Africa. Peter Forbath's The River Congo (1977) is a classic in terms of literature on the colonisation of the Belgian Congo. King Leopold's Ghost (1998) by Adam Hochschild is an insightful, accurate, and grim portrayal of the harsh realities of Zaire's colonial era.
political participation and competition in present-day Zaire can be traced back to the colonial times when the Congolese were given no political rights or freedoms.

The policy of patrimonial authority had its start with the Leopold era and was subsequently perfected under the Belgian administration. In the words of Peter Forbath:

[A]s the paternal power, Belgium was obliged to look after and provide for the material needs of its Congolese 'children.' In return, however, just as a father would of a child, it had the right to expect dutiful obedience. It most certainly didn't have to consider treating the Congolese as equals, allowing them their civil liberties and preparing them for independence. And it didn't (1977: 388).

This was the theory behind Governor-General Rhehman's slogan, "Domineur pour servir" (translated: "Dominate to serve"). To serve meant to impose Western civilisation on the Congolese people. Belgium anticipated a long "civilising" process that precluded the involvement of Congolese in administrative roles. Every policy implemented and each decision made were for the benefit of Belgium and its administrators. At this point, one theoretical debate that has been raised concerning studies of colonialism and its impact on contemporary African politics merits comment. Some analyses (Chabal, ed., 1986; Ellis, 1994) have proposed one colonial history that more or less includes all the experiences of African countries, regardless of the colonial powers that administered their territories. Other studies (Collier, 1982; Widner, 1994; Mamdani, 1996) have differentiated the colonial practices of the different European powers. This difference is a key to explanations of how African political regimes evolved in the postindependence era. Colonies under British rule evolved differently from those under French rule; the Belgian Congo evolved in ways that were distinguished from French, British, and Portuguese colonies, and so forth. It is critical to this thesis that these divergent paths of colonialism be recognised in their impact on current political practices in African countries - just as the similarities also be acknowledged because there were several commonalities, too.

The historical experience of Belgian colonialism in Zaire has been widely documented, at the very least because of a simple irony: The Belgian Congo was seventy-seven times the size of Belgium!  

Less obvious is that the creation of the Belgian Congo lumped together a great many diverse and traditionally hostile peoples, or tribal groupings ethnically at odds with one another.  

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57 Zaire's territory covers a total area of 2,344,885 square kilometres while Belgium's total land area is less than 31,000 square kilometres (30,528 to be exact).
58 Three major studies examine and categorise the significant ethnic groups of people living in present-day Zaire, although none reach the same conclusions. Ethnographer Alan Merriam (1961) claims there were seven major groupings of people. In contrast, René Lémarchand (1964) specifies fourteen major ethnic groups in his findings and Crawford Young (1965) includes eight groups in his work.
used to administer the colony, however, did little to unite them. Lemarchand observes that, indeed, the overall effect of Belgian colonial policy was to "divide rather than unite" (1964: 143). A reading of the range of studies published on Belgian colonialism leaves the impression that Zaire, like other former African colonies, was subject to a system of rule that encouraged competition between political groups based on ethnic divisions (Mamdani, 1992: 313).

The colonial officials employed the "time-worn but efficacious 'divide and rule' strategy" (Clark, 1995: 360). An approach to colonialism already implemented in the British colonies, the "divide and rule" system of administration was used to sustain and encourage ethnic hostilities, thereby keeping the population tied to tribal identities instead of national affiliations that involved the masses. Political analysts Lemarchand (1964) and Young (1965) confirm in their respective studies that the Belgian administration did not want to encourage nationalist sentiments for fear that a territory-wide movement would threaten the effective operation of the colony. Thus, the characteristic behaviour of the Belgian administration towards the Congolese peoples replicated that of King Leopold II: the local natives were viewed and consequently treated as lesser human beings.

This type of colonialism, both Lemarchand and Young argue, served Belgium's purposes while oppressing the needs of the people living in the Belgian Congo. According to official theory, paternalistic rule, like the British colonial policy of indirect rule, left intact "the traditional social institutions of family, clan, and tribe..., although [each was] utilised for the purposes of national government" (McDonald et al., 1971: 105). In one sense, two political systems were allowed to co-exist, that of the colonial power and the traditional authority of the village chiefs. However, there was no doubt which one dominated. The Belgian administration shook the foundations of the traditional political system, including its leadership patterns. There was little encouragement given to African customs and government. Although lip-service was paid to traditional chiefs, the real power was in the hands of the colonial authorities. Most chiefs probably did not realise that they had signed away their rights to own land when treaties were negotiated with Stanley and his co-workers (Slade, 1962: 31).

For an excellent account of the notion of indirect rule as it relates to colonialism in Africa, see Mahmood Mamdani's major work, Citizen and Subject (1996).

Two excellent works on the Belgian colonial system and the struggle for independence in the Belgian Congo are Lemarchand (1964) and Young (1965).

One of the first international human rights crusades was advanced based on rumours and subsequent testimony of gross and violent mistreatment of the African peoples by the Belgian colonial administration. See Askin and Collins (1993).
Several of those writing on the Belgian period in Zaire, including Young have borrowed Thomas Hodgkin's "platonism" paradigm to depict Belgian colonial rule:

Platonism is implicit in the sharp distinction, social and legal, between Belgian philosopher-kings and the mass of African producers; in the conception of education as primarily concerned with the transmission of certain unquestioned and unquestionable moral values and intimately related to status and function; in the belief that the thought and behaviour of the mass is plastic; and can be refashioned by a benevolent, wise and highly trained elite; that the prime interest of the mass is in welfare and consumer goods - football and bicycles - not liberty; and in the conviction that it is possible, by expert administration, to arrest social and political change (Young, 1965: 52).

These ideas correlate well with the characterisation of Belgium's colonial policy as patrimonial. Patrimonial authority was contrived in the early era of the Congo's colonial history. It was implemented with relative ease in part because traditional societies in Zaire were founded on patrimonial authority. The legacy of patrimonial government institutions would dictate the course and nature of the postcolonial regime. Zairean politics would be defined by its capacity to serve the interests of the ruler, his family and close associates. In the following section, two sets of colonial policy shall be examined to further attribute patrimonial authority to contemporary Zairean political life.

2.1.3: Educational policy and economic policy of the Belgian Congo.

In order to sustain the control that the Belgians wielded over the local population, the colonial administration relied upon several political and economic policies. Many of these policies left Zaire with a legacy of problematic issues in the postcolonial years. In a carefully argued account of the role and challenge of ethnicity in Zaire, John Clark observes that "[t]he administrative policies of Belgian colonialism constituted a...deep source of contemporary ethnic and political conflict" (1995: 358). Likewise, the colonial policies fostered such basic contradictions and incompatibilities within the subject population that postcolonial Zairean groups have had to contend with unresolved political issues from the colonial era. To illustrate this point, let us look at two policies in particular, namely educational and economic policy.

In fact, most studies focus upon these two related sets of colonial policies which worked to the advantage of the Belgian administration (Lemarchand, 1964; Young, 1965; Anstey, 1966; Gould, 1980; and Clark 1995). One set of policies concerned the implementation of an education system in the Belgian Congo. The Belgians seemed to demonstrate incremental amounts of cultural sensitivity when it came to establishing educational policy. They recognised, for instance, that the

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62Some of the problems that resulted from the colonial legacy include a lack of political education; however, this will be further explored in a later section.
school system in the Congo could not be a mere carbon-copy of the Belgian system. Colonial administrators contended, "Il serait vain de transporter en Afrique l'organisation scolaire de Belgique... Le Congo appelle une organisation scolaire spéciale, judicieusement adaptée au milieu" (Buell, 1965: 11). In other words, a special school system would be devised that worked specifically for the Congolese students, taking into account their particular traditions and backgrounds.

A policy of "gradualism" became the rationale for offering primary education on a broad base, with little attention given to higher education. The Belgian administration only obliged the Congolese to attend primary school. In fact, some scholars (Slade, Forbath) estimate that less than 20 percent of the Congolese youth were admitted to secondary institutions. Until 1955, none were allowed to attend college. As Ruth Slade observes, such a policy "would be more likely to ensure a contented population than would the granting of political rights and the formation of an elite" (1960: 5). The gradualism policy was motivated by pragmatism. However, according to a study by Ray Downey, it was "...a selfish pragmatism...since it assured a long period of Belgian control while meeting the goal of 'civilising' the Congolese people" - not necessarily educating them (1985: 189). In this way, the Belgians could attest to a basic level of literacy in their colony without the fear of provoking a sense of national identity through education.

This philosophy of education (some would argue that it grew out of a fear of the native peoples), coupled with the practice of controlled gradualism that concerned itself almost exclusively with primary education, was considered by the Congolese évolutés as an affront to their intellectual capabilities (Downey, 1985: 179). They interpreted it as Belgium's intention to keep the Congolese in a position of inferiority. The paternal "father" (Belgium) did not want the "children" (Congolese peoples) to grow up. Otherwise they might amass the strength and skill with which to attack "le patron" - Belgium. Still, as is the case in most paternalistic relations, the "children" insist on growing up and taking charge of their affairs as adults. In fact, such a policy gave credence to the accusation that Belgium had no direct intentions to prepare the Congo for independence and therefore, was to blame for the immediate postindependence confusion and anarchy. I should reiterate that under the pretext of "civilising" the Congolese lay the real motivation behind Belgian colonisation: access to the vast resources and economic potential of the region. Consequently, any

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63 Translated, the essence of this quote reads: "It would be vain to implement the Belgian educational system in Africa...The Congo needs a special educational system adapted to its particular environment."

64 The group of évolutés included Congolese men who had profitted from secondary school education. Their role will be discussed shortly.
overt willingness on Belgium's part to prepare the Congo for independence would imply the surrender of rights that it had claimed as the Congo's coloniser.

Just as the educational policy fostered the dynamics of a patrimonialist society, the economic policy put forth by the Belgians was equally detrimental to future economic policies in the postcolonial Congo. Political analyst Vanderlinden observes that economic (and political) development for the African person was simply not encouraged in the Belgian Congo (1996: 1014). To this end, the second set of policies concerned the colony's economy. In fact, colonial policies worked to handicap the economic future of the local masses. How so? The institutionalisation of patron-client relations—-one essential element of neopatrimonial regimes - was also practiced in the colonial period. It provided one method to secure Belgian access to the colony's mineral wealth. The "patron", in this case the Belgian colonial administration in the Congo, could not control all the levers of economic power. Consequently, the Belgian administrators depended on "clients" in the form of traditional Congolese leaders, chiefs, and ethnic groups, to help manage the economic system. In exchange for their cooperation, the clients were given special privileges including small portions of the profits generated from the mines and other colonial economic ventures.

A thorough analysis of the economic policy necessarily involves a breakdown of the complex issue of access to resources, especially minerals. It is common knowledge today that the Central African region, especially Zaire, boasts one of the world's most abundant supplies of natural resources and mineral deposits. Diamonds, cobalt, copper, gold, iron, tin, chromium, manganese ore, zinc, calcium, oil and coal are among the metals and gems in plentiful supply in Zaire, mostly in the provinces of Shaba and the Kasais. The map on the following page highlights the location of the Congo's mineral deposits.

During the colonial era, the mineral wealth of the Belgian Congo had been described alternatively "as a 'geological scandal' and as reminiscent of the 'promised land'" (Diallo, 1984: 64). It is easy to understand the 'promised land' description but why a situation of scandalous proportions? Because intense and often violent competition arose between groups that wanted access to the spoils of mining operations. It is no wonder that tiny Belgium was keen to administer the territory and

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65There are several terms used to describe the phenomenon of patron-client relations: patronage, clientelism, rent-seeking, and prebendalism - to name the most common. Generally, they denote a similar set of ideas that refers to relations between individuals and social groups. The type of relationship is typically unequal in that the "patron" authority reaps the most benefits from the interaction, often to the extent that he/she amasses the power to rule over everyone and everything within its/his territory. The clients usually benefit, too, but not to the same extent.

66A useful article on the importance of economic issues in the Belgian Congo is PEEMANS (1975).
control the access to resources. Accordingly, political analysts David Gould (1980) and Winsome Leslie (1993) argue that the colonisation of the Belgian Congo was essentially an economic enterprise.  

The geographical location of the Belgian Congo's mineral resources


2.1.4: The colonial era comes to an end: what legacy is left behind?

By the late 1950s, despite attempts by the colonial administration to prevent the growth of nationalist sentiments, a widespread nationalist movement led by the Congolese group of évolutés had arisen in the Belgian Congo. Indeed, it was among this group that "the organisations were formed that would ultimately lead the Congo to independence" (Roth, 1979: 39). The individuals in this group evolved as "a distinct stratum of [Congolese]...composed of the subordinate [albeit adequately educated] African employees of the Belgian colonial administration, private enterprises, and a smattering of self-employed [Congolese]...who had acquired the intellectual and technical skills to challenge the colonial order" (Kannyo, 1979: 54). During the years prior to independence, the évolutés organised various student groups and "cultural associations" representing Congolese

67For further discussion, see GOULD (1980) and LESLIE (1993).
interests. These groups began actively and openly demonstrating against the Belgian colonial regime. Their role in the final years of Belgian colonial administration was a primary factor that contributed to the speed with which the Belgians decolonised.

In December 1958, at the All-African People's Conference in Ghana, Patrice Lumumba, the founder of the Congo's first political party, the *Mouvement National Congolais*, gave a fiery speech in which he insisted:

> Down with colonisation and imperialism. Down with racism and tribalism. Long live the Congolese nation; long live independent Africa. ...The independent that we [Congolese] claim in the name of peace cannot be considered any longer by Belgium as a gift, but to the contrary...it is the right that the Congolese people have lost...The Congolese people must stop sleeping and waiting for independence and liberty. The Congo is our country. It is our duty to make it greater and better (quoted in Forbath, 1977: 392).

Following an international conference in Brussels on the status of the colonies, held in response to increased pressures for their release from European rule, a collective decision was made to grant independence to several of the colonies, including the Belgian Congo. Within six months of the Brussels Round Table Conference, the Belgians had hastily retreated from government and administrative duties in their colonies. Unlike the British and French colonial regimes, "the Belgians had not prepared [the Congo] for a more or less gradual transition to independent statehood" (Kannyo, 1979: 56). Instead, the 6-month task given the new Congolese leadership (the *évolués*) was a difficult, if not impossible one. They were expected to prepare elections, form national and local governments, and write new legislation, including a constitution. Thanks to the policy of patrimonialism, the Congolese had little, if any, experience with political processes and government administration. What therefore was to become of the independence era looming in the horizons?

The quick withdrawal of the Belgians raised questions about the reasons for such haste. Several opinions were put forth. One view maintains that the Belgians pulled out quickly as a result of the growing fear of nationalist uprisings against the colonial regime. In other words, Belgium was not anxious to engage in a costly war that would undoubtedly be brutally violent, given the violence with which the colonial administrators had treated the Congolese. Another account suggests that the Belgians were hoping that independence would plunge the new Congo into chaos and anarchy and they would be asked to return and administer the territory again. While the latter scenario did

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68One of the political groups, the *Alliance des Ba-Kongo* (ABAKO), was led by Joseph Kasavubu, who would become the first president of the independent Republic of the Congo in 1960. Another of the groups, the *Mouvement National Congolais* (MNC), was led by Patrice Lumumba, who was given the title and responsibility of the first prime minister following independence.
not occur, the new Congo certainly did plunge into the bloodiest epoch of its history almost immediately after its independence. Then there is the view that supports the Belgians' belief that they could manipulate the Congolese people "even after granting them independence, by the judicious dispensation of financial and political assistance and other favours, so as to assure the installation of a pliant, puppet government in Leopoldville [present-day Kinshasa]" (Forbath, 1977: 394). This latter view epitomizes the patrimonial structures developed in the colonial regime.

Regardless of the view taken, it appeared that the Belgians had grossly misjudged the situation in the Belgian Congo. They were shocked at the sentiments expressed in Lumumba's speech, at the furious anger the Congolese people directed at the Europeans. The Belgians clung to the idea that they would play a major role in the future of the colony, going as far as to propose a Belgo-Congolese federation which granted more responsibility to the Congolese themselves, although Belgium would remain in control. Although several accounts suggest that Belgium simply followed the lead of its European counterparts (France and Great Britain) to decolonise, the reality according to Belgium implied it had no intention of relinquishing altogether its access to the Congo's resources. Even so, the Belgian authorities relented to the demands of the Congolese évolués and handed over the colony's administration. The Belgian Congo was officially granted its independence on 30 June 1960, taking upon itself the name of the (First) Republic of the Congo.

With the conclusion of this section, I must acknowledge that minimal justice has been paid to a study of the impact that colonialism has on contemporary Zairean affairs, political or otherwise. Evidence suggests that the effects of colonial policy were severe. Furthermore, they are deeply embedded in modern-day Zairean politics. The most important fact to retain from this review of colonial policy in the Belgian Congo is the significance of patrimonial authority to the workings of politics and the leadership styles. As we proceed to a brief analysis of the turbulent years of the First Republic, it will be shown how the politics practiced during the colonial era facilitated the institutionalisation of a neopatrimonial regime and the subsequent growth of political conflict in the postcolonial decades.

2.2: The "Congo Crisis": a taste of the political future?

The tumultuous years of the First Republic of the Congo have long intrigued political analysts. Indeed, the high levels of ethnic and political violence that characterised the Congo Crisis (1960-1965) have generated relentless studies and debates by noted scholars of Zaire, including René Lemarchand (1964), Crawford Young (1965), Kwame Nkrumah (1967), S. Weissman (1974), and Michael Schatzberg (1988). Most of the studies tie the effects of colonialism to the subsequent few
years of postindependence "chaos". One account of the events surrounding the Congo Crisis presented by David Gould suggests that the 5-year period of extreme political violence was special in that "in it, the colonial period [was] at once extended and denied" (1980: 20). In other words, the worst aspects of the Belgian economic and political legacy were institutionalised in the first few years of independence, producing what Winsome Leslie calls "a kind of postcolonial colonialism" (1993: 169). These ideas will be explored further.

In essence, this section serves as an informative review rather than an explicit analysis of the Republic of the Congo's early years as an independent country. The intent is to highlight the political struggles that confronted the first regime in the Congo Crisis. In fact, many of the political struggles of the early 1990s are reminiscent of the chaos of the Congo Crisis. During both struggles, army units mutinied. Foreign troops were called in to restore order. In both cases, political leaders were locked in inexcusable conflict: President Kasavubu with Prime Minister Lumumba in the Congo Crisis and President Mobutu and opposition leader Tshisekedi in the renewed crisis of the 1990s. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the nature of the Mobutu regime was not only traced back to the Belgian colonial regime, but it was also shaped by the political dynamics of the immediate postindependence years of the Congo Crisis. Bratton and van de Walle argue that "[t]he circumstances in which different leaders consolidated power [after independence] partly determines the degree of pluralism that came to characterise the existing regime. ... In the absence of a dominant party, [Zaire being an excellent case,] ensuing regimes have been characterised by instability and a greater reliance on coercion, notably through military intervention" (1994: 468).

Tragic though the ensuing crisis was in so many respects, it is important to note that these 5 years were in fact "the only period of free expression in Zaire's modern history" in which parliamentary democracy, political pluralism, and accountability existed not just in principle, but in reality (Clark, 1995: 360; Mvuluya, 1993: 52). The Congo Crisis was also the most violent period of the country's history. It is no secret that the first five years of Zaire's independence represent a slice of history that many Zaireans would rather forget. It was a period characterised by anarchy and bloodshed.

This section addresses several issues. Given the strength of previous arguments raised in the section on Belgian colonisation, one objective is to remain sensitive to the impact of colonialism in the First Republic's initial pursuit of political freedom and expression. Two related questions come to mind: (1) What caused the breakdown of relations between the Congo's first independent leaders, and (2) how did the nature of political institutions inherited from the colonial regime contribute to
the chaos and violence? A second objective seeks to identify the actors in the First Republic. I propose that three major groups were involved: (a) the nationalists led by Patrice Lumumba, (b) the moderates under the leadership of Joseph Kasavubu, and (c) the army, controlled by Joseph-Desiré Mobutu. The transfer of political power from the Belgian administration to the independent republic created a thorough weakening of the government infrastructure. Given that government structures inherited from the Belgians were weak to begin with, the new government did not have much with which to work in the first fragile months of independence.

The initial response of the local population in Leopoldville (now Kinshasa) to their independence was one of pride and elation. The formation of a state - politically independent and economically profitable - was uppermost on the people's nationalist agenda. The excitement of independence, however, masked an enormous set of problems that the new leadership had to address promptly. The departure of the Belgian colonial regime encouraged a proliferation of new contenders vying for political power. In fact, the bulk of political conflict, especially at the onset, centered around questions of leadership, power, and government institutionalisation. Struggles for power were commonplace as tests for group membership within the new polity developed. Crawford Young concurs that "with the departure of the Belgian regime in 1960 there were multiple new contenders for power, and a drastic shift in its locus, both at the national and provincial levels of government" (1971: 215; 220).

The euphoria of independence thus died quickly, due in part to the instability and lack of expertise left behind when the Belgians withdrew from the Congo, and the abundance of new contending parties. The Congo Crisis erupted, wreaking havoc on the newly independent nation and its people over the next five years (Schatzberg, 1988; Young and Turner, 1985). Studies suggest that the First Republic inherited the patterns of mobilisation that were encouraged under the colonial regime whereby political identities were synonymous with ethnic or regional groups (Clark, 1995; Young 1965; Lemarchand, 1964). The numerous parties that emerged with independence were for the most part tied to ethnic bases, with the possible exception of the *Mouvement National Congolais* (MNC) led by Patrice Lumumba. Even so, the two leading blocs of power emerged in a crisis-laden context of ethnic and political animosities. On the one side, there was the nationalist coalition comprised of the MNC and other related parties. On the other side, Joseph Kasavubu of

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69 In a landmark study on Zairian political and socioeconomic history, Michael Schatzberg (1988) discusses at length the impact of colonialism upon the structures of the new state following independence. 70 John Clark, in a study of the impact that ethnicity had in the politics of the First Republic, argued that Lumumba, as leader of the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC), had renounced affiliation with any ethnic group in the Congo. For further discussion, see Clark (1995).
ABAKO (Alliance des BaKongo) organised a coalition with members from "the Federalist Cartel, some moderate unitarists and an assortment of ethnic groups" (Mvuluya, 1993: 53). These two blocs formed the first government of the Republic. Kasavubu was elected President and he appointed Lumumba as Prime Minister.  

One legacy of the colonial era to which I have already alluded was the lack of education in the "know-how" of administering a government. The institutions that were designed to facilitate a smooth transfer of power from the Belgian administrators to the local Congolese instead obstructed the transition process, especially since the latter group had little training or understanding of how and why the institutions functioned as they did. Furthermore, the government leaders refused to recognise each other's respective authority. President Kasavubu and Prime Minister Lumumba were at odds with one another, in part the result of diverse ethnic backgrounds but mostly due to conflicting ideological views. As a result, compounding the tense relations was the fact that these men were unprepared in the skills of governing.

Less than 6 months following independence, a complete breakdown of relations occurred between President Kasavubu and Prime Minister Lumumba. Lumumba was dismissed by Kasavubu (a dismissal the former rejected on the grounds that it was illegal) and a political stalemate emerged. Both politicians made alternative claims to the seat of governing power. Both refused to back down. The stalemate was only resolved with the intervention of the armed forces, led by Colonel Joseph-Desiré Mobutu. He temporarily suspended all political activity in order to neutralise the government. He restored power to the hands of President Kasavubu in February 1961.

Meanwhile, Lumumba had set up a rival government in the northeastern city of Stanleyville (now Kisangani). Lumumba's political agenda had a significantly popular support base, as he encouraged his followers to promote nationalism and move away from the colonial legacy of dependence upon the European powers. Nonetheless, his popularity was not enough to ensure his security. He was imprisoned shortly thereafter and murdered, allegedly on the orders of Col. Mobutu, who acted with the support of the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).  

71 For a breakdown of the parties, parliamentary seats, voting and elections that took place in the First Republic, see Mvuluya (1993).
While on the subject of American intervention, immense debate has ensued over the role of the American government in Lumumba's assassination and its considerable support of Mobutu. Many Zairean scholars blame the U.S. government for its intervention, thus having enabled Mobutu's rise to power. They argue that the U.S. government, in retrospect, made the political mistake of assuming that Lumumba's nationalist agenda was instead promulgated by the more lethal communist sentiments. By taking action against Lumumba, however indirect it was perceived at the time, they assisted in the development of a highly repressive one-party dictatorship under the guise of 'democracy'. Never had a contradiction in foreign policy been more apparent than in this case of American relations with Mobutu's Zaire!

Outrage over and counteraction to Lumumba's assassination was widespread. Lumumba's followers took up his cause, despite the risk to their lives. Yet they lacked the coercive resources and the charismatic leadership with which to defend their position. Thus in most cases, their efforts were met with deadly violence by the army. The extent of army violence was demonstrated in the case of the Kwilu rebellions of 1963-1964. According to the foremost scholar of the rebellions, Benoit Verhaegen (1966, 1969), the Kwilu rebellions broke out with the objective of a "second independence". They were led by Pierre Mulele, a nationalist leader of a pro-Lumumba government in exile (Comité National de Libération). Mulele blamed Kasavubu for the failures of the postcolonial government. The army, still under the leadership of Col. Mobutu and with the assistance of U.N.-sponsored troops, went into the Kwilu region and stamped out the rebellions. The swift action of the army clearly contrasted with the inaction of the government. In the government's attempt to consolidate and increase its control over the vast territory, including the hard-to-reach peripheral regions, its inexperience was readily apparent.

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73 It is widely acknowledged that the U.S. government supported Mobutu's military intervention in 1960 and was behind the plot to kill Lumumba in 1961. They feared Lumumba's Marxist background and radical independence agenda and sought to have him permanently removed from the political scene. The American administration suffered from "Cold War" syndrome and the Congo was a strategic win for them in Africa. Fortunately for them, Mobutu's stance was and remained throughout his Presidency anti-communist.

74 For further discussion on the Kwilu rebellions, see Claude E. Welch, Jr. (1980) for his review of the Kwilu Rebellions and subsequent discussion of the history behind the mounting problems in that region, culminating in the Shaba invasions of 1977 and 1978.

75 Benoit Verhaegen, author of Rebellions au Congo (1966, 1969), wrote two outstanding volumes on the Kwilu rebellions, both of which covered every aspect of the uprisings, from the political context to the leadership, the socio-economic influences, and the military role in the conflict. His study provides valuable information that enhances the understanding of the Congo Crisis era.
To demonstrate the government's inexperience, let us examine the notion of secessionism, and in turn, the secession of Katanga from 1960-1963.\textsuperscript{76} The province of Katanga (now Shaba) seceded under the leadership and with the backing of Moïse Tshombe and the Belgian government, respectively. Less than two weeks following the independence of the First Republic, Tshombe declared independence for Katanga. Tilly concurs that violent resistance by separatist groups - in this case, the Katangese secessionists - have most frequently begun after a government attempts to exert control over areas of the country that have enjoyed relative autonomy from the central government institutions (1973: 446). The roots of Katangese separatism extend far back into the region's history, but the conflict was further complicated by the province's mineral wealth.\textsuperscript{77} As political analysts Stone and Clark discovered in their respective studies, "regions that contain a disproportionate share of a state's wealth often acquire a sense of deprivation of wealth perceived as their birthright; this kind of regional covetousness motivated Tshombe in 1960" (Clark, 1995: 361; Stone, 1983: 91). In the case of the Katanga secession, only after a formal request for assistance was made to the United Nations, and only after U.N. forces arrived, did the secession come to an end in January 1963\textsuperscript{78}

During the next few years, political turmoil escalated. The Katangese secessionist anarchy and warring ethnic factions were indications of a rapidly disintegrating Congo. The BaLulua and BaLuba tribes of the eastern provinces engaged in ethnic fighting, killing tens of thousands of people. Amidst the pervasive chaos, President Kasavubu attempted to keep the country together, and while progress was slow, there were some successes. First, the Kwilu rebellions in the eastern region had been defeated and the threat of secession had decreased. Second, a new constitution, \textit{La Constitution de Luluabourg}, had been adopted by referendum. More importantly, a new parliament had been elected to guide the country through its political problems.

In one sense, then, it came as a surprise when in November 1965, Army Chief of Staff Mobutu once again intervened in a bloodless military coup d'État.\textsuperscript{79} Whether or not his intervention was

\textsuperscript{76}Following on the heels of the Katanga secession, another eastern province, Kasai Oriental (otherwise known as South Kasai) attempted secession as well. Albert Kalonji led the attempt. However, it was not successful, which perhaps explains why little is mentioned in studies of the Congo Crisis.

\textsuperscript{77}The Katanga (Shaba) province of Zaire boasts one of the world's most abundant supplies of mineral resources (both strategic and precious). Cobalt, copper, gold, iron, tin, chromium, manganese, zinc, cadmium, and coal are among the metals in plentiful supply. In the Kasai region of Zaire, diamonds are mined. Revenues from their exportation contribute significantly to Zaire's gross national product.

\textsuperscript{78}For further analysis, see ABI-SAAB (1978); he examines the role of the U.N. in the Congo Crisis. See also GERARD-LIHOIS (1966) for his account of the Shaba secession; it is among the best in the field.

\textsuperscript{79}There is widespread belief that Mobutu was placed in power with the support of the United States. The U.S. government used Mobutu's anti-Soviet stance to secure a strategic position in Africa. For further reference, see KALB (1982); SCHATZBERG (1991); and WEISSMAN (1974).
necessary or even timely is a question that has long-mystified analysts of Zairean politics. Why did Mobutu intervene when it was apparent that progress in the political arena was being made, however finite it might have been? The situation was more complex than mere appearances might suggest, as major studies have confirmed (Lemarchand, 1964; Young, 1965; Schatzberg, 1988); nonetheless, a full explanation is beyond the boundaries of this thesis. Accordingly, Mobutu claimed he was "restoring order" with a parliamentary mandate. He re-centralised the power of the government under his authority, and declared himself President upon introducing the (Second) Democratic Republic of the Congo.80

From the installation of the First Republic until its demise five years later, the control of the government was a consistent source of conflict between the participating groups, often erupting into episodes of political violence, as was the case with the Katanga secession and the Kwilu rebellions. While some analysts place all the blame for the conflict on the legacies of colonial administration, other factors were also involved. Although a broad discussion of ethnicity as a political variable was not undertaken in this section, we cannot ignore that, by the very fact that Zaire's territory is immense, ethnic rivalry is an obvious aspect of politics. Colonialism had instilled a pride of ethnicity in the operations of politics. The "divide rather than unite" system of government had worked to discourage nationalism.

Still, the years of the Congo Crisis were intensely nationalist. The nationalism that took root in the early 1960s would grow to great proportions in the 1990s. Even amidst tremendous political chaos in the years leading up to regime transition and change, the contending opposition groups were in accordance with a policy of national unity. At no time did the average Zairean envision his country breaking up into smaller pieces. Instead, Zaireans simply wanted the opportunity for political and economic freedoms that they had previously been denied. If one positive experience resulted from the Congo Crisis, it was that the Zairean people learned to appreciate the freedom of political expression. Throughout the years of Mobutu's dictatorship, Zaireans did not forget what they had briefly enjoyed in the years of the First Republic of the Congo. It was one motivating force in the push for regime transition and change.

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80 Zaire has undergone an impressive list of name changes since its independence. It started as the (First) Republic of the Congo (1960), became the Federal Republic of the Congo (1961), then the (Second) Democratic Republic of the Congo (1964), then Zaire (1971), followed by a return to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1997. Often, it is referred to as Congo-Zaire or Congo-Kinshasa, to distinguish it from the Republic of Congo, or French Congo, or Congo-Brazzaville (all of which refer to the same country).
2.3: The institutionalisation of neopatrimonialism in Zaire.

Given that one of the central tenets of this thesis is the proposition that the neopatrimonial nature of the Mobutu regime in part determined the dynamics of regime transition and change in the 1990s, it is not only important, but equally necessary to examine the institutionalisation of neopatrimonial policy and practice during the first decades of Mobutu's power. This section is therefore devoted to explanations that focus on the structural precedents of patrimonial rule which impacted upon the developing nature of the Mobutu regime. The condensed historical background provided is broken down into two separate chronological phases. This section examines the first phase from 1965 - 1980 during which the Mobutu regime was established and the President's neopatrimonial leadership style perfected. The second phase, the 1980s, will be assessed in a later section.


This section examines the rise of the Mobutu regime. Emphasis is placed on a structural analysis that relates the implementation of a personal dictatorship with the colonial legacy of neopatrimonial authority. The primary objective of a neopatrimonial regime is to maintain the structures and government institutions, formal and informal, that enable it to stay in power. In the case of Zaire, President Mobutu's objective was to remain in power at all costs. Through the skillful development of several political strategies and a willingness to use repression to achieve his objective, President Mobutu was able to secure government authority. Four policies that were strategically employed are examined: (a) the "Mobutu-as-father-of-the-Zairean-family" policy, (b) a policy of the classes, (c) the authenticity campaign, and (d) the Zaïreanisation policy. Each of these policies in turn had one aim: to centralise political power in the Presidency. In order to do this, the Mobutu regime relied upon its command of the army. Government repression was an essential element of the Mobutu dictatorship. The policies that were introduced to institutionalise neopatrimonialism could not be put into practice without the backup of the military forces. Before I proceed to the government policies, however, it is useful to review the type of regime that characterised Zaire.

Much scholarly attention has been paid to the nature of the Mobutu regime (Callaghy, 1984; Young and Turner, 1985; Schatzberg, 1988; Leslie, 1993). The ultimate manifestation of government authority in the hands of one man, President Mobutu, was a political feature shaped by the heritage of patrimonial authority practiced during the era of Belgian colonialism. Like Côte d'Ivoire under Félix Houphouët-Boigny and Cameroon under Ahmadou Ahidjo, Zaire under Mobutu experienced relatively long periods of stability in the 1970s and 1980s, thanks in part to the willingness of his regime to employ coercive measures to suppress all oppositional elements, in addition to the strength of patron-client networks that sustained Mobutu's power.
As in a dozen or so other African countries, political power in Zaire was built on the neopatrimonial foundation of politics and government. Relations within the Zairean polity, including access to resources, were fashioned through clientelism and careful regulation of the government machinery (van de Walle, 1994: 131). In the Weberian tradition, a regime such as the one modeled in Zaire was a "type of government organised as an extension of the ruler's own household, with no rights or privileges other than those bestowed by the ruler" (van de Walle, 1994: 131; Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 61). To illustrate this point, Hastings Banda, former leader of Malawi, was quoted during his presidency, "Nothing is not my business in this country: everything is my business, everything. The state of education, the state of our economy, the state of our agriculture, the state of our transport, everything is my business." (quoted in Jackson and Roseberg, 1982: 165). Just as "everything" was Banda's business in Malawi, President Mobutu also made "everything" his business in Zaire.

One of the characteristics of a neopatrimonial system is its predilection towards informal political institutions that include presidentialism. Typical of a presidential system where one individual holds the reins of political power, the Zairean government's legislative, executive, and judiciary duties were progressively consolidated in the office of President. All political decisions were made with the knowledge and endorsement of Mobutu. Thus, formal rule in Zaire was highly personalised and arbitrary; informally, Mobutu's words were the law. The ideology of Mobutuism, for example, demonstrated how neopatrimonial rulers sought "to promote a cult of personality...[in which] they dominated the national media, their likeness graced the currency, their portraits hung in every public building, and the national printing press periodically published collections of their speeches and writings" that seemed to endow the leaders with divinity or supernatural authority (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 64; Ellis, 1993). Mobutu was given several praise-names, including "Le Guide", "helmsman", and "mulopwe" to place him above all others in Zaire. The name mulopwe is of particular significance. In the Tshiluba dialect of the BaLuba people of Zaire, mulopwe is the honorific title given to their kings. However, not every king is bestowed this title; it is reserved for those who are given divinity by the gods. In this sense, that Mobutu ascribed to himself the title mulopwe illustrates what he thought his image represented to the Zairean people.

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81 For further discussion on different forms of predatory rule in Africa, see RILEY (1991); FATTON (1992); BRATTON and VAN DE WALLE (1994, 1997). Jean-Claude WILLAME (1972) provides an excellent study of patrimonialism in Zaire in the early years of Mobutu's rule.

82 For a comparative account of certain neopatrimonial characteristics found in African countries, see JACKSON and ROSEBERG (1982).

83 In the upcoming discussion of Mobutu's policy of authenticité, the ideology of Mobutuism is further assessed.
Another informal institution that characterises neopatrimonial regimes is the use of state resources for political and personal ends. President Mobutu did not distinguish between public and private funds; the government’s money was his to do with as he pleased. Over the course of his years as President, he amassed a personal fortune in excess of USD$6 billion. Mobutu encouraged his family members and close associates to do the same, hence the close link between clientelism and the use of state resources. In his brilliant book on Zaire’s political struggles between state and society, Thomas Callaghy argues that the major source of political conflict in Zaire has to do with "the location and distribution of political power and economic resources" (1984: 48-9). In an assessment of political conflict in Zaire, the government plays a pivotal role. Access to, and dominance of, the government institutions are the motivating forces that spin the wheel of politics in Zaire, much as they do in other African countries founded on neopatrimonialism. Michael Schatzberg advances this argument in his study on the Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire (1988) in which he emphasises the importance of power relations and control over economic consumption as key determinants of political affairs.

In terms of popularity, the first few years of Mobutu's presidency suggested he had a promising start. There were several reasons. Not only had he intervened when internal political turmoil and insecurities were certain to escalate into full-scale civil war in the Congo Crisis, but his actions were decisive and strong, as evidenced by his handling of potentially threatening forces, such as the Catholic church and the labour unions. Zaïreans applauded his humble attitude when he "decried mismanagement by government functionaries who served only the 'people and companies that pay them bribes'; he angrily denounced politicians' willingness 'to sell the Congolese nation and people' for support from foreign powers" (Askin and Collins, 1993: 74). He announced he would live off of a soldier's salary to demonstrate his commitment to building an economically and politically viable nation. In all appearances, Mobutu seemed like an ideal leader. Moreover, he contended that he would serve as President for only 5 years, in order that stability and growth be enabled. Following that, elections would be held. He was heralded as the dynamic "saviour" of the people from the "evils" of the Congo Crisis. Nzongola concedes that "everyone seemed to like the idea of having a strong national leader serving as a neutral arbitrator and a reconciler" of political differences between antagonist groups (1978: 12). Mobutu's proposals for effective government and his ambitious plans for socioeconomic development held the promise of peace, stability, and prosperity in the country (Schatzberg, 1988: 3). No wonder he was so popular in the first years of his Presidency.

In retrospect, Mobutu's political agenda had been masterminded to provide him with complete political power and authority. None of his promises given above did he have any intention of
fulfilling. In other words, as President, he placed primacy on one political objective: the creation of a highly personalised system of government that would enable him to remain in power and profit at the same time. From leadership style to management of economic affairs, from methods of class politics to the establishment of a bureaucratic administration built on patronage and corruption, President Mobutu implemented a government based on the ideological foundation of neopatrimonialism, referred to as Mobutuisme in Zaire.

Mobutu banned all political activity and founded the Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (MPR) as the national party in 1966. As party leader of the MPR, he announced ipso facto party membership for all citizens. One Zairean affirmed, "The MPR presents itself as a large family to which all Zaireans without exception belong. All Zaireans are born equal members of the MPR..." (Baangampong, 1975: 5). The MPR was institutionalised as the State-Party in 1970, shortly before scheduled elections were to take place as promised in 1965 when Mobutu first took office. When election time came, he was voted into office with a reported 99 percent of the vote. This was not unusual in the experience of electoral competition in several African countries, especially those built on foundations of patrimonial authority. It is argued that generally, "Elections...are depicted as empty and largely symbolic exercises designed to legitimate officeholders" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 68). In fact, the political power and military dominance that Mobutu held enabled him to render impotent any opposition. Mobutu had quickly and quietly seen to the removal of all potential political rivals.

That is not to say that political opposition and violence were uncommon. On the contrary, violent outbursts - at one level between factions within the government structure fighting for client privileges and at a second level, between groups formed outside the government comprised of the Zairean masses - were regular aspects of political life in Zaire. All the same, government repression of any opposition was systematic and brutal. Government "repressive forces are themselves the most consistent initiators and performers of collective violence" (Tilly, 1975: 509; 515). The Zairean masses feared the armed troops of the Mobutu regime. As a result, their fear served the purposes of Mobutu's policy of "zero- tolerance" towards any opposition groups that might challenge and destabilise the political system.

President Mobutu ruled with supreme authority in all spheres. This meant that, while patron-client networks were developed to centralise his power, other lesser patrons were still powerless. A clear example was reflected in the Zairean leadership core. Ministers in the government, senior political officials, and other members of the MPR national party had very little real power. In part, this was due to Mobutu's reshuffling techniques, for which he was widely acknowledged as the expert in
Africa. The Cabinet was periodically reshuffled to thwart potential challenges to Mobutu's power from senior government officials. Members of the government succumbed to internal contests for power, authority, and favour with Mobutu on a regular basis. Moreover, their positions were subject to change at the whim of the President, who feared that if an official held an influential position for too long, that individual might erect a power base with enough leverage to challenge his Presidency.

Operating with such high levels of job insecurity, Zaireans with routine access to government resources took advantage of the system while they could, for they knew the time would come when they would be replaced. Political power was fleeting for all government agents with the exception of President Mobutu. Therefore, those in power took advantage while they had the opportunity. Michael Schatzberg provides an apt explanation:

As personal, political, and economic insecurity increase, people in power seek to accumulate resources as rapidly as possible... However they can, while they can, they extract whatever they can because those in authority know a fall from grace may be imminent. Their positions are so insecure, and Mobutu's favour so fickle, that even the President's closest collaborators must assume that a similar opportunity to convert power into wealth might not reappear. Power is quickly gained, and rapidly lost (1988: 3).

One Zairean scholar concurs that in order to remain in power, "...the ruling class had found a way of reproducing and perpetuating itself through reshuffles and the frequent restructuring of the administrative apparatus of both party [MPR] and state" (Mvuluya, 1993: 79). In other words, the ruling elite undermined the effectiveness of administrative institutions by the systematic patron-client practices developed to access power and resources as long as possible.

With an idea, albeit limited, of the type of regime fostered under President Mobutu in the early years, let us consider the following account of some of the policies that were instituted by his government to remain in power. They further demonstrate the nature of neopatrimonialism in the Mobutu regime and its impact on Zairean political affairs.

2.3.1.1: The policy of "paternity".

One of the most strategic moves in the course of Mobutu's presidency was developed at an early stage. As President, Mobutu assumed the role of chief or "father" of the Zairean "family", which included every Zairean citizen.\textsuperscript{84} One of Michael Schatzberg's studies reveals that through the government's clever use of symbols, images, and metaphors, a complex system of patronage was

\textsuperscript{84}Several political analysts discuss the role of Mobutu as the "father" of the Zairean nation. See alsoirschberg (1988), especially Chapter 5.
devised to maintain political quiescence among the Zairean people. \(^{85}\) As head of the "family" (whether "family" referred to the MPR party or the nation as a whole), one of Mobutu's duties was to give "...advice and directives. But if the children do not obey, they will be punished..." because Mobutu is "...a good father of the family, clairvoyant, considerate, attentive, and affectionate..." who at all times is "...preoccupied...with the well- and better-being of the Zairean people." (Schatzberg, 1988: 71; 77). In other words, those who have been led "astray" are assured that Mobutu's "paternal love will always lead him to forgive [them, provided they]...repent and reform" (Schatzberg, 1988: 96). The above clearly demonstrates how government repression was justified and at times even advocated by Mobutu in the interests of preserving the "family".

Mobutu, as "chief", conducted himself much as a Machiavellian leader would: the state's property and resources, in essence the state's power, were considered as the President's personal property. \(^{86}\) Thomas Callaghy comments in *The State-Society Struggle: Zaire in Comparative Perspective* (1984) that the line between private and state property did not exist in Zaire. René Lemarchand adds that the nature of Mobutu's regime "...[was] highly personalised and mediated through patron-client ties" (Lemarchand, 1992c: 185). In Zaire, the patron was Mobutu, and the clients were his supporters, family members, and personal friends. For the most part, allegiance to the President was based on ethnicity and regional background. \(^{87}\) David Gould (1980) provides an insight into the development of Mobutu's paternalist approach to politics. He contends that paternalism originated in "the nature of the colonial policies formulated to deal with the Congo" (Gould, 1980: 36). These in turn are linked to the patterns of clientelism first embraced in the colonial period. \(^{88}\) All this to say, the "Mobutu-as-father" ideology corresponded to and was inherited from the ideas of patrimonial authority first introduced in the era of King Leopold.

One question arises: did the Zairean masses agree with this view of Mobutu as father? On the one hand, the Zaireans did not believe in this paternal ideology that espoused *Mobutuisme*. They recognised the infringement upon their political rights that this ideology imposed. Zaireans had been treated as "children" in the colonial era; they had no desire to continue being treated that way

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\(^{86}\) Interesting parallels have been drawn between King Leopold's era of rule in the Congo and Mobutu's decades of rule; both considered the state their personal property. For further discussion, see Leslie (1993) and Gould (1980).

\(^{87}\) Most studies acknowledge the favouritism that Mobutu bestowed upon people from his home province of Equateur. For further discussion, see Schatzberg (1988); Callaghy (1984); and Young and Turner (1985).

\(^{88}\) For our purposes, clientelism is defined as "a reciprocal pattern whereby those on top control those below" (Gould, 1980: 36). Conceivably, those 'on top' include the father, or master (Mobutu), while those 'below' comprise the masses.
in a political environment of independence. On the other hand, patrimonialism, at its most basic level, designates authority in small, traditional societies. The chief of a village is the "father" of the village, and the villagers are his "children". Consequently, when it came to questioning this ideology, traditional belief patterns did not necessarily contest it. The validity of Mobutuisme, however, wore thin as time went on and Mobutu's power grew more repressive and exclusive. No longer was he seen as the 'father' so much as he was viewed as the dictator or "tyrant".

2.3.1.2: The creation of an elite class policy and the notion of clientelism.
Consider for one moment the structure of class relations in Zaire during this period. A disparity between the elite few of the President's entourage and the other majority percent of the population was evident in the system of clientelism that was institutionalised almost immediately after President Mobutu took office. Mobutu's political power rested on the selective allocation of government-controlled resources to individuals and groups within the ruling elite class. Michael Schatzberg (1988) refers to Zaire's elite class as the "politico-commercial bourgeoisie". Otherwise, they are viewed as the offspring of the President's inner ring of loyal supporters, many of whom come from the Equateur region. In fact, key positions within government institutions and parastatals, or government-owned corporations, were given to members of Mobutu's ethnic tribe and region (Ngbendu and Equateur province respectively). It was widely assumed, although never blatantly stated, that ethnic affiliation in Zaire determined whether or not one had access to resources and wealth. For example, a Zairean from the Kasai province in central Zaire knew there was little prospect that he would become a rich man from government favours. In contrast, villagers in Equateur province were guaranteed certain measures of wealth and opportunity by the simple fact that they belonged to Mobutu's ethnic region.

A study by Morris Szefel on access to government resources in Zambia revealed that those with the most consistent access to the government received, in addition to their salaries, other services such as housing, medical assistance, and loans for setting up business or farming ventures (1982: 20-21). Accordingly, in Zaire, the means to obtaining wealth and access to government resources were similar to those in Zambia - through politics. Individuals and groups that were closest to Mobutu received the most lucrative opportunities to advance their economic positions through special government contracts, import-export licenses, mining projects, tax exemptions, and so forth (Gordon, 1996: 71). In return for these favours, Mobutu's clients "mobilised political support [for the MPR and other government institutions] and referred all decisions upward in a mark of loyalty.

to [the] patron" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 65-6; Lemarchand, 1988). These interactions encouraged the supremacy of the small ruling elite while simultaneously undermining the power and influence of the majority Zairean population. Through the manipulation of class relations, the Mobutu regime maintained its stronghold on political power.

While on the subject of political manipulation and clientelism, an important aspect of Mobutu's leadership style should be addressed. In Zaire, the notion of political corruption was perfected under the leadership of Mobutu. Based on a study of classes and access to power in Guinea, Claude Rivièrè contends that the famous Marxian formula, "those who govern do so because they are rich", should be altered in some African cases, notably Zaire, to read: "those who are rich are so because they govern" (1975: 66). There is substantial proof that Mobutu amassed a personal fortune in Swiss bank accounts of more than USD$6. billion from the time he took office in 1965. He bought properties overseas, including "11 chateaux and large properties in Belgium, a building on the exclusive avenue Foch in Paris, a palatial residence in Nice, a 32-bedroom villa in Switzerland, a Costa del Sol beachside villa, and a 16th-century castle in Spain" (George, 1988: 107). A popular slogan in Zaire read "Mobutu, Voleur!" (Mobutu, Thief!) in condemnation of his ill-gotten wealth (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 105).

According to the findings presented in his book, Thomas Callaghly concludes that "corruption is now the most visible defining feature of the Zairean state", permeating all aspects of the political, economic, and social spheres (1984: 143).90 Another related concept in debates surrounding neopatrimonial regimes' use of state resources is that of kleptocracy.91 Again, kleptocratic behaviour was exemplified in the Zairean case. The term "kleptocratic" is applied to political regimes in which all levels of government govern by theft and the systematic use of corruption (Young and Turner, 1985: 183).92 The Zairean kleptocracy is thus a "system for transforming the

90 For an informative analysis of corruption and the Zairean government under Mobutu, see Gould (1980).

91 According to one study, the roots of Mobutu's modern kleptocratic habits are traced directly to the administrative practices of the Congo Free State under King Leopold. One report confirmed that the only European colony in Africa to "run at a profit" was the Belgian-administered Congo. Clearly, using profits from state resources to fill the personal pockets of government leaders was not a new idea. For a more indepth analysis, examples, and a review of Mobutu's self-enrichment 5-point system, see Akin and Collins (1993).

92 Mobutu perfected a system of rule by theft. Some records suggest that there were years when Mobutu and his close associates pilfered more than 20% of the country's government budget, 30% of its mineral export revenues, and 50% of its capital budget, not to mention the "millions in bilateral foreign aid, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund loans and foreign investment" that never reached their destinations (Collins, 1997a: 278). For a further breakdown of percentages and monies stolen by Mobutu and his cronies, see Collins (1997); Akin and Collins (1993); and Young and Turner (1985).
public resources into private wealth, while using bribery, coercion and violence to thwart all movements for change" (Askin and Collins, 1993: 72).

In order to sustain its unlimited access to financial resources, the Mobutu regime frequently intervened in the economy of Zaire. The President himself publicly advocated the Lingala expression "yibona mayele" which means "to steal cleverly". In other words, the Mobutu government sanctioned theft as a means to achieving wealth, provided an individual was discreet in his thievery. Another study by Nzongola concurs that Mobutu's kleptocratic ways promoted the interests of the elite group to the disadvantage of the general welfare of the people (1994a: 23). Clearly, the class policies and clientelist networks provided evidence of the manipulative skills perfected by President Mobutu during his power. He was able to monitor and control (when necessary) political relations and group interaction through the institutionalisation of clientelism and class structures.

2.3.1.3: Policies of l'authenticité.

President Mobutu was well known in African circles for his ideology of l'authenticité, referred to variously as nationalism, authentic Zairean nationalism, and Mobutuism (Kannyo, 1979: 61). In fact, the professed doctrine of the MPR and the Mobutu regime was "authentic Zairean nationalism and condemnation of regionalism and tribalism" (Dobert, 1979: 83). From that, Mobutu advocated what was labeled 'recours à l'authenticité' (translated: "a return to authenticity") in the early 1970s. In principal, l'authenticité was an attempt on Mobutu's part to erase the last traces of Belgian colonialism. The operative word is "attempt"; scholars have argued, just as this thesis argues, that the legacy of colonialism will not disappear for a long time, if ever. It has shaped the present in Africa and will undoubtedly shape the future, too.

Among other things, the authenticité campaign enabled Mobutu to change the names of the country (from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Zaire in October 1971), the river, and the cities. He even banned the use of Christian names. In 1972, the President changed his own name from Joseph-Desiré Mobutu to Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu wa za Banga (which translated from Mobutu's tribal dialect, Ngbendu, means something to the effect: "The warrior who knows no defeat because of his endurance and inflexible will and is all powerful, leaving fire in his wake as

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93 In an excellent study of political regimes in Africa, Michael Bratton and Nicholas Van de Walle (1997) put together a comprehensive analysis of the different types of regime, state, and government that exist in Africa. In their discussion of neopatrimonial regimes, including Zaire, they argued that the government had "a powerful incentive for extensive regulation of economic activity, through which the incumbent elite gained control over a wide range of monopolies and economic rents" (66).

94 For an excellent, albeit brief, discussion of Mobutu's authenticity campaign, see Adelman (1975).
he goes from conquest to conquest" (Callaghy, 1984: 181)). These changes introduced by the authenticity campaign appeared rather superficial, especially the stipulation that men could no longer wear ties but instead had to dress in the traditional abacos, or short-sleeved, collarless suit.

Zairean scholar Buana Kabue quotes Mobutu firsthand regarding the ideology of authenticity:

*L'authenticité est une prise de conscience du peuple zairois de recourir à ses propres sources, de rechercher les valeurs de ses ancêtres afin d'en apprécier celles qui contribuent à son développement harmonieux et naturel. C'est le refus du peuple zairois d'exposer aveuglement les idéologies importées (1975: 203).*

In essence, this was a profound statement by Mobutu that appealed to the Zairean collective conscious first, to adhere to the traditional values of their ancestry; second, to appreciate that which contributes to their harmonious and natural development; and third, to beware of the dangers of imported ideologies. In a speech given in Dakar, Sénégal, President Mobutu further defined authenticity as "being conscious of one's own personality and one's own values and of being at home in one's culture" (Dobert, 1979: 83). With that in mind, another part of the campaign was "to create the myth of Zaire as an image of some idealistic, precolonial African village living in harmony and arcadian bliss under the benevolent authority of a strong-willed chief represented by General Mobutu" (Kannyo, 1979: 61). Clearly, l'authenticité was a policy based on the idea that an "authentic Zairean nationalism" was needed to maintain political stability and order (Diawlo, 1984: 56). In this way, it legitimised Mobutu's promotion of Mobutuisme.

What was left unsaid but certainly understood, at least in Zairean circles, was that Mobutu had created an ideology - Mobutuisme - that embodied the President's thoughts, teachings, ideas, and actions. Other than the Zaireans who benefited from membership within the ruling elite, few of those belonging to the general population were keen on this policy. The Catholic church was perhaps the most vocal in its condemnation of Mobutu's decision to disallow the use of Christian names. The Zairean masses were shocked at the country's name change from the Congo to Zaire. It was a blatant contradiction of terms, according to the definition of authenticité cited by Mobutu. Peter Forbath points out: "[T]he change from Congo, a word so inarguably authentically African, to Zaire, which is not only not an authentic African word but no kind of real word at all - it is the clumsy Portuguese mispronunciation of the ancient Kikongo nzadi or nzere, meaning 'the river that swallows all rivers' - is bound to make one wonder" about Mobutu's true intentions (1977: Preface, xi). Still others opposed to the Mobutu regime claimed that the authenticité campaign was a strategy devised to "mystify" the Zairean masses, to obscure the reality of an overwhelmingly dictatorial government.
In terms of the impact of l'authenticité on the political struggles of the 1990s, two ideas come to mind. The first is that the authenticité campaign, as an agenda of extreme nationalism, created ethnic tensions in provinces where ethnic groups overlapped international borders. Those who were not "Zairean" by origin, even though they had lived in Zaire for generations, were singled out. One classic example is the Banyamulenge of eastern Zaire. This group of people belongs to the Tutsi tribe that originated in Rwanda and Burundi. However, they crossed over into present-day Zaire in the 19th century and have been living in the Great Lakes region since. During the 1990s, their role in bringing about the regime change was critical, as will become evident in the upcoming chapters. In essence, l'authenticité created a kind of xenophobia that only served to divide people along ethnic lines rather than unite them in national terms.

The second impact of l'authenticité, related to the first, was reflected in the lack of a "good neighbour" policy between Zaire and its neighbours. Mobutu effectively isolated himself from his surrounding peers through his stringent promotion of l'authenticité. When political pressures for regime transition began in the 1990s, the opposition received widespread support from neighbouring countries, although this was due in part to other factors besides the policy of authenticité that have not yet been discussed. In any case, the "recours à l'authenticité" as a political strategy backfired. It did, however, provide overwhelming evidence of the neopatrimonial nature of the Mobutu regime.

2.3.1.4: The Zaireanisation policy.

On the economic front, the Mobutu regime implemented a policy in November 1973 intended not only to promote economic growth within the country, but more importantly, to elevate the financial status of the elite ruling class. The policy was labeled "Zaireanisation"; the plan was to Zaireanise (or confiscate) all foreign-owned businesses, including those in agriculture, mining, commerce, manufacturing, and transport, and give them to Zaireans. Again, those who benefited were mostly connected through ethnic or patron-client ties to Mobutu and referred to as "les acquéreurs". Literally translated, the term means "the buyers", although in the Zaireanisation context, it meant "the grabbers". Edward Kanno argues that the measures taken were an exploitative attempt by the members of the ruling elite to increase their economic resources and power by removing foreign ownership in the money-making sectors (1979: 60-2).

Justification of the Zaireanisation policy was based on the idea that whatever the colonial regime and foreign businessmen had taken from the country should be restored to its people. Compensation was to be made to the expatriates, although there were no guidelines as to how or when this would be done. Before long, many of the larger enterprises that were Zaireanised were
further nationalised by the government. These actions undermined the goal of giving back to the Zairean people what was "rightfully" theirs in the first place.

Retrospective analysis suggests that Zaireanisation was a poorly implemented plan. One report points out: "Although the stated objectives [of the plan] were commendable, little thought appears to have been given beforehand as to possible consequences of the lack of sufficient numbers of trained managers and other qualified staff on production, the internal distribution mechanisms, and the like" (Whitaker, 1979: 190). By the end of 1974, the disastrous results of Zaireanisation were evident. In most cases, the new Zairean owners were ill-equipped to manage the businesses. They had neither the training nor the capital to maintain the businesses and generate further income. A good number of the industrial factories and shops quickly descended into bankruptcy. World prices for copper, a significant Zairean export commodity, fell and further destroyed the economy. The overall evidence of the failure of the Zaireanisation policy, especially in light of the loss of foreign capital and management, placed the Mobutu regime under immense pressure to prevent an economic catastrophe from occurring.

In a display of "rare political courage", President Mobutu acknowledged the errors of Zaireanisation and attempted to shift directions by introducing the Mobutu Plan of retrocession (Diallo, 1984: 72). In an effort to bring forth renewed economic stability in 1976, Mobutu invited former foreign businessmen (Belgian, Portuguese, Pakistani, Greek, and Lebanese) to return to Zaire and their former businesses would subsequently be restored to their ownership. The Mobutu Plan was implemented upon the advice of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). When the IMF granted its approval of these economic reform policies, foreign capital and business investments returned to Zaire and saved the economy from complete collapse.

By the end of the 1970s, Mobutu's reputation as the caring "Father" of the Zairean people had waned. The mal zairois, or Zairean sickness, had permeated most sectors of the state apparatus and society (Aphane, 1993: 4). Neopatrimonialism had been institutionalised through the policies of authenticité and Zaireanisation, and the development of an elite ruling class. However, these strategic policies had not met their intended goals of development for the Zairean population at large, and Mobutu was blamed. Further criticism arose from the Zairean masses and the emerging opposition groups concerning the concentration of executive and legislative power in Mobutu's

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95 There was one rather obscure stipulation to the retrocession inviting foreign businessmen back to Zaire: Zairean businessmen were to enter into partnership with the foreigners. This meant that they were entitled to a healthy percentage of the profits of the foreign companies, 60 percent to be exact. Typical of Mobutu, the Mobutu Plan had ulterior motives that would benefit himself and his entourage.
presidential office. Authoritarian methods of leadership were increasingly unpopular, especially in light of the ban on political activity outside the realm of the MPR. Moreover, in economic terms, copper prices had plummeted in 1974, inflation, fiscal mismanagement, corruption, and ethnic hostilities had served to further disillusion the Zairean people as to the political objectives of the Mobutu regime (Dobert, 1979: 59). Before the very eyes of the Zairean masses, the Mobutu regime had become a full-blown personal dictatorship.

Still, Zaire is not the only African country in which leaders have ruled with an iron fist as dictators. Two classic African examples of personal dictatorships in recent times aside from that of Mobutu's belong to Idi Amin who ruled in Uganda from 1971-1979 and Jean-Bedel Bokassa of the Central African Republic (1966-1979). In Zaire, as in these two countries, government institutions were created in name only and did not have the ability to check executive powers. In the place of formal government institutions were informal political organisations and policies. Mobutu's power was sustained through the use of the military forces under his control. Nevertheless, the early years of the Mobutu dictatorship also witnessed the birth of a political opposition movement. It is to an analysis of these brave groups that we now turn.

2.4: Developing a political arena of conflict: the origins of opposition.

The first half of this chapter explored the roots of the neopatrimonial nature of the Mobutu regime, tracing its history as far back as the colonial era. The second half of the chapter examines the development of group interaction and political opposition to the Mobutu regime. To put it differently, in an attempt to explore the ideas in this thesis with a structured contingency approach, up until now the emphasis has been on the "structured" part through discussions of structural precedents, neopatrimonial institutions, and so forth. From this point on, this chapter emphasises the "contingency" aspect of the approach in assessments of the behaviour of actors and groups and the growth of political conflict.

There is one broad objective in this section. It is to explore the development of an opposition movement in Zaire. I want to establish that an opposition movement of potential contenders did in fact emerge, albeit in a non-traditional capacity, despite the Mobutu regime's lack of tolerance for political competition and its willingness to repress any such movements. Before I proceed, it would be helpful to review the polity and mobilisation models discussed in the last chapter. In brief, there are three primary social units that comprise the polity model: a government, a polity,
and one or more opposition groups. A government is the group that controls the principal means of coercion in a polity. An opposition contender is a group that uses its resources to influence a government. A polity is the set of opposition groups that routinely interact with the government, including the government itself (Tilly, 1978: 52-53). The polity model is a model of group interaction and power struggles. Tilly theorises that in any given polity, "all contenders are attempting to realise their interests by applying pooled resources to each other and the government" (1978: 55). The second model of mobilisation examines the behaviour of a single opposition group, coalition, or movement through the interests, organisation, mobilisation, collective action, and opportunities that are available to that opposition force. The combination of these variables determines how an opposition group will interact with other groups and with the government. The predominant patterns of mobilisation will play a role in the ability of groups to access power and government-controlled resources.

2.4.1: The origins of political opposition in Zaire.

From the onset of Mobutu's presidency in Zaire, there were factions within the country opposed to his leadership and politics. Thus far, we have examined the institutionalisation of a neopatrimonial regime in Zaire. This type of regime is not known for its openness to political competition. On the contrary, regimes built on patrimonial authority do not allow opposition. Instead, they devise policies designed to give the impression that the masses are involved and consulted about the workings of the political machine. Participation within Zaire's national party was encouraged. Mobutu argued that he created the policies of authenticité and Zaïreisation for the benefit of the Zairian masses when in fact, they only consolidated his power base and increased his material wealth. The Mobutu regime's promotion of authentic nationalism and 'Mobutuism' was a guise for its manipulation and oppression of the Zairian citizenry.

Unsurprisingly, internal and external groups that saw through Mobutu's public layer of "all-is-well-with-Zaïre" reacted to the Mobutu regime's oppressive and neopatrimonial nature. Prior to 1980, protests against the regime, while extensive and widespread, had been "ad hoc, isolated, and largely ineffective" (Leslie, 1993: 49). This did not mean, however, that opposition willingly succumbed to Mobutu's single-party rule. On the contrary, attempts were made, notably by external opposition groups, to influence the government during the period from 1965 - 1980. However, they did not result in any significant political change. Instead, they enabled 'father' Mobutu to further justify his oppressive rule by stamping out the disturbances his 'straying children' had caused.
The inability of the young opposition movement to effect significant political change was due in part to a lack of organisation and resources with which to mobilise support for the contending groups. Underlying these obvious weaknesses, however, was a more critical factor. Zaireans had never received "political education" and they were unfamiliar with participatory politics and competition. During the colonial era, the Congolese were treated as subjects, not citizens. They were not ascribed political rights because the Belgian administration did not see the need for their political education. More importantly, politically educated Congolese would undoubtedly see through the exploitative measures of the Belgians and mount a revolutionary war against their colonial domination. On that thought, the following discussion provides a breakdown of the diverse elements of opposition and illustrates the challenges opposition groups to the Mobutu regime faced as a result of their inexperience and lack of political education.

In brief, recall that President Mobutu seized control of the government in 1965 amidst a prolonged political struggle between the left-leaning supporters of Lumumba and the conservative wing led by Kasavubu. With military acumen, he restored a semblance of order to the political chaos. However, a unified and democratic country was not part of Mobutu's political agenda. The image of Mobutu as "Father" of the nation excluded any notion of opposition or dissent (Kannyo, 1979: 61). With the creation of the Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (MPR), President Mobutu effectively imparted the signal that he would not readily endorse nor tolerate challenges to his authority. The MPR monopolised all available political space in the system. All other political organisations - women's groups, student and labour unions - were forced to give up their independence and join the ranks of the MPR. Mobutu even refused to sanction an opposition within the structures of the national party. As a result, genuine opposition groups were forced either to go underground or in exile (Nzongola, 1994a: 20; Schatzberg, 1988: 141).

2.4.1.1: External opposition groups and activities.
The exiled opposition groups were more active during the early years of Mobutu's dictatorship, despite reports of their fragmented, often unorganised structure, lack of leadership and inarticulated ideological base. The most significant attempt to destroy the Mobutu regime came from opposition based outside the country. The Shaba uprisings were widely documented by

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97 Mahmood Mamdani (1996) has written an excellent book on the notions of "citizen" and "subject" during the colonial era. It is a recommended "must-read" for those interested in the complexities of European colonial policy, indirect rule, traditional law and civil law, and so forth.

98 For further elaboration on the origins of the opposition in Zaire, there are several useful articles and books; see Kabwiti (1979); Ngondi (1984); Leslie (1993); and Nzongola (1994a). Not only do these texts discuss the role of the underground and exiled groups, but they also examine the positions of the Catholic church and student organisations in the initial years of the opposition movement.
analysts of Zaire (Nzongola, 1994a; Callaghy, 1984; Leslie, 1993; Young and Turner, 1985), largely because of the element of international attention and subsequent intervention. The *Front pour la Libération Nationale du Congo* (FLNC), an exiled group, launched an attack of the Shaba mining region in eastern Zaire in March 1977.\(^\text{99}\) There was some initial dispute as to the identity of the FLNC forces that invaded the province in the Shaba I uprising. The Zairean press claimed they were Katangese mercenaries from Angola. Others believed the rebel troops were ex-gendarmes and secessionists. The group claiming responsibility, however, denied it was any of the above. Instead, the FLNC defended its position as that of a "revolutionary and progressive movement with political and military discipline, working closely with the Zairean masses to overthrow the Mobutu regime" (Hull, 1979: 272). As to the identity of the rebel soldiers, they reportedly comprised a group of Zairean refugees and dissidents living in Angola and Zambia. The Shaba I uprising was unsuccessful in terms of dislodging the regime, however, the exiled FLNC group did not give up.

They organised another rebel attack on the eastern Shaba province in May 1978 (Shaba II). This time, the rebel troops occupied the central mining and railway towns, in particular the strategic Kolwezi diamond center. Again, the Zairean press reported that "Katangese gendarmes aided by whites who have been identified as Cubans" were fighting against the Zairean army (Hull, 1979: 275). When the Western news agencies got wind of this piece of information, they assumed the invasion had been financed by the Communists and prompt action was taken to halt the uprising. The rapid response from the Western powers (United States, France, and Belgium) revealed their increasing alarm over the presence and influence of the Soviet Union and its allies in Central Africa.\(^\text{100}\)

In sum, the Shaba uprisings accomplished at least two objectives of the opposition movement. First, the FLNC opposition had learned that Mobutu's military forces could be fought effectively with oppositional forces provided the latter were organised and mobilised with some coercive resources. The FLNC troops had been initially successful in quelling Mobutu's army. It was only after President Mobutu negotiated, or rather pleaded, for a foreign military presence that the uprisings were put down and the FLNC was forced into exile again. A second accomplishment of the Shaba uprisings was revealed in the ease with which contending groups (in this case, the FLNC) could rouse popular support for the opposition movement. Clearly, the Zairean masses were no longer disillusioned with the nature of the Mobutu dictatorship. Consequently, one result

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\(^{99}\)The Shaba province was formerly Katanga. The name was changed when Mobutu changed the name of the country and many of the cities in 1971 as part of his *authenticité* campaign.

\(^{100}\)The role of external factors, the impact of the Cold War, and international actors will be discussed in the following section (2.5).
of the Shaba uprisings was an increase in popular demands for political change, pluralism, and open elections for government positions, particularly the presidency. To facilitate these demands, Mobutu allowed a new parliament to be elected, although what in fact that accomplished is anyone's guess. If anything, Mobutu miscalculated the growing opposition, because it was from the elected parliament that "the leaders of the new phase of the [opposition] movement would emerge in 1980" (Nzongola, 1994a: 22).

2.4.1.2: Internal oppositional forces in the early years of the Mobutu regime.
Internal opposition came from informal sources in the early years from 1965 - 1980. In Africa, the church and the student groups have played an active role in mobilising opposition against authoritarian governments. In Zaire, the Catholic church and to a lesser extent its Protestant equivalent, L'Eglise du Christ au Zaire, were the most active internal opponents to the Mobutu regime during this time. The church was respected and widely supported because of its role in the provision of education and health care services to the Zairean people. In its role as provider, the Catholic church regularly came into conflict with the Mobutu regime. One of the reasons for this tension stemmed from the nature of the church itself. Given its autonomy as a religious institution, the Catholic church represented to the regime a potential locus where political opposition could gather and mobilise support.

In fact, several oppositional elements sought refuge under the umbrella of the Catholic church. Mobutu was unable to do anything about it. The inability of the government to exert control over the operations and organisation of the church without the use of repressive force constituted a serious impediment to Mobutu's power. The growing anti-Mobutu sentiment, demonstrated in part by the churches' strong condemnation of the regime's authenticité campaign that imposed upon Zaireans the abandonment of their Christian names, came to a head in 1975 when the regime attempted to assert control of the Catholic and Protestant mission schools (Kabwit, 1979: 286). Mobutu believed that teaching his ideology of 'Mobutuism' in the schools would dampen the spirit of opposition that the churches were promoting among their membership.

One other informal group that worked alongside the church to encourage mobilisation against Mobutu's authoritarian regime was the students. Zairean students have been a consistent and powerful opposition force against Mobutu's dictatorship since its inception.\textsuperscript{101} In 1961, university students formed the Union Générale des Etudiants Congolais (UGEC). UGEC received

\textsuperscript{101} For an indepth examination of the informal opposition against Mobutu, see the excellent review by Ghislain Kabwit (1979).
international recognition due to (a) its ideological foundation based on the martyred Lumumba's nationalist agenda, and (b) its popularity among Zairean exiles in Belgium and France. UGEC maintained a distance from the youth wing of the national party, known as the Jeunesse du MPR (JMPR). UGEC was also the first opposition group to publicly denounce the Mobutu regime, claiming the latter was responsible for "a total lack of personal liberty in the country" (Kabwit, 1979: 284).

In 1969, frustrated with the government's repression and violence aimed at the Zairean population, UGEC organised several marches that resulted in the violent deaths of hundreds of students by government troops dispatched to break up the demonstrations. Student opposition culminated again in 1971 in a clash between the military forces and the student unions. Mobutu ordered the universities closed after these events. Then the government forced the students to enlist in the army in order to learn discipline and respect, and of course, to be indoctrinated with the Mobutuiste ideology.

Zairean analyst Ghislain Kabwit provides an insightful summary of the opposition movement in the early years of Mobutu's presidency. Speaking in general terms, he comments:

Opposition does not seem to be an organised phenomenon, as the autocratic and oppressive nature of the Mobutu regime has not tolerated the growth of any internal organised opposition. Rather, it seems to be a spontaneous phenomenon whose causes can be said to be massive economic failures, deterioration in the social conditions, and predation on the population by the army, the secret police, party cadres...and other Mobutu loyalists (1979: 290).

The neopatrimonial, repressive nature of Mobutu's regime served as an obstacle to the efforts of both internal and external opposition to mobilise the Zairean masses in the first 15 years of Mobutu's presidency. Having no legal identity with which to publicly oppose the regime without fear of violent reprisal by the regime forces demonstrated that not only was organisation difficult, but mobilisation without resources was practically impossible. However, the 1980s witnessed a more structured development of the Zairean opposition movement and increased group interaction.

2.4.2: The growth of internal opposition groups in the 1980s.

With the emergence of an opposition movement, the 1980s promised to be a decade of political struggles and increased government repression. Cracks in the armour of the Mobutu regime were beginning to show. The neopatrimonial structures that had enabled Mobutu to rise to the presidency and consolidate his power base had eroded with time. While conflict had been a regular feature of Zairean politics in the 1960s and 1970s, there was a point at which the struggles for
political change (a) became formalised, and (b) challenged the survival of the Mobutu regime. The political landscape of Zaire in the 1980s underwent a subtle, but poignant transformation from relative stability in the structures of the Mobutu regime to a political climate of insecurity, conflict, and violence. This transformation was reflected in an increasingly fervent anti-Mobutu opposition movement.

In the early 1980s, opposition to Mobutu's one-party system formally crystallised. Increased political activity directed at political reform was manifested through the work of key elements within the opposition movement. A group of men who came to be known as the Group of 13 demanded in a critical report that the Mobutu regime initiate political reforms for a multiparty system and free elections (Leslie, 1993: 55). Many of these "13" were members of the parliament and various legislative councils already working within the government system. However, Mobutu's reaction to these demands was imprisonment, torture, and banishment of these thirteen men. Even so, they continued their fight for political change. In 1982, the Group of 13 went against the dictates of the government and founded a party, the Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social (UDPS) under the leadership of political dissident Etienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba. The UDPS represented the first attempt at an organised contending group in the Zairean polity. The UDPS was an instant success with the Zairean masses. Its efforts to mobilise support for the opposition were remarkable considering the constraints of Mobutu's dictatorial regime.

Despite the government ban on political activity outside the realm of the MPR, the UDPS joined the bandwagon of oppositional forces, formal and informal, that were increasingly dissatisfied with the regime. It solidified the growing anti-Mobutu sentiment and reinforced the informal opposition from key societal groups, including the churches, student groups, and labour unions. As an organisation, the UDPS became associated with the fight for democracy and was "the single most important party in terms of name recognition and emotional attachment for millions of Zaireans" (Nzongola, 1994b: 220). The political party started out as a moderate party with ambitions of basic political liberalisation and reform. But it became "more 'radical' in its demands and ultimately call[ed] for the complete dismantling of the Mobutuiste system" (Leslie, 1993: 56).

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102 Tshisekedi was once a close confidant of President Mobutu. In fact, he served as interior minister in the 1960s and minister of justice and of planning in the early 1970s. Tshisekedi fell out of favour with Mobutu over the latter's dictatorial regime style in the late 1970s.

103 For a breakdown of activities conducted by the opposition groups represented in the universities, churches, and labour unions, see Leslie (1993), especially the chapter on the Zairean polity (49-60).
Over the next few years, opposition to the Mobutu regime continued to manifest itself, often with violent repercussions. In most cases, the regime choreographed repressive violence as a means to sustaining political power and thwarted all attempts of the opposition to effect political change. For example, faced with elections in July 1984, President Mobutu redirected attention away from the upcoming elections by staging incidents of political violence and then blaming the chaos on the UDPS. Unsurprisingly, Mobutu was the sole candidate in the presidential elections, just as he had been in the elections of 1970. In another case, the government troops exploded several bombs in Kinshasa that killed innocent civilians. Again, the UDPS was blamed for inciting anti-Mobutu demonstrations that went out of control. The government soldiers were forced to intervene to restore order. In yet another incident, Zaireans died at the hands of government troops who claimed they were fighting against a rebel force, the PRP, who had occupied the town of Moba in eastern Zaire to contest the Mobutu regime.104

An interesting observation merits brief mention. The PRP, or Parti de la Résolution Populaire, was a rebel group under the leadership of Laurent Kabila - the same Laurent Kabila who would lead the armed struggle for regime change in 1996. In the 1970s, the PRP had frequently engaged in sporadic rebel activity in the eastern regions of Zaire. Tilly notes that rebel groups amassed in remote regions place the government at a disadvantage because first, they are located in terrain unfamiliar to the government forces, and second, they employ military tactics and strategy which are also alien to the armed forces of the government (1978: 209). Unsurprisingly then, the Zairean army had been unsuccessful in dislodging the PRP rebels from their guerrilla bases near Lake Tanganyika. Kabila's group was affiliated with an external opposition group, FODELICO (Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo) that was active in the 1970s. FODELICO was the antecedent to the Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre (AFDL) that emerged as the coalition force which ultimately wrested power from the Mobutu regime in 1997.

In any case, during the 1980s, one way that the Mobutu regime tried to offset the growth of the opposition movement was through the coordination of a series of ministerial reshuffles in which key "opponents" were given senior positions in the government. Another tactic Mobutu employed was the creation of an amnesty policy for exiled political opponents.105 These political strategies

104 Moba is located along the shores of Lake Tanganyika.
105 Mobutu's amnesty offers had been numerous and seemingly reflected his willingness to accept the opposition movement within Zaire. However, as Winsome Leslie notes, "frequently these offers [were] pretexts to eliminate prominent members of the opposition" who were residing outside of the country (1993: 56).
were ways in which the regime facilitated the demands of the popular opposition. In other words, President Mobutu led the Zairean people to believe that he was listening to their political demands. These actions provided further evidence that the government was allegedly willing to accept opposition to its one-party state, albeit in a restricted manner. Mobutu refined his skills in political co-optation when members of the original Group of 13 were reintegrated into the MPR.

The only member of the Group who refused to be co-opted was Tshisekedi. Thus, "he soon came to represent democracy for Zairean citizens" (Leslie, 1993: 56). Substantial opposition activity occurred in 1988 when Tshisekedi and the UDPS began a series of political meetings aimed at arousing mass support and action against the Mobutu regime. The UDPS organised an unauthorised pro-democracy march in Kinshasa on the anniversary of Lumumba's death (17 January). The march was hugely successful in one of its goals - to involve huge numbers of Zaireans. However, it resulted in detention and house arrest for Tshisekedi. In early 1990, Tshisekedi was released and the UDPS resumed an active role in the opposition movement, once again organising demonstrations in Kinshasa. This time, they were met with deadly force by Mobutu's armed forces.

All in all, opposition to the Mobutu government up until 1990, while pervasive and sustained, was largely ineffective. There was little organisation, few resources, no leadership structure within the various contending groups (other than the UDPS), and mobilisation patterns for political change were practically non-existent. In other words, "Mass support in the absence of a strong organisation and an appropriate political strategy is not enough for effective political change" (Nzongola, 1994a: 31). What characterises the strength of an opposition as a kind of change agent is its "quality as an articulated and organised group" (Gusfield, 1970: 453).

If that is the case, a strong political organisation with the ability to enforce change upon the Mobutu regime had yet to emerge, despite widespread anti-Mobutu support. Not only was this due to the factors mentioned above, but Mobutu's repressive government strategies and his skill at dividing the opposition and co-opting his opponents compounded the political struggles. Nevertheless, to use the infamous expression, "Persistence pays off". Internal opposition from key groups - students, the Catholic church, and to a lesser degree the labour unions in the early years, and the UDPS in the 1980s - eventually had enough of an impact on the Mobutu regime to effect some political change. The year 1990 turned out to be a benchmark year for Zaire's opposition movement with the opening to multiparty politics.
2.5: Political forecast for the Mobutu regime in the 1980s.

The aim of this section is to assess the political forecast for the Mobutu regime in the 1980s. Political and economic events, both domestic and international, took place that reflected and influenced a serious decline in the support of the Mobutu regime. Of particular importance is the structural nature of some of the formal government institutions that determined in part the regime's response to the various crises in the country and abroad. In earlier discussions of the neopatrimonial nature of Mobutu's regime, informal political institutions such as presidentialism and clientelism were examined. In the 1980s, however, the weaknesses inherent in the formal institutions were revealed through the extent of political and economic decay. As a result, changes in the environment prior to 1990 paved the way for the development of a volatile political situation in the 1990s in which regime transition and change became possible political scenarios.

The Zairean opposition faced at times seemingly insurmountable challenges, among them how best to effect political change upon a regime founded on institutionalised neopatrimonialism and committed to oppression, corruption, and embroiled violence. Like other neopatrimonial rulers, Mobutu refused to deal with, or at the very least, acknowledge that there were problems with his regime. From 1980 onwards, he embarked on a path that would plunge the Zairean nation into further political and economic collapse. One of Crawford Young's profound questions asked, "Is there a state [in Zaire]" (1984: 80)? That the question was even asked revealed the depressing reality of Zairean political life - a life without civil rights, political freedom and expression.

Let's pursue these ideas for a moment. Crawford Young is one of the most productive and knowledgeable political analysts on Zaire. For him to pose such a question has implications that merit further discussion. He contends that major studies of state decay had never before "entertain[ed] the possibility that the state [might] lose its capacity for rational behaviour, and thereby its ability to serve the interests of development, capitalism, or the ruling class" - at least not until the 1980s when the economic and political crises of Africa took on a new urgency (1984: 80). Is it not possible, though, that a partial explanation for state decay in neopatrimonial regimes could be found in a more straightforward cause such as mere exhaustion? To maintain a neopatrimonial regime and the clientelist networks within requires an immense amount of energy and resources. In time, a contradiction of sorts manifests itself: at some point, a declining state will lose its ability to sustain patron-client relations. However, the bureaucratic state has become too big and contains within itself the seeds of its own weakness and ultimate demise. Hence state collapse.
All the same, Young suggests there are in fact three related processes that explain how states
decay. In turn, I argue that each of these processes is epitomized in the Zairean neopatrimonial
regime. Briefly, the processes that engender political state decay are: (a) a decline in the
competence of the state institutions to carry out their intended actions, (b) a loss of regime
credibility in the eyes of the citizenry, and (c) the systematic use of corruption that deflates the
legitimacy of the state (Young, 1984: 80-1). These processes of decay are interwoven in the
upcoming discussions on the slow, but steady decline of the power of the Mobutu regime.

As for the economy in Zaire, its state of decay was a familiar tale. Basic infrastructure, such as
that needed in the health and transportation sectors, had fallen so low that people could no longer
rely on the Mobutu state to meet their basic needs. Zaire experienced negative rates of economic
growth; from 1980 - 1989, the average annual GNP per capita change was -2% (Bratton and van
de Walle, 1997: 131). From the mid-1970s onwards, the average per capita income was
approximately USD$150, and falling rapidly (Whitaker, 1979: 183). There was no economic
growth; if anything, the economy was in decline. When it came to private foreign investment, the
neopatrimonial nature of the regime actually discouraged investors because of the security risk and
the corruption of the government bureaucracy. In order to generate revenues, Mobutu relied upon
extortion and diamond smuggling, in addition to his cut from legitimate diamond and copper
exports. Meanwhile, the masses were left to deal with a corrupt government system bent on taking
every cent their livelihood earned them. Given these statistics and the appalling socioeconomic
conditions, scholars and analysts of Zairean studies have posed the question: how did the Mobutu
regime endure? Possible answers to this question constitute the central challenge of the next few
pages.

Up to this point, Zaire's political record illustrated an essential problem, familiar to some other
African countries under neopatrimonial regimes, witness Côte d'Ivoire under Houphouët-Boigny
and Nigeria's Second Republic. It was a severe lack of authentic political activity usually attributed
to the African state as one of its weaknesses. Still, if the Zairean state was as weak as its record
suggests, why did it persist? Effective opposition to the Mobutu regime was compromised by its
repressive nature, in addition to several other factors that contributed to the durability of the
Mobutu regime. The most compelling factor was revealed in the nature of the government
structures, in particular the Office of the Presidency and the security forces. The regime's
willingness and capacity to engage in government repression also constitutes an important factor
that explained how the Mobutu regime endured. The development of a vibrant informal economy

106 For an excellent article on the endurance of weak states in Africa, see JACKSON and ROSBERG (1982).
was the third factor, while the influence of the external environment makes up the fourth. I intend to examine each of these in turn.

2.5.1: The nature of formal government structures revealed.
In addition to the strength of informal political institutions that shaped the neopatrimonial regime in Zaire, the survival of the Mobutu regime was dependent primarily on the structure of two formal government institutions: the Office of the Presidency and the Armed Forces. Yet, one of the most commonly cited traits of a neopatrimonial regime is the weakness of its government institutions. How then, do we explain the argument that the structural weaknesses of Zaire's government institutions in fact facilitated the survival of the Mobutu regime? This is the challenge of the next few paragraphs.

According to studies conducted by seasoned scholars on Zaire (Callaghy, 1984; Young and Turner, 1985; MacGaffey, 1987; Schatzberg, 1988), the survival of the Mobutu regime in Zaire was ensured through four formal government institutions: the MPR, the Political Bureau, the Office of the Presidency, and the Armed Forces. These institutions had the potential to wield tremendous political power, even if their credibility and competence were frequently questioned by the opposition forces. The formal institutions of the government, particularly the Armed Forces, were responsible for carrying out the President's orders to use repressive tactics against the opposition and the citizenry as needed. Accordingly, the fear of government repression prevented the opposition movement from actively engaging in Zairean politics.

The MPR national party was pervasive. It permeated all government structures and sectors of Zairean society. Operating more as a medium for propaganda than anything else, the MPR's "main activities consist[ed] of marches, mass rallies and communal (forced) labour, or salongo" (Callaghy, 1984; MacGaffey, 1987: 50). Eventually, as part of Mobutu's half-hearted reform measures, the MPR was transformed from a separate political institution into a mere extension of the civil administration, or Political Bureau. The Political Bureau was a huge government apparatus. A common practice of all African neopatrimonial regimes was the creation of a large bureaucracy to operate the patron-client networks that proliferated. However, the maintenance of a large bureaucracy was costly. As state resources dwindled, Zairean public officials grew more

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107Salongo, the term for labour in the Lingala language, included such jobs as the construction and maintenance of roads, state buildings, schools and hospitals, and most importantly, houses for Mobutu's elite officials; these tasks were supposedly created to improve the living conditions of the Zairean people. Instead, they improved the living conditions of the elite minority.
undisciplined, devising new ways to make money off the citizens through a complex system of *pot-de-vins* (bribes), red tape, and other sorts of *matabiche*.

The Office of the Presidency was the principal government institution through which Mobutu carried out his will for the Zairean state. The Office also controlled the coercive agents of the state. President Mobutu skillfully managed the power of Zaire's security forces. He "distributed the military power of the state among an overlapping network of military and paramilitary forces, each of which served under the personal leadership of one of his close collaborators" (in 'Zaire: Two Years...', 1992: 32). The security forces under the Mobutu regime represented the most palpable threat to political opposition and change.

The known security forces under Mobutu's government included the *Center National de Documentation* (CND, Zaire's version of the secret police), the *Garde Civile*, the *Gendarmerie Nationale*, the *Forces Armées Zaïroises* (FAZ), and Mobutu's infamous, highly-trained *Division Spéciale Présidentielle* (DSP). The security forces were assisted by smaller units belonging to civilian and military intelligence. Two such groups were the *Service Nationale d'Intelligence et de Protection* (SNIP) and the *Service d'Action et de Renseignements Militaires* (SARM). SNIP replaced the Belgian *sûreté*, a formidable intelligence force, of the colonial period. The leadership of these different branches of the security forces was given to Mobutu's closest associates and members of his ethnic group. The breakdown of Zaire's security forces based on ethnicity was a blatant confirmation of Crawford Young's argument: "The very nature of personal [dictatorship] led rulers to build armies according to an ethnic security map" (1994: 241). Mobutu's use of mercenaries was well-known. Not only were they used during the "Congo Crisis", but they were also brought in during the Shaba invasions of 1977 and 1978 and they would be brought in again in the 1990s.

The secret police, the intelligence agencies, and the DSP were perhaps the only semi-responsible coercive agents as they answered directly to the President. The gendarmerie and the army, as the lower echelons of the military pyramid, were mostly ineffective and uncontrollable, in part a reflection of their limited training, low pay, and mass numbers. The FAZ descended from the *Force Publique* of the colonial days in the Congo. Like the former military organisation, the FAZ retained its image as a separate and often repressive group of soldiers, called upon "to deal with the many ethnic disturbances, secessionist efforts, and student riots of the 1960s" (Keefe, 1979: 255). The

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108 For an excellent breakdown of the security forces - their origins, leaders, and functions - under Mobutu, see the special report published by *Africa Watch* entitled "Zaire: Two Years without Transition." (1992: 33-37).
FAZ soldiers' ability to intimidate and destroy personal property and security was legendary. The army became synonymous with the enemy for Zaireans, especially those caught up in the opposition movement and public protests. Even for those who remained uninvolved, intense dislike of the army had arisen due to its indiscriminate harassment and tendency to run "roughshod" through the country in blatant disregard of citizens' rights and property.

2.5.2: The nature of repression in the Mobutu regime.
In a regime characterised by neopatrimonial institutions and policies, it is often the case that the leader comes from a military background to take office through a coup, an internal war, or some other revolutionary type of activity. It is therefore unsurprising that Mobutu first appeared in the early 1960s as an army general. Not only was his close affiliation with military structures a determining factor in the outcome of the political struggles of the Congo Crisis, but his military background also guaranteed the heavy involvement of the armed forces in all political matters during the years of his rule. Even though Mobutu abandoned his military rank and uniform so as to instill a sense of legitimacy in his leadership, he indiscriminately used the Zairean armed troops to consolidate his power base during his presidency. Over the years, tens of thousands of Zaireans were killed, subjected to torture, arrest, arbitrary detention, and forced into exile.

The level of government repression is never a straightforward issue, nor is it a simple matter of degree. Rather, the ability and/or willingness of the government to repress stems from several factors. During the first two decades of the Mobutu regime, repression was best understood as a response by the government to the slightest challenge from any oppositional elements within Zairean society. Not only did the regime have access to the necessary resources needed to sustain the army, but given the neopatrimonial nature of government institutions in Zaire, the Mobutu regime disabled contending forces from accessing any coercive resources, either by removing their leaders, violently interrupting public political rallies, and so forth. For instance, the ban on political activity outside the structure of the MPR forced contending groups into exile in the 1970s. Exiled groups clearly did not have routine access to government-controlled resources. The perceived threat of attack against the regime was therefore minimal.

The Mobutu regime was so paranoid of potential opposition that it often reacted violently to the most innocent gatherings of individuals, say at a soccer field or in a public square. This reaction served to stimulate rather than deter support for the opposition. David Mason observes that, "If in response to unabated mass support for political opposition the regime escalates its repressive activity, this violence will eventually become more indiscriminate with respect to both the selection of targets and the level of violence applied" (1990: 33). In Zaire, the situation resembled a "Catch-
Government repression was high and it stimulated support for the opposition. Support for the opposition was so high because of the indiscriminate use of repressive violence on the Zairean masses.

The scope and intensity of government repressive violence is therefore crucial to the development of opposition groups, their interaction, and the levels of popular support they are able to achieve. In Zaire, the choice between supporting the Mobutu regime or the opposition movement, or remaining uninvolved was dependent upon the perceived costs and benefits of each option (Mason, 1990: 41). When Zaireans engaged in political protest that turned violent, it was usually sporadic and brief, because they did not have the organisation nor resources to sustain longer intervals of violence. Thus, political violence by opposition forces was more spontaneous than organised, and always in response to government-initiated violence. In fact, many Zaireans chose to remain uninvolved in politics.

On the one hand, they were less prone to join one of the oppositional groups out of fear that the government would react violently, which it did upon most occasions. Collaboration with oppositional groups was dangerous and often meant arrest, torture, and even death. On the other hand, supporting the government was not an appropriate or desirable response in light of its authoritarian structure and the whimsical nature of the President. Unfortunately, not everyone shared the desire for political change, nor were they willing to sacrifice their lives to push for change. Most Zaireans had too much to contend with in meeting their basic needs for survival. They were only concerned with political agendas - of either government or oppositional groups - insofar as they were directly affected. Nor were many Zaireans intellectually drawn to any particular set of ideas, given that education had never been a priority of Mobutu's social policy agenda. This, of course, was an inherited policy from the colonial regime...another neopatrimonial trait that served the interests of the patron at the expense of his "children". The "children" had to survive without le patron to assist them. They did this through the development of an informal economy in Zaire.

2.5.3: Zaire's informal economy.\textsuperscript{109}

The role of civil society in African regime transition is undermined in current studies of regime transition. An improvement would be to adopt an approach that assesses the inclusive range of civil society groups, especially in their capacity to act as alternative institutions of political nature

\textsuperscript{109}Other terms are used to refer to the informal economy in Zaire. They include: the parallel economy, the second economy, and the underground economy. In essence, they all mean the "black market".
directly opposed to the failed governmental institutions. As Sklar rightly observes, "a huge gap presently exists in the literature on the roles and relevance of nonelites" (1991: 301). Typically, the response of the African masses to their governments has been the exit option due to the nature of the regime as a hostile force.

In the words of esteemed political analyst Crawford Young, "Economic survival [was] sought outside the public realm in the parallel or underground economy" (1984: 82). The vibrant informal economy in Zaire owed its existence to the oppressive nature of the Mobutu regime and the inefficiencies of government institutions to manage the economy. In one sense, the informal economy that developed in Zaire to deal with the weakness of the regime's socioeconomic structures in fact facilitated the regime's survival. How so? The Zairean masses endured extreme socioeconomic hardships with little or no political voice. Janet MacGaffey, one of the foremost scholars of Zairean political economy, observes that the Zairean people have confronted "seemingly insurmountable problems of survival...by taking matters into their own hands and organising an unofficial economy and other parallel social institutions to offset the failure of official ones" (1992: 243). With the citizenry dependent upon the informal economy for their basic survival needs, the Mobutu regime could concentrate on maintaining its coercive resources and increasing the wealth of the ruling elite, both of which would ensure a longer political life for Mobutu and his close associates.

MacGaffey also argues that, contrary to evidence suggesting otherwise in other African countries, the informal economy in Zaire was a political phenomenon. It represented initiatives taken from below to influence the political situation above at the levels of government. In a parallel, yet more pessimist view, Nzongola (1994a) points out that, due to the strength of the Zairean informal economy, the impetus behind a direct, revolutionary attack upon the Mobutu regime had diminished because the people never reached a point at which survival was no longer a guarantee. They could always rely on the informal economy to meet their needs. In other words, due to their preoccupation with economic survival; the Zairean masses "have been incapable of making their own revolution" (1994a: 2). Thus, not only did the informal economy in Zaire provide the masses with various mechanisms to survive, but it also gave the Mobutu regime a safety net with which to maintain its political power. Schatzberg argues that recourse to violent oppositional tactics for the purpose of influencing the regime in power were inhibited because of the huge amounts of energy needed simply to survive (1988: 140-141).

For the most comprehensive analysis of the informal economy in Zaire, and a thorough review of the economic crisis in general, see the two book studies by MACGAFFEY (1987; 1991).
2.5.4: International support for the Mobutu government.

While the emphasis in this thesis is on domestic factors that influence Zaire's political environment, the relevance of the international context cannot be ignored. Credit should be given to Western governments, in particular the American, Belgian, and French - otherwise known as the "troika" in Zairean circles - for their political, economic, and military support of the Mobutu regime from its inception in 1965 until the mid-1980s. In particular, some comment should be made regarding the vital interests that the United States had in Zaire as a Western ally. The Cold War had made Africa a battleground for the bipolar forces of the United States and the Soviet Union. Not only did several African countries, especially Zaire, have valuable strategic minerals needed for the production of nuclear weaponry, but these countries could provide support and access to the opposing forces. The objective of the American government was to stop Communism from spreading. It needed allies in Africa, and Mobutu was an outspoken, staunch anti-Communist. Was it a coincidence, then, that one of the most mineral-rich African countries also happened to be pro-West or were there motivating forces behind Mobutu's position as a Western ally?

This is a serious question to ponder though unfortunately, not in this thesis. The Mobutu regime was propped up by the American government, of that there is no doubt. Neither is the role of the CIA in enabling Mobutu to rise to power open to debate. The facts are evident. Zaire's mineral wealth has certainly explained the predominant international interest in the politics of the country. Economic interests have been at the top of Western governments' foreign policy agenda in Zaire since the days of colonialism. What is more pertinent to this study is that over the years, the Mobutu regime isolated itself from its neighbours by allowing American covert operations to launch their fight against Communism, for example in Angola or the Sudan, through connections in Zaire. Mobutu counted on the support of the United States. So when the Cold War ended and American interests declined, the Mobutu regime found itself surrounded by several unfriendly neighbours, who were more than happy to offer their support to the Zairean opposition movement to overthrow the Mobutu regime.

As the mid-1980s approached, allegations of economic mismanagement, corruption, and human rights violations under the Mobutu regime reached the international community. The Western troika clamped down on foreign assistance to Zaire. For example, Belgium presented a bilateral aid package in 1987 with stringent conditionality clauses demanding that Mobutu improve the poor human rights record in Zaire. Likewise, by the end of the 1980s, the American government no

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111By the end of the 1980s, Western support for the Mobutu regime had declined considerably. Foreign governments could not longer overlook the massive corruption of the government, nor the dismal record of human rights abuses by the Mobutu government.
longer needed Mobutu to act as strategic buffer for their military commitments in Angola.\textsuperscript{112} France, too, was preoccupied with other interests in its former colonies. In essence, the Western governments, secure in the realisation that their economic interests in Zaire were no longer at stake with the end of the Cold War, adopted a policy of abandonment, turning their backs on Zairean political culture and the burgeoning economic and political crises. The repercussions of waning Western support and interest in Zairean political and economic affairs only served to usher in more desperate and violent attempts at political change by the Zairean masses.

David Gould makes a useful observation that aptly summarises the ideas of this section. It bears testimony to the changes that gave rise to the Zairean crisis of the 1990s. Gould contends that all interested parties, commentators, journalists, politicians, and academics alike, concur that,

Zaire is in deep trouble as it faces mounting bankruptcy, near-total breakdown of vital services, military incompetence and repression, mass impoverishment, the increasing unpopularity of the regime, and increased dependence on foreign creditors, technicians, and soldiers. While there is broad agreement as to the symptoms of the Zairean crisis, however, there is little consensus on the causes (1980: Preface: xii).

The symptoms of the Zairean crisis were illustrated throughout this chapter. Formal political institutions had deteriorated to such an extent that they no longer served the people. The Mobutu regime - as pervasive, corrupt, oppressive, and inefficient - was unable to meet the socioeconomic and political needs of its population. By the end of the 1980s, Mobutu's policy of seeing "first to [his] own preservation" was no longer viable in light of the pending political crises (Schatzberg, 1988: 143). Life in Zaire was characterised by massive poverty, a deterioration of the economic infrastructure, an underdeveloped and misguided opposition movement, as well as violent injustices engendered by an abusive authoritarian regime. Consequently, these circumstances had compromised any optimism for a peaceful solution to Zaire's political problems and opportunities for regime change. As Gould points out, though, the causes of the Zairean crisis are perhaps more crucial to an understanding of the crisis itself than are the symptoms. In the next chapter, I will examine causes and conditions, based on the historical background that we now have, and with the objective in mind to explain how regime transition and change came about in the 1990s.

For the time-being, I have presented on the following page a modified version of Tilly's polity model as it would appear in Zaire prior to 1990. Compared to the theoretical model in the first

\textsuperscript{112}American interests in the civil war in Angola were realised with the assistance of the Mobutu government. Mobutu acted as a buffer in the shipment of armaments to Jonas Savimbi's rebel group, UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola). For more information, see MCCORMICK (1994).
chapter (Fig. 2), slight differences in the practical application should be noted. For example, within the Zairean polity, there were no organised opposition members per se. Instead, the member groups located within the polity comprised various segments of the population with direct ties to Mobutu's ethnic group and region. In other words, member groups were the clients to Mobutu's patronage system of government. Outside the Zairean polity were what could be called the (illegal) challenger groups. However, they did not present a real challenge to the Mobutu regime. In fact, none of the groups possessed the necessary resources with which to viably compete against the regime for political power. The internal opposition groups were active throughout both stages of the polity. They organised protests and rallies and were regularly confronted by Mobutu's repressive army. But formal oppositional activity was most prominent in the 1980s. The external groups, on the other hand, were active mostly during the 1960s and 1970s.

Consider the schematic breakdown below:

The polity model in Zaire, prior to 1990

![Diagram of the Zairean polity model]

*Figure 3: The Zairean polity, adapted from Tilly's polity model (1978: 53).*
2.6: Concluding comments.

This chapter has provided a condensed historical background to politics in Zaire from the colonial era through independence in 1960 to the decades of the Mobutu regime prior to 1990. From a brief analysis of Zaire's colonial legacy to an examination of events in the Congo Crisis; from the political optimism of the late 1960s to the institutionalisation of Mobutu's neopatrimonial regime in the 1970s; and finally, from an emerging, fragile opposition movement in the 1980s to a fervent, widespread anti-Mobutu sentiment, this chapter has attempted to link the structural heritage of neopatrimonialism with a practical application of the polity model of group interaction in Zaire.

The nature of the Mobutu regime was exposed little by little through discussions of the colonial era and the early years of independence known as the "Congo Crisis". The effects of colonial policy and the institutions of patrimonial authority paved the way for an authoritarian regime to emerge under the leadership of Mobutu in 1965. President Mobutu embarked on a path that would consolidate his political power in Zaire through the implementation of several policies - for example, l'authenticité and Zaïreanisation - that would reflect the neopatrimonial nature of his regime. The legacy of colonialism had bestowed to the Mobutu regime the structural formations of neopatrimonialism. In an environment that encouraged minimal political participation and even less political competition, the opportunities for political change were limited.

The polity model contrasted the dominance of the Mobutu regime with the weakness of the opposition forces. It related opposition groups to the Mobutu regime via struggles not so much for ultimate political power, but simply for a political voice and opportunity to act in contention against the dictatorial policies of the government. The important notion to consider was that the Zaïrean people no longer perceived the Mobutu regime as an answer to their political problems. On the contrary, the regime and its government structures had become an obstacle to political change. Mobutu had lost his legitimacy as a leader; one Zaïrean remarked that there was an urgent need to "drive out this greatest of African dictators - the real obstacle to the process of [political] change" (quoted in Africa Research Bulletin, 1991: 9728).

At the same time, though, the dismal economic and political landscape had reduced the authority of President Mobutu's personal regime, which enabled the development of new opportunities for access to resources and political power in the late 1980s (Goldstone, 1991: 43). All these divergent factors converged to exacerbate tensions and gave rise to the emergence of viable, alternative political organisations in the 1990s. Taking these insights into account will facilitate an analysis in
the next chapter of the causes, conditions, actors and events that enabled the transition process to unfold.

In bringing this chapter to a close, we must ask ourselves: what has the experience of Zaire's political past meant in terms of the country's political future? As one analyst, I. William Zartman, concludes, the Zaire of 1990 is a country in which "[o]rder and power...are up for grabs. These ups and downs of power then vie with central attempts to reconstitute authority. For a period, the state itself, as a legitimate, functioning order, is gone. The collapsing state contracts, isolates itself, [and] retreats" (1995: 1; 7). In retrospective analysis, do we not approach regime transition and change by examining the root causes and crises? Clearly, Zaire was poised to enter a new phase of politics. The desire for political transition was widespread, and the potential for a regime change that replaced the "old" with the "new" was never stronger than at any other time in Zaire's short, tumultuous history.
CHAPTER 3: THE "TRANSITION" YEARS IN MOTION:
An analysis of the dynamics that shaped political processes of change in the 1990s.

3.0: Introductory comments.

The winds of political change that had taken Eastern Europe by storm in the late 1980s turned south towards Africa. African countries across the continent, especially those under authoritarian forms of government, were subject to unwavering pressures for political and economic reform. The year 1990 marked a watershed for African politics much as did the "year of independence" from colonialism in 1960. The quest for political transitions to more democratic regimes flourished in all but a half dozen or so African states. Zaire belonged to the majority captured in the winds of political change.

By the end of the 1980s, Zaire was characterised as a "land of unending and continuing crisis" (Schatzberg, 1988: 3). The Zairian political and economic crises - engendered by a repressive dictatorship under President Mobutu - had assumed qualities conducive to a political environment of change and violence. As to the change, transitional processes were perceived as the best solution to transformation of the institutional and structural elements of the political regime. In order to decrease the levels of political violence and repression, the solution that received the most support called for a complete regime change. The first step needed to accomplish these two goals was an opening to the politics of the Mobutu regime. This in turn would enable processes of transition and group mobilisation to appear and take root in Zaire's political arena.

With that in mind, this chapter uses the historical-political context review provided in Chapter 2 to focus on an examination of the political conditions and dynamics of regime transition as it unfolded in Zaire in the 1990s. In brief, two related sets of issues embodied in a structured contingency approach were developed in the last chapter. In the first place, the political structures and nature of the contemporary Mobutu regime were linked to the legacy of patrimonialism practiced in the colonial regime. In other words, neopatrimonialism was the core feature of Zairian politics and determined all political behaviours and actions. The second set of issues related to the patterns of political group interaction in Zaire's first three decades of independence. The interaction between groups and individuals in the Zairian polity were integral to the likelihood, nature, and extent of attempts to work within and/or transform Zaire's political arena.
As I have argued throughout, this thesis proposes to demonstrate how the neopatrimonial nature of the Mobutu regime influenced the processes of political transition and determined the odds that regime change would occur. The ways in which this has been done include capitalising on selected parts of group-conflict theory that explore the dynamics of group interaction and mobilisation. Subsequently, it links these ideas to the structural precedents of neopatrimonial politics in Zaire. Put differently, one of the central insights of this thesis concerns the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the political behaviour of groups as an independent force and the inherited traditions and structures of neopatrimonialism.

The chapter plan has three broad objectives. The first is to assess the political landscape in the 1990s through an examination of the interactions between significant groups in their struggles for political power and transformation. An assessment of the political causes and conditions that created a situation in which processes of transition were made possible constitutes the second objective. The third comprises an analysis of two defining features of this period: (a) widespread participation and competition in politics, and (b) high levels of political violence. To further assist the organisation of this chapter, several questions arise that will facilitate the examination of the process of regime transition in Zaire:

1. How did the neopatrimonial nature of the Mobutu regime affect the onset of regime transition in Zaire?
2. What causes and conditions encouraged the process of regime transition?
3. Why did the Mobutu regime accede to the demands of the Zaïrean opposition/masses?
4. How did the transitional process unfold?
5. Were the structures of government power altered in any way in the early 1990s?
6. What factors determined whether the opposition coalition was successful as an agent of political change?

Rather than attempt a breakdown of the various phases of transition as outlined in Chapter 1 (1.3.3), I will organise the discussion around the political factors and characteristics inherent to the unfolding transition in the neopatrimonial context of the Mobutu regime. The reason behind this is obvious: the general phases of transition overlap and are therefore difficult to sequence. Nonetheless, the major events that occur in Zaïre's political setting will be chronologically explained so that a sense of the interactive nature and development of the transition process is readily apparent. The first section addresses some general contextual themes, including the crisis of political legitimacy, the birth of economic protests, and the popular demands made to the Mobutu government to do something to alleviate the problems. The initial responses of the government are also explored. In the second section, the formation of an opposition bloc - the Union Sacrée - is
assessed along with its insistence that a national conference be convened to discuss and implement the transition process. The increased application of political protest, violence, and government repression are developed against this background of interactive group struggles in the changing Zairean polity.

Next, an analysis of the role of the national conference in the unfolding transitional process constitutes one part of the third section. Another part will reveal the neopatrimonial nature of the Mobutu regime in its manipulation of repression and violence towards the national conference, the opposition forces and the Zairean masses respectively. The fourth section will examine the dissolution of the national conference and the ensuing political stalemate between government forces and the opposition coalition. From the stalemate arose parallel governments. According to the Mobutu regime, the idea of dual power provided further justification for governmental repression and violence against the Zairean masses. Following the fourth section, I will assess the failure of the Union Sacrée to negotiate regime transition, the breakdown of relations between the government and the opposition, and the consequent measures taken to continue the transitional process. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the regional environment of instability and the impact of external factors on the political transition process in Zaire.

This chapter covers a lot of material. Therefore, before we proceed, a brief review of the process of regime transition is in order. In essence, regime transition refers to a shift from one regime to another. It is depicted as "a struggle between competing political forces over the rules of the political game and for the resources with which the game is played" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 10). The process typically begins with popular protests against economic and political crises, is followed by government-initiated reforms (genuine or otherwise), then elections, and finally ends with the installation of a new regime. We should also refamiliarise ourselves with the characteristics of political transitions in neopatrimonial regimes. Chapter 1 argued that there were five basic characteristics which set transitional experiences in African neopatrimonial regimes apart from transitions in other types of regimes. According to Bratton and van de Walle’s formulation, it is the following characteristics of transitions in neopatrimonial regimes that make the African experience of political change unique: (a) popular pressures for political change instigate the process of transition, (b) the incumbent leader’s role in the process is crucial to its

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113 Although the thesis does not engage in comparative analysis, the research revealed that recent literature compares transitional processes in Europe, Latin America, and Africa. It was discovered that the institutionalisation of neopatrimonialism in African countries in fact sets their transitional experiences apart from those in Europe and Latin America, where pacted transitions are more popular. For further discussion, see O’DONNELL and SCHMITTER (1986), BALOYRA (1987), MALLOY and SELOGSON (1987), and PASTOR (1989).
outcome, (c) patron-client relations break down, fracturing the elite ruling class, (d) the opposition is joined by elements of the middle-class (i.e. the intellectual and diaspora communities as well as businessmen and professionals), and (e) the establishment of new rules of the political game becomes the main objective during the transition.\textsuperscript{114} With these ideas fresh in our minds, we shall proceed to the first section.

3.1: Recourse to political change in Zaire.

Most scholars of Zaire studies confirm the conclusive evidence that widespread decay had permeated the Zairian state by the end of the 1980s (Young and Turner, 1985; Callaghy, 1984; Lemarchand, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1986; Weiss, 1995). With the Mobutu regime in its fourth decade of rule, the 1990s experienced a series of events which further alienated the government, introduced new contending groups, stirred public opinion, and precipitated the onslaught of regime change. The "Transition" years, from 1990 - 1996, were anything but peaceful; instead, violent confrontations between government forces and the local opposition groups were the norm.\textsuperscript{115} Contention for political power emerged and pounded relentlessly upon the government, first with the emergence of the opposition bloc and then with the appearance of the \textit{Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaire} (AFDL) in 1996.

This section explores the initial phases of regime transition in Zaire, beginning with the identification of a crisis of political legitimacy and the birth of economic protests and pressure to implement reform measures. The response of the Mobutu regime to public cries for its removal was the dissolution of the Second Republic and an opening to multiparty politics. The neopatrimonial nature of the Mobutu regime determined in part the dynamics of the unfolding transition. In particular, the notion that the President's role is critical to the process is discussed. Mobutu reluctantly acquiesced to the popular demands for political change, however he had no intention of resigning his role as the primary player in the events that took place. What, in essence, occurred during the initial phases of the transition process was a marked transformation of the existing political environment.

Before I proceed, I would like to discuss what arguably is a unique characteristic of the transitional experience in Zaire - one that in fact sets it apart from other transitions in African neopatrimonial

\textsuperscript{114}For further discussion, see BRATTON and \textsc{van de Walle} (1997: 82-89).

\textsuperscript{115}The term "Transition" is widely used by political analysts of Zaire to characterise the first half of the 1990s. As the literature suggests, from 1990 onwards, a transitional process of politics was taking place - transitional in that the dissolution of the Second Republic in April 1990 had not been immediately replaced with the Third Republic, and therefore Zaire was theoretically "in transition".
regimes. An understanding of the implications of this argument will only become clear as the chapter progresses. Even so, in anticipation of the outcome of regime transition in Zaire it has already been noted that the transition process was repeatedly blocked by the Mobutu regime. Moreover, the Union Sacrée, in its capacity as a political agent of change, ultimately failed to meet its main objective: regime change. Yet, outside the boundaries of transition politics, regime change did eventually come about in Zaire. What was so remarkable about the transition experience in Zaire was that the challenger group that achieved regime change had been a non-player in the transitional process. In fact, the AFDL coalition of political groups had never been mentioned in studies of the power struggles that characterised the first six years of the transition period.

In this chapter and the next, it will also become apparent that what the opposition bloc lacked, the AFDL coalition had, and this enabled the latter group to enforce regime change. In a discussion of the changing dynamics of a polity, Charles Tilly observes that an emerging group can often tip the scales in favour of drastic political change. In his words, "when contenders not holding membership in the existing polity mobilise into a bloc [that] successfully exert[s] control over some portion of the government...", this bloc has the potential capacity to completely transform the political environment (1978: 192). While I do not want to jump ahead in these discussions, the emergence of a group with enough resources and organisation to actively compete against and overthrow the Mobutu regime had not been predicted, nor expected by the Zairean masses, political analysts, and certainly not by the contending opposition groups that formed the Union Sacrée.

Even so, another related fact cannot be overlooked: the opposition coalition that emerged in 1990 set the groundwork for regime change through years of politicking with the government in the transition process, competing for power and resources, and working around obstacles placed in its way. While I can only speculate, the AFDL coalition would probably not have achieved successful regime change as rapidly as it did without the preliminary work and widespread support of the opposition coalition. On that positive note, we now address the beginning of the 'Transition' years.

3.1.1: President Mobutu tours Zaire.

In 1990, President Mobutu toured the country, soliciting "national consultations" that encouraged the Zairean people to come forward with ideas, comments and criticisms of the government, in addition to possible solutions to Zaire's political and economic woes (Lemarchand, 1992a; 1992b; Leslie, 1993; Nzongola, 1994a). Mobutu was reportedly unnerved at the widespread criticism which essentially said the problem "...est vous, Citoyen le Président" (translated: "is you, Citizen President") (Nzongola, 1994a: 23). The solution: among other things, the Zairean people repeatedly called for Mobutu's resignation and subsequent elections for the installation of a new government.
President Mobutu, however, had no intentions of resigning from his position of power. Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja comments, "[W]e are not dealing here with a normal type of regime but with a [neopatrimonial] kleptocracy bent on promoting its narrow group interests to the detriment of the general welfare" of Zairean citizens (1994a: 23). The government's reaction to this widespread negative response was addressed in a speech that Mobutu gave on April 24, 1990 in which he announced the abolition of his single-party dictatorship and a one-year transition to multiparty democracy.

In an essay on African attitudes towards transition processes and democratisation, Jácques-Mariel Nzouankeu (1991) gives a telling summary of the political situation in Zaire at the time of Mobutu's speech. He observes that:

When the leadership senses that dissension is mounting and that a trial of strength with the masses is imminent, it takes the initiative and grants promises of reform. This way of proceeding is ambivalent, as it may either reflect a genuine desire to democratise the regime, or on the contrary, constitute a political stratagem designed to defuse the crisis, thereby enabling the regime in power to gain a respite and fashion new instruments to extend its political domination (379).

The Zairean political regime, caught in a web of growing anti-Mobutu sentiment and opposition, attempted to demonstrate its willingness to engage in political reform with the announcement that the President made to end the single-party state. Mobutu acknowledged that, given the neopatrimonial nature of his regime, he was vulnerable to personal attempts to remove him from power. Moreover, his regime was more susceptible than other types of regimes (military oligarchies and one-party states) to collapse under the pressure of popular protests (Huntington, 1991: 41-7). Even so, was the desire to liberalise and democratise genuine? That is doubtful. After all, "a dictator cannot be expected to become a democrat overnight", nor even after months of transitional change (Nzongola, 1994c: 221). Let us recall that the defining feature of Zaire's neopatrimonial regime was Mobutu himself. In the words of Bratton and van de Walle, "[T]he prospect of [transition] depends more on the personality, management skills, and governing institutions of the incumbent ruler" (1997: 87). In other words, the opportunities that Zairean opposition groups had to transform the structures of political power and secure access to government-controlled resources seriously depended on the role of President Mobutu throughout the entire process of transition.

In any case, a major development instigated with the dissolution of the Second Republic in favour of a multiparty system was the flourishing of opposition groups. For obvious reasons, the presidential decision to dissolve single-party rule could not take effect immediately. Instead, Mobutu announced that there would be a period of transition during which the political institutions
and structures of the regime would undergo reform. This transition to the "Third Republic" was allegedly designed to bring with it political freedom for all Zaireans. It was also intended to initiate the process of constitutional reform, the dismantling of the MPR institutions, the depoliticisation of the army and security forces, and plans for open elections within two years (Aphane and Cornwell, 1993: 2). President Mobutu even agreed to resign as head of the MPR and publicly announced that he would act only as 'referee' in the transitional political process.

These plans for action on the part of the Mobutu government were intended as only that; they represented nothing more than a manipulative attempt to stay in power and maintain the neopatrimonial institutions that gave Mobutu access to state resources. Studies of transitions in neopatrimonial regimes have shown that "reforms introduced by leaders under popular pressure [were generally] insincere, hurried, merely tactical, and subject to reversal as soon as pressure was released... unless the incumbents "...were pressured persistently...by tenacious opposition-led protest movements" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 185). Still, for theoretical purposes and despite Mobutu's vrai political intentions, a process of liberalisation was set in motion with his infamous speech. The Second Republic of Zaire had been dissolved; the transition process had begun, instigated and assisted by political and economic crises, to which we now turn.

3.1.2: A crisis of political legitimacy.

Already by the 1980s, the Mobutu regime and sole party (MPR) had lost political legitimacy in the eyes of the people. Winsome Leslie notes with irony that, "To the [Zairean] man in the street, the party's acronym (MPR) mean[tt] mourir pour rien (to die for nothing), an indication of the blame placed on the regime" (1993: 49). Political legitimacy was rooted in economics. No longer did Zairean citizens have faith in the ability of the Mobutu government to solve basic problems, such as ensuring the supply of food to cities, building housing projects in the over-crowded urban centers, maintaining order and security, and so forth. The neopatrimonial nature of the Mobutu regime encouraged patron-client relations that in turn eroded a sense of loyalty to institutions of political authority. Public funds and aid had been diverted into the pockets of Mobutu and his entourage. The average Zairean lived in poverty, the economy declined and resources dwindled, while the ruling elite became richer and richer.

Unsurprisingly, it was only a matter of time before economic duress, mass discontent and frustration took on political overtones as Zaireans blamed their material hardships on the mismanagement and corruption of the Mobutu government and its leaders. "Populations rarely
remain passive in the face of political abuse or worsening life conditions (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 100-101).\textsuperscript{116} The late Claude Ake (1993) aptly observed:

The foundations upon which Africa's democracy movement is based is the bitter disappointment of independence and post-independence plans - the development project being a prime example. Poor leadership and structural constraints have turned the high expectations of independence into painful disappointment. ...[T]he politics of the present leadership, far from offering any prospect of relief from underdevelopment, has deepened it immensely (239-240).

More often than not, attempts to access the dwindling pot of state resources controlled by the government instigated violent repression of the Zairean masses. The lack of political legitimacy meant that the Mobutu regime had to rely more and more on coercion and patron-client relations. All in all, legitimacy was compromised in the face of blatant political violence and injustice, thus destroying Mobutu's ability to exercise control over the entire polity and its inner workings.

3.1.3: Mass pressure for multiparty politics achieved a measure of success.

Discussions in the last chapter revealed that every group that had challenged the Mobutu government prior to 1990 was systematically refused access to political power. More importantly, Mobutu had often used whatever means available to destroy the group altogether. Neopatrimonial regimes tolerate limited amounts of political competition. From the time Mobutu took office in 1965, his government had enforced a ban on all political activity outside the realm of the national party, the Mouvement Populaire de la R\'evolution (MPR). To ensure political opposition did not develop extensively, the regime was more than willing to use its coercive means to maintain political order. Of equal import was the existence of clientelist networks that had sustained Mobutu's authority in the 1970s and 1980s. The privileges gained through patronage were closely guarded by Mobutu and his government agents. Not only had the patrons come to depend upon these ties, but the clients who were given favours in exchange for their loyalty to Mobutu were reluctant to have the political forum opened to competitive group interaction.\textsuperscript{117}

Nonetheless, Mobutu's 1990 speech ending single-party rule encouraged the birth of new political groups. A number of factors worked together to explain why these groups emerged and proliferated. These factors include, but are not limited to the opening of the political arena to multiparty politics. This was due in part to a weakening of the Mobutu regime's coercive strength.

\textsuperscript{116}Ted Robert Gurr (1970) is the leading theorist of the role that discontent and frustration play in politics, his approach to explanations of revolution and regime change fall under the rubric of aggregate-psychological theories. See his works for further discussion.

\textsuperscript{117}The response of the "clientelist" elites to multiparty politics and the opposition coalition will be further explored in an upcoming section.
and therefore its ability to repress. Other factors included a decrease in the resources available to the government, fractures within the elite ruling class, economic crises, the perceived illegitimacy of President Mobutu and his government, and increased levels of mass discontent and frustration. Likewise, trends such as population growth, price-inflation, ethnic conflict, urbanisation, capitalism, and industrialisation each had their peculiar influence upon the appearance and nature of opposition groups. Although Tilly argues that "they do so indirectly, by shaping the potential contenders for power, transforming the techniques of governmental control, and shifting the resources available to contenders and governments" (1973: 447). These factors, taken together, encouraged the rapid growth of the opposition bloc. The Mobutu regime now faced the challenge of how best to respond to the opposition and the transition process without relinquishing its power and authority.

3.1.4: The Mobutu government's initial response to the rise of political opposition.

The following section addresses the government's initial response to the overwhelming political participation and competition created with the acceptance of multiparty politics. In a manner reflective of past reform initiatives and political strategy, the Mobutu regime applied a mixture of rewards, compromise and repression. The initial response of the Mobutu government to the changing political environment was shaped not only by the nature of the demands for reform, but more importantly, by the availability of state resources (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 103). As a result, the choice of responses include: threat (repression), toleration, or rewards (facilitation). Lemarchand concurs in his argument that African neopatrimonial leaders, especially Mobutu, adopt several strategies aimed at thwarting the attempts of the opposition to liberalise the polity, involving "a variable mix of carrots and sticks" (1992b: 181).

Like other neopatrimonial African leaders who had engaged in transitional processes (Niger, Bénin, Togo), President Mobutu confronted the political and socio-economic problems plaguing Zaire by ignoring them, as long as they did not directly affect the regime's control over the resources and political power. However, one of the trademarks of the regime was the willingness and consistency with which Mobutu condoned the use of the "stick". In other words, when the government (re)acted, the choice method was political repression instead of reform. In a study of political repression, David Mason argues that regimes that have been successful in violently suppressing opposition in the past will continue and in fact, increase their use of coercive tactics as threats to their power increase (1990: 41).118

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118See MASON (1990) for an account of the indigenous factors that affect revolutionary change and violence.
In this particular circumstance, however, the Mobutu government attempted a different approach. Wisened to the international donor policy that essentially tied foreign aid to good government behaviour, Mobutu conceded that perhaps repression was not the best method to employ in this new game of politics. Instead, Mobutu first acquiesced to the demands of the opposition with a mixture of "carrots" (rewards) and compromise. In his view, the announcement to end single-party rule and begin the transition to a multiparty system was considered a reward; the government had facilitated the people's demands. In a similar manner, when Mobutu agreed to step down as head of the MPR, he boasted of his commitment to compromise.  

In effect, he had merely tolerated the public call for his resignation. The classic political theorist, Alexis de Tocqueville, declared long ago in *The Ancien Régime* (1856) that the opportunity for regime transition and change "occurs most often when a nation has accepted...the most crushing laws, [and] rejects them at the very moment when their load is being lightened.... Usually the most dangerous time for a bad government is when it attempts to reform itself" (quoted in Eckstein, 1980: 155).

In simpler terms, the Mobutu regime relaxed the restrictions placed on political freedoms and competition, which in turn allowed for the possibility of failure and collapse of the government institutions. What de Tocqueville predicted might happen when a bad government attempts to reform itself actually became reality in the case of Zaire. O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), whose accounts of political regime transition in Latin America are compiled in a 4-volume book study, confirm: "Once the government signals that it is lowering the costs for engaging in collective action...[then] former political identities re-emerge and others appear...to expand, beyond anyone's expectations, the public spaces the incumbent rulers decided to tolerate at the beginning of the transition" (quoted in Bratton, 1994: 62-3). The greatest challenge to Mobutu's rule, therefore, was likely to come from the emerging political groups that Mobutu had allowed into the political arena in the first place.

On the one hand, the Mobutu regime demonstrated its willingness (albeit limited) to engage in political reform by dissolving the single-party government system. The incumbent's prowess at manipulating circumstances to conform to his political agenda was never more evident than in the decision to introduce multipartyism in Zaire. On the other hand, the Zairean people had heard promises of political reform from the Mobutu regime for decades. For example, upon more than one occasion, Mobutu had announced plans to hold elections. These plans were either forfeited, the

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119 Less than a year after this announcement, Mobutu resumed his position as leader of the MPR.

120 De Tocqueville's manuscript, *The Ancien Régime* (1856), was eventually translated; see DE TOCQUEVILLE (1955).
elections were rigged, or Mobutu saw to the removal of all political opponents. In more than 25 years as President, only three elections were actually held; in all three elections, he averaged 99.1 percent of the vote. There were no other contenders; Mobutu was the sole candidate.

Another example of Mobutu's political deception occurred in the early 1980s when the government announced amnesty for political exiles that had fled the country. Those who returned were often placed under house arrest or co-opted into Mobutu's government, as was Kamitatu, a well-known political dissident who returned to Zaire and joined Mobutu's government. Ngufa Karl-I-Bond represents another classic example of a political exile who returned to Zaire in the early 1990s and actually became one of several Mobutu-appointed prime ministers during the transitional period. It is no surprise, then, that the false promises Mobutu made throughout his rule did not inspire faith or loyalty in the government. If anything, they resulted in nothing save sustained government brutality and increased alienation of the Zairean masses from the political regime.

Unsurprisingly, then, Mobutu's apparent voile face did not quell popular skepticism altogether. Was the Zairean president seeking only to reduce and pacify internal and external pressures for political reform in order to remain in power and control government access to foreign assistance? Nzongola draws attention to Mobutu's Machiavellian nature when he argues that, "Mobutu never makes concessions without figuring out how he will subvert their intended results in a manner consistent with his retaining effective control. [H]e would use terror, money and ethnicity to divide and weaken the opposition to his advantage", just as he would use carrots and compromise (1994a: 10). Tilly (1978) concurs that this type of political behaviour is a regular feature of repressive governments. The Mobutu government acted as any other dictatorship would: it attempted to reduce the chance that contention for political power would result in regime change "by deliberately de-mobilising [its] most likely opponents and closely controlling the opportunities for collective action" and political change (Tilly, 1975: 445). In sum, government repression constituted the most pronounced response of the Mobutu regime to the growth of the opposition

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121Bratton and Van De Walle (1997: 70) give statistical data that lists sub-Saharan African countries and their record of presidential elections. My statistical information was drawn from their findings.

122Three of the prime ministers during the transition years (there were still others) had been a part of Mobutu's government in the early years, then they had changed sides and were either exiled or placed under house arrest. In the 1990s, suddenly they were prime ministers! This is a classic example of Mobutu's skillful co-optation methods. The three men were Etienne Tshisekedi (July 1991), Nguza Karl-I-Bond (November 1991), and Faustin Birindva (March 1993).

123By internal pressure, I am referring to the pressure applied by (prior to 1990) "illegal" opposition groups and the Zairean masses who expressed a general anti-Mobutu sentiment; external pressure for political change came from Western governments, NGOs (non-governmental organisations) and foreign businesses with vested interests in Zaire and its resources.
movement. Even so, the end of the Second Republic transformed the political landscape and set in motion a period of transition.

3.2: The process of political transition gets underway.

In this section, there are three objectives. The first seeks to identify and explain the emergence and growth of the opposition movement in Zaire. President Mobutu's infamous speech altered the political environment in dramatic ways. Participation and competition in politics sky-rocketed. Every Zairean citizen had something to say about what was happening with "le processus de transition". The second and third objectives relate to the notion of political violence and repression. The second explores government repression while the third examines popular protest and the escalation of political violence by the opposition and the masses.

3.2.1: The emergence of a legitimate opposition coalition.

With the unveiling of the new political arrangement in April 1990, Zaire witnessed an enormous influx of groups into the political arena. The Mobutu government initially permitted the entry of two other parties to the political arena. By July, more than 40 opposition parties had seized the opportunity for active participation. How and why did these groups form? In review, groups are generally formed on the basis of shared interests among individuals. The political parties (or groups) that emerged in Zaire, like in any other country, were the result of individuals banding together for the advancement of common political objectives and claims to resources, such as lowering government taxes, initiating changes to the (non-existent) healthcare system, and most importantly, seeing to the removal of the Mobutu regime from political power. They insisted upon political change, even though what that political change entailed was unclear. One thing can be said: the political opposition groups that emerged were well aware of what they were against (Mobutu), but they did not always express clearly what they were for.124

The Union pour la Démocratie et Progrès Social (UDPS) was by far the largest, most influential and organised group. Nzongola argues that the best determinant of a party's popularity in Zaire is the number of people it attracts to rallies and public demonstrations (1994b: 220). The UDPS clearly had the advantage. In addition, several other parties, including the Parti Démocratique et Social Chrétien (PDSC), the Parti Lumumbiste Unifié (PALU), the Union des Fédéralistes et Républicains Indépendants (UFERI), and the Mouvement National Congolais-Lumumba (MNC-

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124This idea merits further exploration. In the next few pages, I will explore some of the challenges faced by the opposition coalition from its inception.
Union Sacrée de l'Opposition Radicale (USOR), or simply the Union Sacrée.

The point needs to be clarified that these larger, mass-based groups were not born with the opening of the political forum in 1990. Chapter 2 examined the birth of an opposition movement in Zaire in the early decades of the Mobutu regime. Admittedly, the ban that Mobutu had placed on political activity hindered the development of oppositional forces. Even so, the claim that institutional legacies from earlier regimes and eras did in fact shape the environment of the 1990s is an argument that has been advocated from the beginning. However limited political activity was in the 1970s and 1980s, the potential for its development under the right circumstances was not forgotten. In one study, Leonardo Morlino maintains that "a previous experience with party organisation 'freezes' allegiances and alignments in such a way that they 'hibernate' during an authoritarian interlude, only to reemerge when... [an opening to politics is] restored" (1987: 66-7). The restoration of former opposition groups, such as the UDP, the MNC-L and UFERI, had contrary effects on the onset of Zaire's transition process.\(^\text{125}\) Bratton and van de Walle provide one explanation:

> On the one hand, it helped speed political change by reducing the time needed by regime opponents to construct an apparatus for mass mobilisation. On the other hand, institutional precedents also impeded change. To the extent that old policy programs were given a new lease on life - including discredited efforts to restore traditional leaders or to promote ethnic sub-nationalism - the [opposition] forces were weakened from within (1997: 146-7).

Despite the potential for negative effects and weakened forces, one point was clear: the opening to a multiparty political forum in 1990 encouraged more popular protest and participation against the Mobutu regime than at any other time during its power.

The end of 1990 saw well over one hundred parties - most of them ethnic-based - vying for recognition, support, access to political power, and a role in the transition process (MacGaffey, 1994: 182; Leslie, 1993: 57). These parties soon realised that as separate organisations, they did not have a base large enough to compete against the Mobutu government and the ruling elites. Acting together, however, they were able to achieve widespread support, even if they initially lacked the resources needed to "...build a strong [enough] political organisation likely to wrestle power..." from the Mobutu regime (Nzongola, 1994a: 31). The leaders of the opposition groups understood that "real political change [was] unlikely to occur as long as the big man [Mobutu]...

\(^{125}\)For further discussion of the contradictory effects of emerging 'former' oppositional groups, see Bratton and van de Walle (1997: 143-47).
remain[ed], since he ha[d] set all the rules and could manipulate any new ones to limit their impact" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 84-85).

Consequently, the only possible solution was to build a powerful coalition: the *Union Sacrée*. Despite occasional struggles among themselves for political primacy, the new opposition groups of the *Union Sacrée* each identified with a collective goal: to remove the "enemy" from power (Goldstone et al., 1991: 46). In this case, the "enemy" was President Mobutu, and his unconditional departure from the political scene was deemed the first necessary step to political reform in Zaire. What needs to be stressed is, first, that the removal of the incumbent is the single most important unifying issue in neopatrimonial regime transitions; and second, that other factors, such as levels of organisation and cohesion are secondary concerns. All the same, Lemarchand argues that these "secondary" issues including "ideological orientation, symbolic texture, ethno-regional underpinnings and mobilisation strategies" are factors that characterise different forms of opposition and they merit closer examination in understandings of how regime transitions unfold (1992b: 180).

Lemarchand's argument is not contested. Yet the irony in the Zairean case is that the *Union Sacrée* honestly did not possess any unifying objective other than to remove the Mobutu regime from power. The coalition's ideology was *anti-Mobutaisme*. Its organisation and cohesion were lacking except when it came to plans to unseat the incumbent. Ethnic factors were ancillary in the big picture of ousting the Mobutu government. Each of the factors that characterised the opposition coalition somehow related back to their collective desire to get rid of Mobutu. Some analysts blame the failure of the opposition to reach the intended *dénouement* - regime change - on this "liability" alone. However, the failure of the opposition coalition to effect regime change is more complicated than that. That argument will be saved for a later section (3.5). For immediate purposes, it should simply be stated that the Zairean people, for the first time in decades, were genuinely hopeful that the process of transition and the political climate of expression through legitimate channels would lead to opportunities for political regime change.

The opposition movement had a growing support base, not just with the average Zairean citizen but with the middle-class intellectual communities both internal and external to Zaire as well. One of the distinguishing traits of transition processes in neopatrimonial regimes is the alignment of the middle-class elements of society with the opposition movement. In fact, academics, businessmen and professionals often assumed political leadership roles in the opposition movement. Their community status lent validity to their leadership. Several members of the Zairean intellectual community, including university faculty and the Zairean diaspora residing in Europe and North
America, had already rejected Mobutu's leadership on the grounds that his dictatorial methods were harmful both to the Zairean people and the country itself. Referred to as the "desertion of the intellectuals" (Brinton, 1938), political affiliation with the opposition coalition was one result of the decades-long alienation of all groups from the political arena in Zaire. Tilly concedes that "an outpouring of new thought articulating objectives incompatible with the continuation of the existing polity is probably [the] single most reliable sign..." that regime transition and change are underway (1975: 526).

For the record, it has been established that the opposition coalition had begun its efforts to negotiate for regime change through the onset of the transitional "phases". What requires further examination are the challenges that confronted the Union Sacrée as it prepared for transition, not least of what was the Mobutu government's response and subsequent action. But first, two challenges to the effective operation of the opposition bloc are discussed. One challenge the opposition coalition faced was with its leadership. Many of the party leaders had at one point worked closely with Mobutu in his government. The leading opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi, for example, had been a former government minister and advisor to Mobutu in the 1970s. The credentials and the loyalty of many of the opposition leaders was therefore questioned by the Zairean masses. Were these political leaders genuinely committed to government opposition or were they "self-centered seekers of political power and material benefits" (Nzongola, 1994a: 31). During times of extreme frustration with the transition process, the Zairean masses accused their opposition leaders of simply "riding the waves" of political liberalisation rather than directing the course of regime transition and change.

Another related challenge concerned the composition of the Union Sacrée. The groups themselves have already been identified. The fact that each group brought a different set of interests to the "big picture" has been mentioned, but we should look more closely at these notions. According to the findings in Bratton and van de Walle's book, they insist that, "The social composition of the protest movements [and opposition forces] was an uneasy amalgam of diverse social elements ranging from workers to businessmen, from students to professionals, from human rights activists and church leaders to regional elites, out-of-power politicians, and former military officers" (1997: 107). On the one hand, this diversity explained the high levels of oppositional support by the masses. On the other hand, it represented a potential source of conflict, given that each group's interests did not necessarily coincide. Apart from the political objective to remove the Mobutu

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126 In a later section (3.5), the weaknesses of the opposition coalition will be assessed; that discussion will continue this initial glance at oppositional challenges.
regime from power, there remained little else to keep these groups together when (or if) regime transition resulted in a change of regime.

Over the same period of time that the opposition groups were forming their identities and facing these challenges, the Mobutu government was working on an agenda of its own. To offset the growing number of political groups in the opposition coalition, the Mobutu government attempted several actions. First, the Mobutu party, the *Mouvement Populaire de la Résolution* (MPR), was renamed the *Mouvement Populaire pour le Renouveau* (Popular Movement for Renewal) in an effort to resuscitate its existence and give new meaning to its bad reputation. The effort to change the name was short-lived, though, as it was opposed by the most radical Mobutuists.

What took place, instead, was the organisation of an alternative coalition that included parties loyal to President Mobutu under the *Forces politiques du conclave* (FPC), or congress of political forces. Second, the government financed a myriad of small parties to soften the impact of the larger opposition groups. And finally, Mobutu revised the government's initial position in an attempt to slow down the process of group mobilisation by demanding that all new political groups go through a 6-step legalisation procedure before assuming membership in the polity. These governmental efforts to complicate the political transition process were lost on the Zairians. Already the Zairean masses were committed to an opposition - any opposition - so long as Mobutu was removed from power. The chosen method with which to facilitate this political objective was through a national conference. That will be discussed in the next section. First, it is important to briefly examine the levels of political violence that the Mobutu regime was prepared to use in its struggle to control the transition process.

### 3.2.2: The use of violence in the struggles of the transition process.

Typical of other transitions in neopatrimonial regimes, the transitional process in Zaire began amidst political instability and pervasive corruption, with the Mobutu regime at center stage. Lemarchand argues that the dynamics of regime transition cannot be separated from the unstable conflict situations in which they appear, develop, and sometimes fail (1992b: 180). He further contends that the forms that conflict and instability assume, critically affect the onset of transition, the character of the opposition groups, the levels of political violence, and the impact of external factors (1992b: 180). In the power struggles that ensued, these issues arose. How they were dealt with clearly rested upon the neopatrimonial structures and nature of the Mobutu regime.

The Mobutu government set the precedent for the use of violence in the repressive measures that government troops employed against the general population. It should be recalled that political
violence, according to the group-conflict scheme, "...grows out of actions which are not intrinsically violent", such as contentious gatherings of people (Tilly, 1978: 177, 183). Furthermore, government forces are most frequently the ones responsible for initiating violent action. With that in mind, this section seeks to address the notion of political violence, from the various stances of the Mobutu regime, the opposition coalition, and the Zairean masses. In the case of the regime, violence was used as a means to maintaining control and intimidating the opposition. The opposition coalition, on the other hand, used violence as a counteractive means to influence and access the government and its resources respectively.

The Zairean masses were often innocent victims caught in the struggles between the incumbent regime and the opposition coalition. However, they were also involved in public protest rallies and street demonstrations against the Mobutu regime. These public gatherings created contentious situations that had a tendency to turn violent, especially when the government soldiers were called in to disperse the crowds. Two events will be examined to illustrate the volatile nature of political action in Zaire during the transition years. One event was initiated by the government: the Lubumbashi massacre in May 1990. In the other instance, the opposition coalition took credit for the organisation of public demonstrations against the government between 1991 and 1993. Both series of events grew out of nonviolent political activity. Yet they both resulted in political violence, thus frustrating the process of transition.

3.2.2.1: The Lubumbashi massacre.

Clear evidence, on the one hand, of the Mobutu regime's unwillingness to withdraw from the political arena, and on the other hand, of its willingness to use repressive measures was demonstrated in the bloody massacre of more than 50 students at the University of Lubumbashi (Shaba province) in May 1990, less than a month following Mobutu's notorious speech ending the single-party state.127 Mobutu's elite security forces descended upon the campus dormitories one night, killing, raping, and looting as they went from residence to residence. This was a planned government response to alleged reports that factions of students were gathering support for their claims against Mobutu's repressive policies. As to the identity of the government troops, reports from 1990 onwards suggest a clandestine fighting force operating in Zaire, known to the local populations as "les hiboux" (translated: "the owls") because their work was carried out in the night.

127 The actual number of students killed is disputed. Government reports told of only one death, foreign faculty at the university estimated more than 150 students were killed; but most sources agree the death toll numbered anywhere from 50 to 100 victims. The United Nations Special Rapporteur, Amos Wako, estimated that only a dozen or so students had been killed; this estimation was thrown out based on evidence and reports of the night's events. My statistics were drawn from a special issue of Africa Watch entitled 'Zaire: Two Years without Transition' (1992). See also Leslie (1993) and Sangmpam (1994: 235).
The Lubumbashi massacre was the first of many night attacks on the opposition forces and the Zairean masses at large.

In any case, the government denied that a massacre had taken place, instead blaming the incident on clashes between rival student groups. All the same, Mobutu's refusal to allow an independent investigation into the matter by human rights groups was close enough to a guilty verdict for the Zairean people. Although the President eventually acquiesced to an investigation, he demanded control of the judicial inquiry and ultimately implicated among others the Shaba Governor Ngbase te Keregbo and the Rector of the university, Dr. Aloni Komanda (Leslie, 1993: 54).

The regime had successfully used its armed troops in the past to dispel terror among civilians and thwart opposition. After all, political repression was a regular feature of neopatrimonial regimes. The leader did not tolerate threats to his authority, nor to the clientelist networks that essentially kept him in a position of power. President Mobutu was prepared to continue regime policies of political repression. Still, the Lubumbashi massacre provoked a series of widespread demonstrations of sympathetic support by high school and university students. Not only did the incident represent the recklessness with which the government would manipulate the transition process, but it also revealed the costs Mobutu was willing to incur to maintain political power.

As long as the government retained control of the Zairean military forces, it was unlikely that the transition would facilitate a transfer of power to a new regime without violent fighting between opposing contenders. In other words, the levels of political violence were determined in part by the Mobutu government's willingness to repress - thanks to the institutional legacy of regime brutality in the colonial era - which, in turn influenced the established patterns of mobilisation, contention for power, and the transitional process.

3.2.2.2: Political protest and demonstration.

Given the high levels of government repression and violence, nationwide demonstrations and strikes were a common occurrence during the years of the transitional process. Political protest was widespread. Without the coercive resources needed to force the government to relinquish power,

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128 For a breakdown of events and court proceedings following the Lubumbashi massacre, see W.A. MUTUA (1991).
129 President Mobutu was known to publicly denounce members of his government and loyal supporters who were "caught" in compromising circumstances, whether it was siphoning monies from the treasury to finance personal investments or ordering the deaths of innocent university students. Usually, the "accused" disappeared from the public eye for a time, only - in most cases - to resurface later, still a member of Mobutu's elite ruling group.
mass gatherings constituted the most effective means of political expression. In many cases, street protests occurred without incident. In other cases, the demonstrations - which "are naturally episodic because protesters can rarely sustain high levels of mobilisation over a long duration" - turned violent when Mobutu unleashed his troops with their machinery into the crowds (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 5). Repressive government violence is typical of neopatrimonial regimes; that the violence is, in most cases, initiated by the government forces also corresponds with the characterisation of neopatrimonial regimes.

The demonstration is a classic example of a nonviolent political activity that often turns violent, particularly when the government forces attempt to break it up. Zaire's anti-government demonstrations and protest marches were organised by the influential UDPS party and general strikes were arranged by the Union Nationale des Travailleurs Congolais (UNTC). Both were supported by tens of thousands of workers, public and civil servants. That the Zairean masses could be readily mobilised and willing to act against the Mobutu government through demonstrations and strikes, despite the dismal record of regime brutality unleashed against any form of oppositional activity, was an encouraging sign that the citizens of Zaire were open to and anxious for the possibility of regime change. If and when the Mobutu government issued the order to interrupt the peaceful demonstrations, the security forces' typical method of violence was to shoot and throw tear gas into the crowds.

The causal sequence from "peaceful" to "violent" action is therefore familiar in the experience of contemporary regime transition and change; Zaire was no exception. Tilly makes this point in an excellent, albeit lengthy, observation:

> Repressive forces do the largest part of the killing and wounding, while the groups they are seeking to control do most of the damage to objects. The division of labour follows from the usual advantage repressive forces have with respect to arms and military discipline; from common tactics of demonstrators, strikers, and other frequent participants in collective violence, which are to violate symbolically charged rules and prohibitions whose enforcement is the affair of agents of government; from the typical sequence of events, in which demonstrators are carrying on an action which is illegal yet nonviolent, and repressive forces receive the order to stop them by whatever means are necessary. The means are often violent (1978: 177).

Access to resources and military equipment enables government forces to carry out violent acts. The opposition forces do not have that same access to coercive resources. Not surprisingly, then, what started out as peaceful political action often turned into violent struggles and intimidation.130

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130 Critics of Tilly's conflict-group theory complain that he does not adequately explain the causal nature of the relationship of collective action to collective violence; Ekkart ZIMMERMANN (1980) queries, "How and when does collective action lead to collective violence? Is collective action a last resort...?" (221).
Two interesting theoretical questions come to mind. First, how does political violence affect the transition process? Peter Sederberg, in *Fires Within: Political Violence and Revolutionary Change* (1994) writes: "The capacity of the regime to deflect, manipulate, or repress [groups] affects the probability of successful *mobilisation* for resistance and transformation. Something must weaken the efficacy of the available instruments of [political] control to provide the *opportunity* for radical [opposition] movements to develop" (191, my emphasis). Exactly what that "something" was remained a political mystery for the time-being. Second, why does political violence attract so much attention when it constitutes a very small part of the entire realm of collective political action? There are several reasons.

One reason is that violent political action tends to produce greater and more visible immediate costs to the participants. For example, when Zairean government troops appeared with weapons aimed at a group of demonstrators in Kinshasa, their aim was to intimidate and put an end to the demonstration. The crowd usually did one of three things: it ignored the troops (as long as they were not using their weapons), increased its actions directed at the troops, or dispersed. However, as soon as the troops began firing into the crowd, the people dispersed. The probability that the Zairean troops were there to use their weapons was high. Another reason that political violence attracts so much attention is that the government forces are more likely to intervene when political action is widespread, threatening, or it gets out of control - as in a riot or a strike that attracts large groups of people. Levels of popular protest were extremely high in Zaire, which is a characteristic trait of neopatrimonial plebiscitary one-party states. While in legal and official terms, Zaire no longer belonged in that category of government systems, the neopatrimonial institutional heritage was still strong in the Mobutu regime.

Within a few months of Mobutu's speech outlining a transition to multipartyism, it became clear that the government had no intention of putting into practice what Mobutu had preached on that April day in 1990. President Mobutu agreed to initiate political reform primarily as a tactic to relieve domestic pressure and mollify foreign governments that had not only criticised his authoritarian government, but were also withholding financial aid as a result. The opposition coalition realised that the government intended to control the political transition process.

These are valid questions. In defense of Tilly, Harry Eckstein (1980) points out that his approach is premised on the notion that humans are rational beings who calculate costs and benefits of their actions and proceed on that basis. Therefore, violence is chosen as a means of action when nonviolent action fails to produce the anticipated results and the expected costs of violent action are less than the expected benefits (149, 155).
As the regime's unwillingness to negotiate with the forces of opposition became more acute, the opposition increased its (peaceful) anti-government activities. Unfortunately, when these nonviolent actions (such as demonstrations and political rallies) were violently repressed by Mobutu's government forces, the opposition groups were encouraged to adopt violent tactics of their own against the regime. In turn, this led to a government decrease in its control over the troops; why would they continue to support a government that was increasingly under political attack, especially when they had not been paid? Ironically then, the Mobutu government's willingness to repress the opposition coalition in fact spurred an increase in political violent oppositional activity which resulted in a decrease in the government's ability to control these outbreaks of violence in the first place (Mason, 1990: 43). This will become evident in the following section that examines the mode of transition through a national conference.

3.3: The role of Zaire's National Conference in the transition process.

This section consists of a discussion on the use of a national conference to effect political regime transition. Following the national conference, a recurrent phenomenon throughout Zaire's political transition was government repression. It was the most consistent response of the Mobutu regime to the opposition movement and the Zairean masses. In the context of the conference proceedings, the government used violence as a means to suspend the conference, changing its political rules, co-opting conference delegates, and so forth. Essentially, Mobutu did everything and anything that would prevent the realisation of a legitimate transition and regime change. This section portrays a rather dismal view of the transition process in Zaire. Nevertheless, the events that took place were an accurate indication of the direction towards which the transition was heading.

3.3.1: The phenomenon of the national conference.

The opposition groups of the Union Sacrée demanded that a national conference be implemented, a conference much like that first introduced in Bénin in 1990, then followed in other African predominantly francophone countries (Togo, Congo-Brazzaville, Niger, Gabon). The idea of a conference setting in which to embark upon a process of transition and institutional reform gathered momentum among the Zairean opposition groups. After much deliberation and stalling, President Mobutu agreed to convene a conference in Kinshasa, which opened in August 1991. At the conference, a wide range of interests from the state, opposition, religious, social, and economic spheres were represented by the various participant groups. It is prudent to examine the national conference phenomenon as a means to achieving political change in Africa.\textsuperscript{131} It typically marked

\textsuperscript{131}The national conference phenomenon is widespread in Africa, especially in francophone countries. It is typified as a "transition from below" where mounting pressure from the population eventually leads to an
the climax of the struggles between the regime's forces and the opposition coalition over the political rules of the transition process.

In the first chapter, divergent paths to political change were briefly mentioned; they included managed transitions, pacts, revolutions, and rapid elections. The conclusion was made that neopatrimonial regimes tended to follow two of these paths: the national conference and the managed transition route. In both cases, the incumbent leader had more opportunities to manipulate the transitional process than in the other paths. Consequently, there is a noteworthy link between national conferences, neopatrimonial regimes, and African contributions to transition literature. First, national conferences were typically convened in regimes founded on the heritage of patrimonial authority; second, within these neopatrimonial regimes, the advent of the conference was especially unique to the African political situation. Political analysts in African studies concur that, "As an original form of political association, national conferences amounted to an indigenously generated African contribution to political institution building and regime transition" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 111).

Comprehensive studies of the national conference are prevalent (see for example Boulaga, 1993; Monga, 1994; Nyang'oro, 1994; Kpundeh, 1992; Riley, 1991; and Robinson, 1994b), so it needs only passing comment here. In several African countries - most of them francophone - the national conference has been a popular forum for discussion of general political issues, possible solutions to socio-economic crises, and political change - past, present, and future. The conference was appealing as a means of political change to both incumbent regimes and opposition forces - but for different reasons. Bratton and van de Walle propose an explanation: "The [leaders] saw [the national conference] as another harmless participatory ceremony that would provide the regime with a much needed boost, whereas the [opposition groups] saw it as the first step in a democratic takeover" (1997: 174). As a result, the national conference was used as a bargaining tool by both

opening for political reform, manifested in a conference setting. However, the notion of a national conference in fact originated in Western political thought as an instrument for government change. According to Pearl Robinson, it is firmly rooted in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's ideas about the people's sovereign right to re-negotiate the social contract (1994b: 56).

132 For a breakdown and explanation of each of these methods of transition, see Bratton and van de Walle (1997: 169-179).

133 This is the central argument of F. Eboussb Boulaga (1993); he claims that the national conference is an instrumental political institution in the transitional processes of neopatrimonial regimes.

134 Julius Nyang'oro suggests that "the difference in the colonial experience between [anglophone and francophone countries]...may have important lessons in terms of how the transition from one-party authoritarianism and/or military regimes to multiparty political systems occurs" (1994: 142). Why the national conference phenomenon was most prevalent in francophone African countries is remarkable and merits further inquiry, although that task will not be undertaken in this project.
the government - in an attempt to maintain its authority - and the opposition groups seeking to increase their own resource power base and effect political change.

Although political analysts contend there is a common sequence through which national conferences proceed, the results of the various national conferences in Africa have been anything but uniform.\textsuperscript{135} Successful removal of long-time dictators and subsequent political transition were achieved in some of the cases - Bénin, Cape Verde, and Congo-Brazzaville. In other countries (Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Zaire), the incumbent leaders manipulated the conference proceedings, rejected the conference's claim to sovereignty, harassed and co-opted the delegates, and refused to relinquish power to a transitional government. In the following discussion, a closer examination of the regime's application of political repression is useful as the dynamics of the transition process hinged on the government's role. That the Mobutu regime controlled the principal means of coercion and was more than willing to use force, impacted upon the patterns of mobilisation that the opposition bloc could effectively produce in its struggle for political change.

3.3.2: The Union Sacrée and the national conference.

The phenomenon of the national conference will now be discussed in the context of Zaire. Three aspects - organisation, sovereignty, and ethnicity - that factored in Zaire's conference proceedings will be addressed to illustrate the complex interplay of different forces. When opposition was legalised in 1990 with the opening to multiparty politics, all sorts of political groups and organisations emerged to play a role in the transitional process. Under the umbrella of the Union Sacrée, these groups advanced claims to the Mobutu government that were incompatible within the existing Zairean polity.

Support for a national conference was widespread and immediate. The Zairean masses had advocated for political change for decades. The Mobutu government had failed in its capacity to "...meet specific obligations which members of the subject population regard[ed] as well established and crucial to their own welfare"; these obligations included "employment, welfare services, protection, access to justice, and the other major services of the government" (Tilly, 1975:

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{135}Bratton and Van de Walle (1997) engage in an indepth discussion of the sequences that national conferences typically follow. To paraphrase and simplify what they propose, the sequence is as follows. First, conference delegates declare the conference sovereign in order to give them power to establish the political rules of the game. Then they abolish the existing constitution and legislature and set up an interim transitional government, assigned the task of drawing up a new constitution and submitting it to a national referendum. If all goes well, the referendum is accepted and plans for elections begin. Rarely, if ever, has this process been smooth or followed through to completion. For further analysis, see Bratton and Van de Walle (1997: 111-114).
\end{footnote}
The conference became the new arena through which grievances, problems, solutions, and challenges from all aspects of Zairean life were put on the table for discussion.

3.3.2.1: Organisational issues.
After several delays, the National Conference officially opened in August 1991. More than 2,800 delegates were in attendance, representing dozens of groups, social classes, and strata of Zairean society. The conference was immediately overshadowed by administrative problems and quarrels among the participant groups. The members could not agree on a conference Chairman, nor could they agree on the issue of sovereignty or the selection of committees. It was not until December that a Chairman was appointed: Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya of Kisangani. Committees were eventually set up to discuss all aspects of national life from elections to (lack of) economic infrastructure, from ethnic grievances to medical assistance, education, and constitutional reform. Throughout the entire conference, there was a very real threat - that the politics conducted between the opposition and the government forces would lapse into the familiar patterns of neopatrimonialism (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 147). The Union Sacrée wanted desperately to avoid this; the Mobutu forces encouraged it because neopatrimonial policy was what they knew best.

Several other issues on the agenda stirred controversy and foiled the conference's organisational structure, including redefining the "rules of the political game", the role of the incumbent in the transition process, the role and organisation of the opposition forces, the criteria for contenders in the "political game", and the strategies and tactics employed by various groups to advance their own interests (Clark, 1995: 230; Karl, 1990: 6). The conference could be likened to a boxing match. The delegates rallied around one issue, debated another, rejected still others. The internal squabbling went on, round after round until the final round came 18 months later and there were still no winners. Contrary to the above analogy, one participant in Zaire's national conference remarked that the conference"...[was] seen as a national catharsis in the tradition of the African palaver (or dialogue), as well as an indispensable mechanism for setting in motion a [hopefully] successful transition" (Nzongola, 1994b: 220). Dialogue certainly took place, yet little action followed the dialogue. In addition to the inability of the groups to compromise, the accusations and petty fights that were almost comical, that is, if one could overlook the purpose of the conference. A large part of the problem was the lack of organisation.

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136 The opposition coalition was anxious to establish the rules of the transitional game for two reasons. First, up until this point, Mobutu had made the rules and there had been no discussion. Second, the opposition groups wanted to gain access to the resources controlled by the government and the ruling elite.
Unfortunately, simple tasks assigned to the conference members at the national conference ended in huge debates. The conference delegates failed to agree on the appointment of a prime minister to lead the transitional government. The *Union Sacrée* chose opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi and pressured President Mobutu to appoint him - which he did. However, Mobutu dismissed Tshisekedi after less than two weeks in office and gave the post to one of his government officials, Bernardin Mungul-Diaka (leader of the *Rassemblement des Démocrates pour la République*, or RDR) (Vanderlinden, 1996: 1017). This political reshuffling of government leaders was the first of many. One of Mobutu's infamous traits was his skill in the action of political reshuffling. Chapter 2 explored this characteristic which was perfected in earlier decades of Mobutu's rule. In essence, political reshuffling ensured that no single person in an authority position would gain enough power to threaten Mobutu's presidency. Unsurprisingly, throughout the conference proceedings, the transitional government changed more than half a dozen times.  

3.3.2.2: Sovereignty.

As to the issue of sovereignty, consensus within the conference membership was not easily achieved. Whether the conference should be a sovereign body with legislative power served as the main bone of contention between the *Union Sacrée* coalition and the Mobutu government parties. On the one hand, the opposition groups maintained that certain conditions had to be met if the National Conference was to operate as a legitimate channel for political reform. For instance, it was argued that Mobutu should be stripped of all executive powers, thus relegating him to a titular position (Joseph, 1991: 18-19; Lemarchand, 1992a: 104). In other words, the *Union Sacrée* believed that the conference should function as an autonomous body with decision- and policy-making powers. Even so, the principal opposition groups bickered among themselves over basic ground rules, credentials, and sovereign power within their own coalition framework (Lemarchand, 1992a: 104).

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137It is important to note that Mr. Tshisekedi considered himself the only legitimate prime minister up to the moment when the rebel forces of the AFDL overthrew the Mobutu government, even when others held that office.

138For purposes of this project, it is unnecessary to catalogue each and every change that occurred in the prime ministership, the Cabinet, and the conference; nor will too much time be spent with dates, names, and minor decisions that affected the transitional process. First of all, Mobutu's reshuffling techniques were notorious; this was pointed out in the last chapter. Second, the proceedings of the conference were so convoluted that knowledge of the details would not be helpful to the overall research.

139The *Union Sacrée*'s three most prominent member-parties were Etienne Tshisekedi's UDPS, Joseph Iléo's PDSC, and Antoine Gizenga's PALU; however, more than 130 parties belonged to the coalition.
The government had its own agenda, and its primary goal was to stay in power at all costs, with the assistance of its own coalition of groups, the Forces politiques du conclave (FPC). We should recall that many of the groups in Mobutu's coalition had been created by the President and were funded ostensibly through his personal bank accounts in Switzerland. His infamous co-optation skills were impressively performed in the National Conference. Having so many "loyal" supporters in the conference, the issue of sovereignty promised to be a never-ending debate. "In the best tradition of neopatrimonial rulers" Lemarchand writes, "Mobutu was able to satiate the appetite of enough presumptive clients to drive a deep wedge into the forces of the opposition and make the so-called Union Sacré sound like an egregious misnomer" (1992b: 182).

Accordingly, President Mobutu decreed that the conference could only exercise advisory (and not sovereign) authority because it lacked legitimacy, or so he claimed (Wa Mutua, 1992: 55). Legitimacy aside however, Mobutu also argued that the Union Sacré was not prepared to handle the responsibility of political leadership. What soon became clear was that President Mobutu intended to play the game of political transition according to his own rules. Like his counterparts in Togo and the Congo (Brazzaville), he did everything in his power to sabotage the national conference in Zaire.140

The Mobutu regime warned against using the national conference as a means of placing the government under trial for its past actions. Mobutu had learned this lesson from his neighbour in Brazzaville, President Denis Sassou-Nguesso of the Congo. Sassou-Nguesso suffered public humiliation for his political crimes at the National Conference convened in Brazzaville in 1990 and was subsequently replaced by Pascal Lissouba in 1992. As a result, the incumbent regime in Zaire refused to relinquish authority, in particular over matters of finance, defense, foreign affairs, and revenue-generating state enterprises such as mining (Leslie, 1993: 59). The only sovereign power that the Mobutu government intended to grant was its own. Despite the fact that a majority vote had bestowed sovereign powers to the National Conference, it had no genuine political sovereignty without the government's recognition.

3.3.2.3: The ethnic factor.

The Mobutu regime was clearly interested in maintaining the political structures that had ensured its survival, not only by cramping political participation in the National Conference, but by using

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140 Some methods of sabotage included alternately suspending and reopening the conference as well as making demands that a new semi-presidential system be implemented, knowing that the conference members favoured a parliamentary form of government.
the ethnic factor to divide the groups within the opposition coalition. René Lemarchand points out that:

[Mobutu's]...unparalleled skill in the arts of co-optation and repression explain[ed] his impressive performance during Zaire's national conference...[He] tried to emasculate the conference by packing the conference hall with loyal supporters, sponsoring pro-government parties, buying off opposition members and renegades, and stimulating ethnic tensions among delegates (1992a: 105).141

It has already been surmised that ethnicity was a strategic issue in Zaire's political equation - one that has been used to bring people together on the one hand, and divide them on the other. With reference to the phrase above, "stimulating ethnic tensions", one strategy - "divide rather than unite" - that had characterised Mobutu's dictatorship since the early years was applied yet again in the national conference.142 Mobutu used the ethnic factor as a method of manipulation and division within the opposition coalition. He sabotaged the coalition's efforts to collaborate on issues of a political nature that would reflect their cohesion and unity.

How then could multipartyism and plurality be fostered in an environment that promoted identity through ethnicity and tribe? Perhaps the key is not to jump ahead but rather, to take small steps and recognise progress as it comes. One of these steps involves accepting that ethnic diversity - as both a positive factor and a threatening one - must somehow be accommodated in the political equation.

If a group's mobilisation is dependent in part on its organisational structure, then "the most important dimension in this regard is the one which runs from communal to associational organisation" (Tilly, 1975: 505).143 Communal groups are small, local, and in Africa, based on ethnic and kinship affiliations as well as patron-client networks. Examples include peasant villages and regional political groupings. Associational groups, in contrast, are large, extensive, and complex. They transcend ethnic identities and encourage national aspirations. Associational groups form a part of civil society and tend to have more opportunities to realise their interests, mobilise

141In its early stages, the conference was not divided along ethnic lines; rather, there was a fraternal sentiment against the Mobutu government among the opposition groups represented. This fraternity, according to John F. Clark, was "engendered by the progressive impoverishment of the people" and their common goal to remove the President from power (1995: 368). Nonetheless, Mobutu eventually managed through skillful manipulation to fragment the conference members along ethnic lines.

142The government policy of "divide rather than unite" was a legacy of the Belgian colonial administration. It introduced and perfected the policy that encouraged divisions along ethnic lines in its attempts to suppress any oppositional threats from the local populations to the administration of the Belgian Congo.

143For an indepth discussion of organisational structure, communal and associational groups, see Tilly (1975).
support, and make claims upon the government. It is more difficult for a communal organisation to access government resources and mobilise for better opportunities.

Consequently, in an ethnic-based society, especially one in which there are dozens of different communal groupings with which to contend, Zaire being a classic example, political reform is practically impossible. Conflicts are more than likely to result in spurts of violence as contending groups struggle for ethnic supremacy. On the other hand, associational groups threaten the political status quo, hence the argument that "[n]opatrimonial states are conspicuously uncongenial to civil society" (Lemarchand, 1992b: 181). Combined, these ideas make for a violent portrayal of African society. In an opposing argument, leading theorist Charles Tilly insists that large-scale political violence "...rarely occurs without the significant involvement of associations" (1975: 506). How, then, would he explain the civil wars, genocide, and ethnic cleansing that have characterised much of Central Africa's recent history? These societies are communally-based! There must be an explanation, or at the very least, a compromise. The Mobutu regime's strategy of dividing the opposition coalition along ethnic lines increased the potential for sporadic ethnic violence. At the same time, its attempt to reduce the appearance of associational groups also instigated violent uprisings as people demanded their civil rights and political freedoms.

Answers to questions of organisation, sovereignty, and ethnicity constituted a significant portion of discussion time in Zaire's National Conference. As a mode of transition to effect political change, the conference was confronted with several obstacles, including those mentioned above. On the flip side of the coin however, the conference's attempt to encourage and expand commitment to the opposition coalition was a success. Popular support for the opposition bloc was at its highest levels during the months that the national conference was in session. The main threat to increased levels of support for the opposition coalition was the subsequent escalation of government repression.

3.3.3: The escalation of political violence.

During the conference proceedings, when faced with the challenge of intense oppositional support, the Mobutu regime employed one of its age-old tactics: when all else fails, unleash the troops on the masses. Group-conflict theory contends that "repressive forces are themselves the most consistent initiators and performers of collective violence" and the majority "...of the killing and wounding in the course of modern collective violence is done by troops, police, and other specialised repressive [government] forces" (Tilly, 1978: 177). This chapter has persistently returned to the nature of government repression during the transition years in Zaire for one primary reason: repression as an interactive force with the opposition coalition and the Zairean masses was the key to political power for Mobutu's regime, built on decades of institutionalised
neopatrimonialism. Mobutu knew that the opposition coalition lacked the coercive resources to militarily challenge his regime for political power.

Still, the intense unpopularity of the regime threatened to transform the clientelist networks that had been established for the benefit of "patron" Mobutu and the ruling elite. Nicholas van de Walle argues that the government's willingness, however reluctant, to engage in reform "threatens political instability because it disrupts long-standing arrangements between rulers and elites" (1994: 136-7). Up to this point, the primary focus has been on the role of either the new opposition groups that were seeking political power or Mobutu and his government. That is not to say, however, that the interactions among ruling elites are trivial. In a neopatrimonial system, these elite interactions are extremely crucial to the flow of politics. Nevertheless, I agree with those who argue that "political struggle [for regime transition]...begins as the result of the emergence of a new [opposition] elite that arouses a depressed and previously leaderless social group into concerted action," rather than with "a move by some group within the ruling [elite] to obtain support from forces external to it" (Rustow, 1970: 352 and Przeworski, 1986: 56, quoted in Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 85-6).

In other words, mass popular protests for political reform and the growth of an opposition movement provide the motivation for political struggles leading to regime transition. Subsequently, the ruling elite feels threatened by these new political developments and decides to take action to ensure its survival. The only possible contention I have is with the idea that the ruling elite was a "leaderless social group". On the one hand, Mobutu was the patron and therefore leader. On the other hand, the ruling elite class in Zaire was built on the informal institution of clientelism. Therefore one could argue that the informal structure of the group did not lend itself to leadership. In any case, the struggles that emerged within the ruling elite class were defined according to whether or not they had access to government resources. The members of the ruling class sought to remain on the inside of the clientelist networks. Being on the outside meant a loss of access to the rewards on the inside of the patronage system (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 86). For this reason, the fracturing of the elite clientelist network had repercussions on whether or not the transition process would unfold smoothly. It has already been surmised, though, that Zaire's transition did not unfold smoothly, in part because the ruling elite was not above using violence as a means to protect its interests and material benefits.

All in all, Mobutu orchestrated the September riots of 1991 not only to keep the opposition bloc disunified, but to prove that political violence and chaos were the result of the opposition's insistence that a national conference and transitional process continue. Following the riots, the
restoration of order and political authority in the hands of Mobutu would ensure that the institutionalised patronage ties remained intact. Mobutu underestimated the will of the people to see the transition process result in regime change; he also belittled the growth of their collective political astuteness to discern between Mobutu's "carrots and sticks" disguised as carrots. The following few pages present a breakdown of the circumstances and repercussions of the violence spawned by the riots.

3.3.3.1: The September riots of 1991.
In the weeks leading up to the September riots, political tensions were high. Twice the popular opposition leader, Tshisekedi, was appointed Prime Minister (July and early September) and twice he was dismissed by Mobutu. In his influential book, *The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire*, Michael Schatzberg draws an important conclusion about that happens in a situation such as the one prior to the September riots: "As personal, political, and economic insecurity increase, people in power seek to accumulate resources as rapidly as possible from those who occupy contextually inferior positions in the social hierarchy" (1988: 3). The expansion of commitment to the opposition coalition had rendered impotent the Mobutu regime and its patronage system, save in the use of repressive violence to intimidate the Zairean masses. The riots presented an opportunity to the Mobutu regime to reassert its control and upset the transition process yet again.

The rioting was led by mutinous military troops from the 31st Parachute Brigade. They were either protesting low salaries (USD$3/month) or no salaries (Braeckman, 1992: 361). For a moment, it is important to note that due to the dwindling financial resources with which to train and arm soldiers in the 1990s, the result was a decline in the quality and unity of the military forces. Ill-trained soldiers, lacking the discipline and military incentive, were less prone to direct control by the regime, but they were easily manipulated to rampage in protest against their material losses. Bratton and van de Walle offer an accurate portrayal of Zaire's armed forces: "The military was exceptionally fragmented in Zaire, where only the presidential and civil guards retained a semblance of discipline as they continued to follow sporadically the orders of their paymaster. The army for its part broke apart into armed bands, turning their guns on the citizenry in efforts to extort livelihood" (1997: 216). Evidence of this was never more apparent than in the September riots. For the most part, the regular soldiers (numerous and undisciplined) were left to their own

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144 The September appointment of Tshisekedi to the office of prime minister was initially rejected by Tshisekedi on the grounds that he would not compromise with the President; however, Tshisekedi eventually accepted the nomination, only to be fired again 3 weeks after he took office; see WEISS (1995).
145 The economy was experiencing massive decline, inflation was astronomical (US$1 = 27500.), and prices for basic consumer goods were too high for the average Zairean to comfortably afford.
devices. Their indiscriminate attacks on the urban masses escalated the levels of political violence and destruction.

Chaos in Kinshasa ensued with *le premier pillage* (First Pillage) and quickly spread to other urban centers in the country, including Kisangani, Matadi, Kikwit, Kolwezi, Lubumbashi. More than 200 civilians and soldiers were killed in the riots. The elite DSP troops that the government dispatched did the largest part of the killing. The civilians who joined the riots and other nongovernmental groups did most of the damage to buildings and property. Severe destruction of property took place: an estimated 90 percent of the modern economic infrastructure was destroyed (Weiss, 1995: 162). Stores, offices, and residential homes were stripped and burned, hospitals lost their equipment and pharmaceutical supplies. The result was millions of dollars worth of damage to the Zairean economy. Following the September riots, banks and businesses closed, export and commerce industries ceased operations, the currency dropped in value, fuel shortages increased, and a lack of food represented a serious mass hunger crisis (MacGaffey, 1994: 182).

To make matters worse, the government's leading allies, France and Belgium - both with substantial populations and economic interests in Zaire - sent a combined force of paratroopers to evacuate their nationals and other expatriates. Reports that more than 20,000 foreign residents fled Zaire after the First Pillage did not bode well for the country's economic reconstruction. In allegiance with the United States, France and Belgium decreased their diplomatic presence in Zaire to a minimum of official representatives. The "troika" of Western governments also suspended aid to the Mobutu government in light of its repressive policies and refusal to work with and accept a transitional government (Leslie, 1993: 170). The repercussions of the September riots backfired on President Mobutu. Elite structures were further fractured, the opposition gained more support, the economic infrastructure was destroyed, and the regime was denied further aid from foreign governments to "fix" these problems. If the military intervention was designed to bring a halt to the transition process, it failed. Instead, the September riots in Zaire revealed the undercurrents of increased political tension.

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146 In Zairean circles, the riots of September 1991 came to be known as *le premier pillage*, or the First Pillage. The Second Pillage, or *le deuxième pillage*, followed in January 1993.

147 Most of the expatriates who left were businessmen and technicians in vital economic industries, including the Inga hydro-electric plant which supplied electricity to the western regions of Zaire and neighbouring countries.
3.3.3.2: Analysts debate the role of violence in Zaire's regime transition.

Political analysts who monitor developing regime transitions have divergent opinions as to the reasons behind the increased use of violence as a means to achieving political regime change. For example, deprivation theorists such as Ted Gurr (1970) would argue that the degrees of discontent and frustration had reached such intolerable levels in Zaire that the masses revolted. Yet the masses did not initiate the riots; government soldiers did. Janet MacGaffey counters with an interesting question: "Why, given the deplorable state of the official economy...and the chronic and devastatingly high rate of inflation, had the anger and bitterness of the population against the regime not erupted in this way [mass looting and rioting] before?" (1994: 182). The Mobutu regime's skills of persuasion - whether directed at government agents, soldiers, the Zairean masses, or even members of the opposition coalition - play an explanatory role. Of course, we cannot ignore the counter debate concerning why people obey in the first place - was it Mobutu's manipulative skills that factored more than the willingness of the people to obey without question or vice-versa? Although I do not address this argument from the stance of the population's level of obedience, there is a large literature on why people obey, how we explain their actions, and the notion of false consciousness. Mobutu encouraged Zaireans to "fend for themselves". And most Zaireans did just that, whether they were manipulated, given no choice, or chose of their own volition to do so is open to debate. Still, the idea of "fending for one's self" was a common practice in neopatrimonial regimes whereby patron-client relations were carefully maintained while all other relations were left to work themselves out. In Zaire, there was a popular expression that people used to reflect this notion: "Débrouillez-vous!" (translated: "Manage on your own!").

Nzongola (1994a) further testifies that the Zairean masses were unable to make their own "revolution" for political change because they were so preoccupied with their personal affairs. Although political participation was high, Zaireans had little opportunity to actually mobilise into organised groups due to the preoccupation with putting food on their plates each night. Consequently, when violent political action occurred, it was usually initiated by government forces in response to perceived (or misperceived) threats from the opposition.

Anthony Oberschall argues that "[p]eople may harbour intense grievances [against the government]; yet they may possess few resources and may be vulnerable so that they can provide but negligible inputs to challengers..." seeking to change the political regime (1972: 306). In other words, when popular resistance is abandoned in favour of action to sustain basic personal needs, as

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148 The English translation of the French verb se débrouiller means "to manage on one's own." In Zaire, due to the neglect of the Mobutu regime to provide basic needs of the Zairean people, the general population had been forced to manage their personal affairs without the help of the Mobutu government.
MacGaffey suggests occurred in Zaire, a desperate situation is at hand. Of course frustration and discontent figure into the equation for political change; but without proper resources, especially coercive, and channels through which to mobilise, opposition groups are unlikely to engage in violent activity aimed at the overthrow of the regime. Any violence they engage in is usually spontaneous, disorganised, brief, and in response to government repression.

For the few days that violence was rampant through the streets of Kinshasa, behind closed doors, the National Conference was involved in its own power struggles. The inability of the opposition coalition and other (government-sponsored) conference members to come to any conclusions about the prime ministership and a transfer of power led to a political stalemate. The government resisted the claims to sovereignty of the national conference and an interim transitional government. Repression was the means through which the government handled the opposition coalition. The September riots were a case in point. At the same time, the opposition contenders no longer accepted the authority of the Mobutu regime. Their reaction to government repression was increasingly violent. The question therefore followed: How would the political stalemate between the two political blocs be solved? In the next section, possible scenarios will be discussed.

3.4: Political stalemate: the dissolution of the National Conference.

After 18 months of sessions (on and off), the National Conference came to an end due in part to the stalemate between government forces and the opposition coalition over certain political and administrative issues. One of the results of the political stalemate was the formation of two parallel governments - one elected by the National Conference and another appointed by Mobutu. This section is devoted to an analysis of the political stalemate that developed in early 1993 and the violence of the Second Pillage.

3.4.1: The Mobutu government vs. the Union Sacrée.

Despite the pleas made to the Mobutu government to refrain from meddling in the conference proceedings, the government's interference persisted. Less than two months following the First Pillage, President Mobutu, through his prime minister Nguza Karl-1-Bond, suspended the conference on the grounds that it was too costly and it provoked unnecessary ethnic tensions (Vanderlinden, 1996: 1017). Political violence intensified as the Union Sacrée attempted to mobilise the masses in protest against the government's suspension of the conference. Months of political turmoil ensued with limited progress in the transitional process. Then, in August 1992, the
government's security forces firebombed the UDPS headquarters. The government attack was met with relative calm by the UDPS delegates and supporters. President Mobutu had anticipated a violent reaction; he hoped to declare a state of emergency and resume complete authority over the government and national conference.

Even so, the scheduled prime ministerial elections took place in mid-August 1992. The elections were recorded in Zaire's history books as the most free and transparent elections ever held. Tshisekedi won an overwhelming 70 percent of the popular vote - a remarkable feat, given the history of ethnic divisions within the opposition coalition. That Tshisekedi won in this way revealed the serious intent of the Zairean masses to temporarily overlook their ethnic differences and focus upon the collective removal of the incumbent Mobutu regime. Crowds of UDPS and other opposition supporters surrounded the Palais du Peuple (People's Palace) in Kinshasa where the conference was held and cheered the results of the election. It was regarded as a clean victory for the opposition forces. According to the mandate of the national conference, Tshisekedi's government was legitimate. In a complex interplay of political forces, the Mobutu government was in fact the opposition to the coalition government. Nzongola observes with some irony: "Zaire must be the only country in the world where the head of state is the leader of the opposition to the legally established government, chief economic saboteur, and coordinator of acts of terror against ordinary citizens" (1994b: 221).

Victory aside, the political interests of Tshisekedi and Mobutu were still incompatible. Tshisekedi refused to deal with President Mobutu; the President ignored the mandate of sovereignty adopted by the national conference and rejected Tshisekedi's position as Prime Minister. Heated debates followed. Zairean political analyst Nzongola writes,

"Whenever the opposition leadership is pushed by whatever factor...closer to the position of the popular masses, a political impasse is created as long as the democratic forces are strong enough to prevent the regime from governing effectively but are still too weak to overthrow the dictatorship" (1994a: 5).

This statement merits further reflection. It re-enforces one argument this chapter has been building from the beginning: Without access to resources (coercive or otherwise), the opposition coalition was unable to defeat the Mobutu government. Indeed the Union Sacrée possessed the ability to

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149 For further detail on the reaction of the opposition to Mobutu's subversive and usually violent manoeuvrings, see Nzonola (1994b).
150 In the elections of August 1992, more than 70 percent of the vote went to the UDPS's Etienne Tshisekedi, while less than 30 percent of the vote was in favour of Mobutu's candidate, Thomas Kanza. For further analysis of the role that ethnicity played in these elections, see Nzonola (1994b).
disable effective government, not that Mobutu needed much assistance in that area, but the coalition was not strong enough to govern on its own. The government was therefore confident that it had the resources and military power to wait out the stalemate. To this end, how could the political stalemate be broken, then, short of the removal of President Mobutu from the political scene or (worst-case scenario) a political "compromise" that did not include genuine liberalisation of the Zairean masses?

After nearly two years of deliberations, the National Conference dissolved itself in December 1992 due to the protracted political stalemate between the government forces and the opposition coalition. The two opposing blocs were unwilling to compromise in their claims to legitimate political power. The Mobutu government controlled the coercive forces and had the upper hand in that department. The transitional government elected by the conference had accomplished little other than to provoke further polarisation and tension between the opposition coalition, the regime, and the masses. The opposition coalition, however, had the advantage of widespread support from the Zairean masses. Their willingness to protest against the regime on behalf of the opposition coalition was a significant factor that encouraged the opposition's efforts to continue working through the transition process. The stalemate was therefore seen as a temporary setback; but by no means was it the end of the struggle for political power. Still, it was unclear whether an opposition, divorced from Mobutu's influence, and armed with the necessary resources, would ever emerge with the necessary strength to effect regime change.

Returning momentarily to the idea stated above that the dissolution of the conference was seen only as a temporary setback, the fact that the opposition coalition remained convinced that some type of political forum was needed to continue the struggle for political change is demonstrated in the following actions. It was agreed that the national conference would be replaced with a smaller body (453 members), the Haut Conseil de la République (HCR), to act as an interim parliamentary government. The political tension between the government forces and the opposition groups threatened to renew the violence that had become a persistent feature of the transition years. General strikes and campaigns of civil disobedience were organised by the Union Sacrée in early January 1993 to contest the political repression of the government and its refusal to work within the structures of an interim government. In typical fashion, the government responded with the Second Pillage.

3.4.2: The Second Pillage.

The government devised yet another violent disturbance that would employ the elite coercive forces to restore order to the chaos engendered by the opposition's political protest. A seemingly perfect
opportunity presented itself when Zairian soldiers complained that they had not been paid. Faced with an over-inflated economy, the Mobutu government authorised the printing and issue of a new 5million-zaire banknote (the largest note, worth less than USD$2.). Prime Minister Tshisekedi, backed by the Haut Conseil, declared the note illegal tender. Mobutu retaliated in a calculated move by paying several units of the army troops with the discredited banknote, expecting that the soldiers would enforce the new note upon the people. Merchants in the commerce sectors of Kinshasa refused to accept the new 5million-zaire bills, so the government troops rampaged through the streets in protest. Reminiscent of the First Pillage in 1991, homes and businesses were looted and set afire, innocent civilians were murdered and raped, stolen goods and other valuables were hauled away as booty, and insecurity levels reached another record high.

Mobutu ordered his loyal DSP troops to restore calm in the city. But as journalist Bill Berkeley reported, "[D]uring the 1993 pillage in Zaire, even Mobutu's elite troops joined the scramble for spoils, grabbing their share and then summarily executing hundreds of rank and file looters" (1993: 28). More than 1,000 people - mostly soldiers who had instigated the riots - were reportedly killed. René Lemarchand observes that "key army units [DSP forces] dominated by President Mobutu's ethnic compadres have repeatedly demonstrated their loyalty to him by shooting civilians and looting the capital city of Kinshasa" (1992a: 104). Among those whose lives were claimed was the French ambassador to Zaire, Mr. Philippe Bernard. He had been watching the violence in the streets below from his office window and was shot by gunfire.

French marines were employed to evacuate their nationals and other expatriates, although Belgian paratroopers were denied access to Kinshasa from across the river in Brazzaville, apparently because Mobutu was unhappy with the Belgian government's lack of financial and diplomatic support (Leslie, 1993: 170). The Western community blamed the Mobutu regime for its role in the explosion of violence that engulfed the urban centers. The Zairian masses knew that Mobutu had orchestrated the violence. Once again, the opposition coalition urged President Mobutu to step down. In his usual manner, Mobutu blamed the Union Sacrée for initiating the mass riots and

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151 The printing of new money went against the monetary policies of the HCR transitional government in its attempt to curb inflation and work within the already collapsed formal economy. The Mobutu government, having had experience with these financial problems in the past, did what it always did: print new money when the old money is gone. According to one estimate by the US Department of State, the rate of inflation at the introduction of Mobutu's new 5million-zaire banknote in 1993 was 8300 percent! See Clark (1995).

152 The estimated death toll at more than 1,000 came from reports of human rights activist groups.

153 There is controversy over whether or not Ambassador Bernard's death was accidental; some reports claim he was shot by stray bullets while others maintain gunfire was aimed at his office window.
demonstrations, and used the opportunity to insist upon the replacement of Tshisekedi as prime minister and opposition leader.

The violence of the Second Pillage, the political tension resulting from the stalemate, and the dissolution of the National Conference threatened a total breakdown of political order in Zaire. The situation was further complicated by the existence of parallel governments. The two blocs formed their own governments in 1993 when the political stalemate prevented them from working together. Each genuinely believed in their respective sovereign powers.

3.4.3: Parallel governments and the notion of dual power.

The Union Sacrée kept the transitional government that had been elected in August 1992 prior to the dissolution of the national conference. Mobutu installed his own government under the prime ministership of Faustin Birindwa, one of his loyal supporters. This left two prime ministers on the scene - the elected Tshisekedi and the appointed Birindwa - and two parallel governments engaged in a political standoff. Mobutu's expertise at playing his opponents against each other, thus rendering them helpless, was apparent in this latest strategy of parallel power. An ultimatum was issued in January 1994. Mobutu agreed to dismiss the Birindwa government provided the dissolution of the HCR took place. Then, a new transitional legislature - the Haut Conseil de la République-parlement de transition (HCR-PT) - would decide upon two contestants for prime ministership: opposition front-man Tshisekedi and Mobutu's chosen man, Molumba Lukoji. The ultimatum circumvented the authority of the HCR (which still had not agreed to its dissolution). The Mobutu regime was widely condemned for this latest tactic, especially since it appeared that Mobutu was intent upon the restoration of the political institutions and neopatrimonial policies of the Second Republic. With little else to do but acquiesce, the opposition agreed to the ultimatum and the HCR was replaced with the HCR-PT.

In concluding this section, one major thought comes to mind: the petty disputes and symbolic gestures of change (the classic example: changing the HCR to the HCR-PT) appeared to overshadow the purpose of the conference, the Haut Conseil, and the transition combined. What is evident is that the inability of the opposition to shake the Mobutu regime and bring about political change had less to do with its lack of organisation and strength - despite overwhelming support - than with the neopatrimonial nature of the formal and informal political institutions of the Mobutu regime. Mobutu blocked the transitional process from every angle, creating frustration and division within the opposition and discouragement within the local populations. He took advantage of the sad reality that the Union Sacrée had "...no real political strategy of transformation...no real organised political alternative. People wanted a new regime, a better regime - that was all" (Bratton
and van de Walle, 1997: 107). Exploring these ideas and the failures of the opposition coalition to effect regime change in the first four years of the transition constitute the discussion in the next section.

3.5: The transition process is blocked.

It would be futile in this project to describe in detail every event and circumstance that transpired from 1994 to 1996. Already, enough has been illustrated to yield an idea of the confusion and violence that characterised the transition process of the early 1990s. Among other details, two critical ones that illustrated the outcome of the transition have been demonstrated. First, the opposition coalition was confronted with several seemingly insurmountable challenges. Some of these challenges were attributed to the internal composition of the coalition; others came from external conditions. Second, the ways in which President Mobutu manipulated the transitional process actually worked to sustain his political and military power. The neopatrimonial nature of the regime was largely responsible for the success with which Mobutu blocked the transition process.

In one sense, the objective of this section is to conclude the discussion of the transitional process and review the reasons that its outcome was blocked. In another sense, though, it is hoped that the negative results of the transition process will be seen in a context which proposes that the political game in Zaire was not yet over. Though the opposition coalition failed in terms of its primary objective - to remove the Mobutu regime from power - the years of political struggle were not in vain. Evidence of state collapse, the climate of exhaustion within the context of transition negotiations, the frustration of the opposition bloc, the decreasing ability of the government forces to continue their campaign of repression against the Zairean masses - these conditions would not disappear. There was no turning back the political processes that had begun in 1990. Whatever the outcome, political change was imminent. With that in mind, although the factors that worked against the opposition coalition during the transition are legion, several are worth sustained attention.

3.5.1: Internal weaknesses in the Union Sacrée.

One factor stems from the lack of organisation within the opposition coalition. Theoretically, if opposition groups hope to advance their demands for reform within the political apparatus, then they need to build an organised coalition. Anthony Oberschall argues that "[m]obilising the resources of disorganised collectivities is far costlier than doing it within solidarity groups..." (1972: 306). The Union Sacrée had thus far been unable to obtain a unified structure or strategy to
do this in Zaire. As in other neopatrimonial systems, there were few Zairean organisations strong enough to effectively contest the regime. It became apparent that the cohesion of the opposition coalition was falling apart under the pressure of sustained conflict with the Mobutu government, in part because of divergent group interests and also due to an increasingly radical leadership. The increasingly divergent interests of the opposition groups within the coalition bear further analysis, as does "Tshisekedi's insistence on his legitimate claim to the office" of prime minister, despite the installation of new transitional governments (Vanderlinden, 1996: 1018).

In the first place, the organisation of the opposition coalition was handicapped by a leadership comprised of "self-centered seekers of political power and material benefits" (Nzongola, 1994a: 23). These were not men who were true patriots concerned with genuine political change and the improvement of the general welfare of the Zairean people. Even Tshisekedi, the so-called "father" of the opposition movement, had been compromised in his position. Nzongola contends that Tshisekedi, like former opposition leaders Patrice Lumumba (1958-60) and Pierre Mulele (1963-68), was "...incapable of delivering the goods to [his] followers, since [he was] defeated before [he] could govern by the...enemies [in this case, the Mobutu regime] in the political class, who relied on their control over the key organs of state power - the repressive apparatus and the central bank..." (1994a: 31).

Tshisekedi's failure to lead, however, was not necessarily his fault. After all, he did have the support of the Zairean masses as oppositional leader. Most Zaireans were willing to overlook his past history as a member of the Mobutu government because he had been radically and publicly opposed to the authoritarian dictatorship since the early 1980s. Nevertheless, the antagonism between the two adversaries - Mobutu and Tshisekedi - was not just in political matters; it was personal and that fact did not assist the effective leadership of the opposition coalition. As Nzongola argues, "Mass support in the absence of a strong organisation and an appropriate political strategy is not enough for effective political change" (1994a: 31).

In addition, the opposition coalition made the mistake of focusing upon politics rather than policy and reform in the national conference, the HCR, and the HCR-PT. The Union Sacrée had sought the implementation of a new political system that would determine who would have political power instead of discussing what should be done with the power once it was gained. Admittedly, opposition forces were anxious to establish the legal rules of the political game and secure a modicum of power for themselves. However, Tshisekedi and the other opposition leaders in the Union Sacrée were forced to make deals in order to advance even a small step during the transition process. This compromised their position and access to much-needed resources. Again, the political
culture of deal-making and patron-client ties is blamed on the legacy of neopatrimonialism; less emphasis is given to processes of political change that foster transparency and accountability (Nzongola, 1994a: 31).

Another obstacle placed in the path of the opposition was the increased fragmentation of the Union Sacrée along ethnic divisions. One African analyst argues that this lack of unity within the coalition is the main factor behind the failure of the opposition forces to effect (democratic) political change (Limam, 1991: 23). The situation was not improved by the fact that the coalition was mobilised moreso along communal lines than associational lines. Even so, primary blame should fall upon Mobutu for encouraging ethnic divisions by offering incentives in exchange for support of his regime and other methods of manipulation that he had perfected as a result of the neopatrimonial legacy of political institutions in Zaire, both formal and informal. Lemarchand observes that "it is in the nature of ...[neopatrimonial] states to impede the growth of associational ties other than those based on patron-client nets, ethnic and kinship affiliations, personal favours and kickbacks" (1992b: 181).

In other words, a characteristic of neopatrimonial regimes is an absence of developed civil society groups. Therefore, a persistent concern of political analysts of African transitions in neopatrimonial regimes is "the extent to which ethnic politics stifles the growth and effectiveness of autonomous organisations..." and therefore compromises the development of genuine associational groups. This concern transferred to the specific case of Zaire (Holm, 1992: 87). Whether the coalition had already been so marred with ethnic overtones and conflict that a unified opposition was impossible was a worrisome reality. Opposition groups within the coalition were continually competing among themselves for higher power positions, material rewards, and ethnic prerogatives.

Still another factor concerned the resources available to the Union Sacrée. Patterns of mobilisation were affected by the opposition coalition's access to resources. The group-conflict approach that Tilly advocates separates resources into three categories: normative, coercive, and utilitarian. He writes:

Normative resources include the commitments of men to ideals, groups, and other people [loyalties, knowledge]; coercive resources include the means of punishing other men and limiting the alternatives open to them [soldiers, weapons, equipment, military technology]; utilitarian

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154Tilly acknowledges that the terminology used (normative, coercive, and utilitarian) is borrowed from Amitai Etzioni (1968), but the idea of categories is commonplace. See Peter SEDERBERG for another classification of resources; he breaks resources down into 6 groups: economic, political, status, information, coercion, and organisation resources (1994: 23). However, in essence the same types of resources are given in the various category schemes.
resources include all the rest, especially those things men find rewarding to acquire [wealth, goods, information services] (1978: 69).

If that is the case, then the opposition coalition had severe deficiencies when it came to resources and access to them. The lack of resources with which to advance alternative claims upon the Mobutu government was a key to its failure to implement successful regime change. Normative resources were in good enough condition - the opposition had widespread loyalty from the Zairian masses. But otherwise, coercive and utilitarian resources were lacking. The Union Sacrée was underfinanced and it could not compete with the fiscal power of the Mobutu regime (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 167). Accordingly, without the necessary resources, especially coercive, Zaire’s opposition coalition - despite its widespread support - was unable to realise or act fully upon its opportunities to lead a transition process to regime change.

3.5.2: External impediments to the success of the Union Sacrée.

In contrast, the Mobutu government had enough resources to prevent the opposition from posing a serious threat to regime power. In part, the likelihood that Zaire’s political transition would develop into a full-scale political and armed attempt to overthrow the Mobutu regime was dependent on the extent to which the government routinely employed violence in the repression of the opposition coalition and the Zairian masses (Tilly, 1975: 546). The Mobutu regime relied upon its repressive tactics to subdue and intimidate the population at large. A weakening in its ability to repress the Zairian opposition coalition would be tantamount to the demise of the Mobutu regime.

One point to consider that has not been discussed at length is the role of the international community. I specified in the beginning of this project that the focus was primarily domestic and political. It still is. But that is not to say that the external environment did not influence internal politics in Zaire. In fact, the next section is devoted entirely to regional influences on the Zairian processes of political change in the 1990s. In the meantime, it is important to briefly address the disappointing, almost non-existent role and interest of the global community in the transitional struggles of the Zairian people. A contradiction of sorts manifests itself as we grapple with these issues. On the one hand, there is the view that had the Western powers taken a more serious interest in the developments of the transition process, had they played more of a role, perhaps Zaire’s transition would not have been blocked. Perhaps regime change would have occurred. On the other hand, the analysis, advice, and opinion that the Western community did offer was done so with little understanding of the complexity and reality of the Zairian situation.

Then, there is the debate that has been waged by African scholars for decades; they argue that African problems must be solved with African solutions. The Western community should stop
meddling. One Zairian scholar complained, "Even our thinking about our own future is done for us by others!" (M'baya, 1993: 360). Do these arguments in fact have a strong case in light of the imposition of Western ideals upon the African crisis? They do. Unfortunately, these debates exceed the boundaries of this thesis. That is not to say they are unimportant, though.

In the 1990s, Western governments in particular criticised the Mobutu regime for its dictatorial leadership style; foreign aid and investment declined; and political friendships cooled considerably between Mobutu and leading members of governments, namely Belgium, France and the United States. Even so, having condemned and criticised Mobutu's blatant violation of basic human rights, endemic corruption, and political repression, these same governments still recognised his regime as the legitimate Zairian government. And it was believed that solutions to Zaire's political and economic problems could only be made as long as Mobutu played a leadership role in the transitional process.

American politicians in particular argued that the transition process to a more 'democratic' government system could not occur without the acceptance and active participation of the incumbent President. They and other external groups, including European governments and donors, conducted their own analyses of the Zairian process of transition and according to David Gould, "...proposed institutional reforms as a solution, stressing administrative and managerial modernisation and pinpointing mismanagement as one of the major causes, if not the major cause of the [transition] crisis" (1980: Preface, xiii). What about the role of the huge and inefficient public bureaucracy? Or what about the special role of administrative corruption that begins with Mobutu and trickles down to the lowliest government employee on the streets? Most critically, how does one propose to reform a system built upon the informal foundations of neopatrimonialism that are so ingrained in the institutional structures of the regime? Neopatrimonialism was not an exclusively indigenous phenomenon. It developed partially as a result of the patrimonial policies of the colonial European powers - the same powers that now believe they know the solutions to the problems they helped to create in the first place? A poignant statement confirms these frustrations: "[A] poor diagnosis of the causes [and conditions] of the Zairian crisis has tended to lead to policy prescriptions which exacerbate rather than solve the underlying problems" (Gould, 1988: Preface, xii). The pages of time cannot be turned back on the "Zairian Crisis", nor can the processes of transition that Zairians set in motion in the 1990s. Still, the chances that a peaceful transition will take place have diminished along with the failures of the Union Sacrée.

In the end, a true transitional government with authority to effect political change had yet to materialise. The Zairian masses were discouraged and agitated by Mobutu's repeated efforts to
block the transition process. Mobutu was pleased that he had achieved his goal to halt the process. The interplay of political forces - that is, the interactions between the government and opposition coalition, between the groups within the coalition, and between members of the government - created differences that could not be reconciled within a system whereby Mobutu still held the reigns of power. Nicholas van de Walle concurs that "[r]eal political change is unlikely as long as the ruler remains, since he made all the rules" (1994: 475). Mobutu's announced plan to open the political forum in 1990 was an insincere and tactical decision, made under pressure from both internal and external forces. There had never been any intention on his part of seeing the transition process through to regime change primarily because his regime was governed under a legacy of neopatrimonialism which negated the surrendering of his personal political power and authority.

What would it take to "unblock" the transition process in Zaire? After all, high levels of government repression were a regular feature of Zairean politics. Thus, the incapacity of the government to repress the opposition coalition and the Zairean masses would require, among other things, a decrease in the coercive resources it controlled. The political environment was fraught with contention; interactions between the incumbent regime and the opposition coalition were characterised by competitive struggles to (a) influence the subject population and (b) access more resources. The domestic environment has been examined up to this point; perhaps what was needed was a series of external crises to influence the transitional process in the favour of the opposition to the Mobutu regime. This idea is explored in the following section.

3.6: The regional environment intensifies Zaire's internal political conflict.

Most political analysts agree that processes as complex as regime transition and change cannot be analysed exclusively from the domestic-oriented position. The importance of external factors and actors should not be overlooked. It is in the degree attached to their importance that controversy is stirred. This debate was raised in the first chapter (1.2.1.1). One view maintained that external factors should predominate in explanations of regime transition; after all, no regime lives in isolation. The opposing view held that primary emphasis should be given to the domestic factors in analyses of regime transition. The conclusion was made that external factors (i.e. aid conditionality, SAPs) alone cannot account for regime change and must be seen as secondary to the domestic environment, its actors, organisations and institutions. Bayart concurs, "External dynamics played an essentially secondary role in the collapse of authoritarian regimes" (1993: Preface, xi). As a result, I have chosen to focus less upon factors that stem from the external environment, not because I question their influence in processes of regime transition.
Nevertheless, this next section is devoted to an examination of the regional environment in Central Africa because it definitely played a role (however secondary) in shaping the internal processes of transition and change in Zaire. There is a purpose served by offering some conjecture that binds external factors to internal conditions of political change - to disprove arguments that reject international approaches altogether. With that in mind, this section endeavours to briefly explore the regional conflict in Central Africa during the early-to-mid 1990s. Specifically, I intend to discuss how the genocide in Rwanda and the subsequent dislocation of peoples affected the turmoil in Zaire, especially in the eastern provinces where, as Chapter 4 will demonstrate, the impetus for regime change was born with the emergence of an armed coalition of forces.

3.6.1: The "domino theory" of political action.

Regional stability was jeopardised by the wars in Rwanda and Burundi. This had serious consequences for Zaire. The "domino theory" - sometimes referred to as "the demonstration effect", the "bandwagon", or "contagion" - is a useful analytical phenomenon in these circumstances: the main premise of this theory suggests that political events and turmoil in one country often stir up similar events in neighbouring countries.\textsuperscript{155} A regional environment that promotes conflict - political or otherwise - often facilitates conflict across international borders, witness Central Africa. How does an environment promote conflict? Is it not the actors who commit the actions that in turn create an environment of resistance and opposition to the existing political institutions of authority? Arguably yes. Even so, the spillover of regional tensions into Zaire's already volatile atmosphere threatened a complete breakdown of interactions between the government, the opposition coalition, and the Zairian population at large. The culprit was ethnic conflict.

3.6.2: Ethnic conflict and genocide.

The ethnic conflict in Central Africa has a historical depth that reaches back decades, even centuries to precolonial African societies. To trace the roots and results of the tensions would be a difficult - if not impossible - task, and one that I will not attempt in this study.\textsuperscript{156} Nonetheless, it is imperative that we recognise how integral the ethnic history of the Central African peoples was to the political crises that shook the region's fragile stability in the 1990s. An unfortunate result of the

\textsuperscript{155}See Hill and Rothchild (1986); Huntington (1962); and Mazrui (1969) for explanations of this type of 'domino' theory, or their particular versions of the same theory.

\textsuperscript{156}For a detailed examination of ethnic hostilities in Central Africa, a useful essay is written by John F. Clark (1995). He relates the mounting tensions in the eastern regions in a comprehensive analysis of ethnicity. Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja (1996), in a surprisingly brief article, also manages to reveal a considerable understanding of the complexities of the ongoing ethnic tensions in the Great Lakes region. He blames the conflict in part on the political alignments of the Mobutu regime, arguing that Mobutu's regional policies exacerbated tensions in eastern Zaire between the ethnic groups.
protracted conflict in the Great Lakes region is that war has "produce[ed] a generation that knows not peace, education, family values and civility; [but rather] a generation bred in violence and knowledgeable only about force, fear and hatred" (Ibrahim, 1995: 133). In other words, the younger generation has undergone a crude process of 'dehumanisation' in the sense that the value of human life has been negatively compromised by war.

Burundi had been exposed to extreme ethnic violence and fighting since the late 1980s. Tens of thousands of people had been massacred from 1988 through June 1993 when the installation of a Hutu-dominated regime occurred. Several months later, fighting broke out again; this time, hundreds of thousands of refugees fled to neighbouring Rwanda. Tensions between governments, not to mention intertribal animosities, were high. Should the genocide in Rwanda have come as a surprise, then, given the history of deep hatred between the ethnic groupings, particularly the Hutus and the Tutsis? One of the worst crimes of the century was committed in Central Africa in 1994. The tremendous human loss, the costs of survival, the obliteration of political and economic infrastructure...these are wounds that do not heal quickly.

To say that the results of the Rwandan genocide of 1994 had serious repercussions in neighbouring Zaire - and going further, even served as an indirect catalyst for the overthrow of Mobutu three years later - would not be too far off the mark. Lemarchand remarks that, "Few situations are more threatening to the process of [transition and political change] than the violent feedback of ethnic strife from state to region and back again into the domestic arena" (1992a: 180). Zaire had Hutus and Tutsis living in its eastern provinces, so the ethnic conflict was interwoven among the three countries. Rwanda and its southern neighbour Burundi suffered enormous losses due to ethnic hostilities exchanged between the larger Hutu tribal groupings and the minority Tutsis. The fall of the Habyarimana and Ntaryamira regimes in Rwanda and Burundi, the extermination of more than 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus in a period of a few months, and the military comeback of Paul Kagame's Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) unleashed a reign of terror in the Great Lakes region, including Zaire.

3.6.3: Rwandan refugees is Zaire.
The reign of terror in Rwanda urged the remaining civilian populations to flee for safer land across the borders into Zaire and Tanzania. Unfortunately the refugee camps set up in the eastern provinces of Zaire's North and South Kivus did not turn out to be much safer. The bulk of refugees

157Both presidents of Rwanda and Burundi were killed in a plane crash in April 1994; the death of the Rwandan president sparked the genocide.
were Rwandan Hutus who genuinely feared retribution for the part they may have played in the massacres of the Tutsi population. Mixed in with the Hutu civilians, however, were the killers from the former Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR) and the extremist Interahamwe militia group. Thus, not only were the refugee camps a humanitarian disaster with severe socio-economic problems (malnutrition, disease, sanitation, overcrowding), but the camps provided a suitable hiding place for those responsible for the genocide. The génocidaires used their own people as protection; one journalist called it their "human shield...to gain access to food, water and medical treatment" in the camps (Allen, 1997: 166).

Soon the camps were controlled by the génocidaires. FAR soldiers and militiamen were rearmed, courtesy of the Mobutu government and the French government.158 They were given the freedom to continue their extermination of the Tutsis from the camps. They launched sporadic assaults across the border against the Tutsi-controlled government in Kigali. On the Zairian front, they collaborated with Mobutu's local troops to stir up trouble for Zaireans of Tutsi origin, otherwise known as the Banyamulenge. Accordingly, a climate conducive to political regime change was created with the dislocation of peoples caused by the genocide, the heavy casualties, the material losses, and the high numbers of armed men and women (Laqueur, 1968: 501). The external environment had transcended Zaire's boundaries and added more problems to the already unlimited number confronting the Mobutu regime and the 'on-and-off' process of transition.

Ironically, President Mobutu - in a manner characteristic of neopatrimonial rulers - used the refugee crisis to his advantage in an attempt to regain power and restore legitimacy that had been lost prior to the escalation of the ethnic conflict in Rwanda and Burundi. The tensions in the eastern provinces gave Mobutu an opportunity to suspend (once again) transitional proceedings in Kinshasa. He also appealed to the Western community for assistance in dealing with the refugee situation and forcefully insisted that he would do everything in his power to alleviate the suffering of the dislocated peoples. But, as Christopher Clapham warns, neopatrimonial rulers "...are basically concerned to use external resources - from armaments on the one hand, to [refugee] relief on the other - as a means of consolidating their own hold on power" (1994: 436). Mobutu officially collaborated with the French government (under the relief programme, Opération Turquoise) in making plans to solve the problems raised by the refugee situation. Unofficially, he accepted aid

158 Colette Braeckman has written extensively on Mobutu and the decrepit Zairean state. In an article on the events leading up to the revolution, she makes some bold claims against the French government, attaching most of the blame for the refugee crisis and ongoing rebel skirmishes in eastern Zaire to the manipulations of the French government as it attempts to hold onto its weakening power in Africa (1997: 130). While the French government certainly played a role, there were more significant regional actors involved, such as the Rwandan and Burundese government.
(intended for the refugees) and overlooked the rearming of the ex-FAR troops and the Interahamwe militia that would enable them to "finish the job" in Rwanda. By the end of 1994, the eastern regions of Zaire were undergoing intense ethnic, economic and political strife, largely due to the refugee crisis and the spillover effects of instability in Rwanda and Burundi.

In the west, Kinshasa was embroiled in political struggles and stalemates, both of which intermittently dominated the arena and induced acts of political violence. The Mobutu regime had thus far managed to prevent the opposition coalition from mobilising to its full potential, despite widespread support for the latter. The tenuous grip that the regime had on political power, however, was slowly weakening. Lacking the financial resources with which to pay the civil servants and maintain an army, overwhelmed with corruption within government institutions, and working with an ailing president presented the government with seemingly insurmountable problems by the mid-1990s. With public resources at an all-time low, the Mobutu government could no longer pay its civil servants or the salaries of its army. This was a critical moment for the government because it could no longer rely on the bureaucratic "client" administration to adhere its allegiance to "patron" Mobutu, nor could it depend upon coercive force and army loyalty in the face of growing opposition. Chris Allen concludes that "in failing to pay salaries [the Mobutu regime]...signed the death warrant it had drafted by its own gross corruption, for it led to the actions of [an armed political struggle] that in turn caused the regime's collapse" (1992: 46).

In sum, this section has illustrated that the external factors which radiated from the intertribal crises in Rwanda and Burundi had important implications in the domestic environment of transition and change in Zaire. Yes, their role was secondary to that of internal forces in determining the course of Zaire's transition attempt. However, to ignore the impact of ethnic conflict in the Great Lakes region would be synonymous with the exclusion of precipitant causes of regime change in Zaire, as will become evident in the next chapter. To this end, the dichotomy between external and internal factors, interests and actors needs to be further explored if a comprehensive analysis of regime transition and change indeed constitutes the focus of this thesis.

3.7: Concluding comments.

With the dissolution of the Second Republic in 1990, the political landscape of Zaire was transformed and the process of regime transition unfolded. Like other neopatrimonial African regimes confronted with severely distorted political and socioeconomic problems, the Mobutu

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159President Mobutu had been diagnosed with terminal cancer in the 1980s. He had made several trips to Europe for treatment, but his health was clearly failing him by the early 1990s.
regime in fact provided the impetus for political transition in Zaire. Following domestic and international pressure to reform, President Mobutu opened the political forum in 1990 and made initial concessions of reform to appease the Zairian masses' demands for political change. Opportunities for political expression had never before been tolerated by the Mobutu regime.

Hence, with relaxed restrictions and lowered costs for participating in collective political action, groups within Zairian society began to mobilise and expand the public space. The new contenders, led by the UDPS, formed the Union Sacrée coalition and combined their resources for better leverage against the regime. Most political analysts will agree with Michael Bratton in his argument that "the greatest challenge [to authoritarian rule]...is likely to come from new or revived identities...[that have the]...capacity for collective action" (1994: 61).

The opposition movement received widespread support from the Zairian people. A conjunctures of several elements accelerated the process of transition. This chapter examined the combination of these various elements in order to determine the ways in which they shaped the political environment such that regime transition was set in motion. These characteristics were identified as the prevalence of anti-Mobutu sentiment among the masses, the polarisation of the masses, divisions within both the opposition coalition and Mobutu's ruling class, exacerbating responses by the Mobutu government against the popular opposition, and the increased use of violence as a strategy for political change. Altogether, these factors facilitated the development of a process of political transition.

By the end of 1992, however, the failure of the National Conference to effect any lasting political change was a discouraging reality to the opposition coalition. The Union Sacrée had sought, through a peaceful mechanism, to implement political reform. Yet it was weakened by internal dissension and ethnic-based hostilities between member groups. Moreover, the collective interests that normally push a group to mobilise were instead so diverse and disorganised that they were detrimental to the process of transition. In part this was reflective of the problems of leadership and legitimacy within the opposition forces, but more critically evident was the role that President Mobutu played in the transition process. Like other incumbent rulers in Africa's neopatrimonial regimes, Mobutu sought to retain his constitutional authority, even though increasing Western donor pressure had forced him to implement some reform measures or risk losing foreign aid and investment altogether. Still, he manipulated and divided the opposition coalition at every possible angle. The concessions he made to the political reform process were limited and lacked authenticity.
Despite popular support for the opposition coalition, the *Union Sacrée* lacked the resources, especially coercive, needed to mobilise and advance its claims in the transition process. Without the resources, there was little chance that it could mount an effective campaign to overthrow the Mobutu regime. By 1996, however praiseworthy the opposition coalition was in its attempts to remove Mobutu from power, the harsh reality of the *Union Sacrée*’s failure was evident in the continued political tensions, governmental repression, and a blocked transition. President Mobutu had capitalised on the internal conflict within the opposition coalition and claimed that he was the only one capable of governing Zaire.\(^{160}\)

Relentless political demands from the opposition coalition, in addition to increased acts of political violence and protest, took their toll on the Mobutu regime. Furthermore, a dwindling economy, a corrupt bureaucratic administration, as well as declining coercive means damaged the government’s capacity to maintain the levels of repression that had thus far prevented political change. In one sense, Mobutu’s decision to allow public competition in the political arena made his own government more vulnerable and therefore susceptible to attacks. All in all, with each passing event, domestic and regional, the blocked transition moved closer to a point at which the right combination of actors, opportunities and circumstances would "unblock" the process and enable regime change to take place. Jack Goldstone contends that when "normal political processes for conflict mediation and resolution fail...", alternative measures are taken that include potentially violent situations that reflect an extreme adaptation of the normal political struggles to the surrounding environment (1980: 429). With that final thought, this chapter concludes the discussion of regime transition in Zaire through means of attempted negotiation. The next chapter will focus on the political armed struggle that re-opened the transition process in the fall of 1996, thus enabling regime change to come about less than a year later.

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\(^{160}\)The fact that the Mobutu government, by most political standards, had ceased to function effectively in terms of providing for and protecting its population is less of an issue than is the reality that, for purposes of this analysis, the government had the coercive capacity to enforce its rule while the opposition forces had no resources with which to counteract.
CHAPTER 4: THE ONSET OF REGIME CHANGE: The AFDL coalition's armed political struggle to overthrow the Mobutu regime.

4.0: Introductory comments.

As recently as June 1996, anyone who predicted that the path from ethnic political conflict in eastern Zaire would lead a year later to the collapse of one of the longest-surviving African dictatorships would have been ignored, if not openly refuted for such outrageous thoughts. Instead, common predictions for Zaire's political future ascribed to such diverse scenarios as the following. In one scenario, President Mobutu and his government would continue to dominate with little change in the established political order. A second scenario suggested that the Mobutu government would agree to a power-sharing arrangement of undetermined agenda with the opposition coalition. This seemed unlikely, however, given the neopatrimonial heritage of authoritarianism ingrained in Mobutu's leadership style. A third scenario predicted that tensions would increase in Zaire such that the country would implode in a violent, anarchic bloodbath.\textsuperscript{161} Despite the development of regime transition in the 1990s, a legitimate struggle to overthrow the Mobutu regime was unforeseen, in part because the conjunction of conditions, actors and circumstances that facilitate regime change had yet to appear. Still, the overthrow of the Mobutu regime in May 1997 marked the end of an eight-month armed struggle led by a coalition of mostly Zairean groups, with the support of the Zairean masses. Moreover, it occurred with remarkable speed and was reported as one of the least bloody regime changes in African history. Glynne Evans makes a poignant observation about Zaire's struggle for political change:

\begin{quote}
Zaire had been on 'early-warning' lists for years as a fragile state whose collapse, without a clear successor regime to Mobutu, could precipitate widespread anarchy. When it emerged that the Zairean armed forces demonstrated no will to fight and that local communities embraced the AFDL's progress, the uprising achieved an unexpected success, thereby fulfilling its goal without help from outside the region (1997: 78).
\end{quote}

This chapter examines the final struggle for regime transition and change in Zaire.\textsuperscript{162} Even though the Union Sacrée had failed to negotiate transition in the first half of the 1990s, it nevertheless set

\textsuperscript{161}The prediction that the latter scenario would occur was made by several foreign governments. In fact, some members of the American government likened the possibility and escalation of bloodshed in Zaire's political conflict to proportions synonymous with the holocaust of World War II. This view was based on the "domino theory" that argues when one country erupts into political violence and chaos, others (especially neighbours) often succumb to their own brand of internal war for political change.

\textsuperscript{162}In the various literature on events in Zaire that occurred from October 1996 to May 1997, several different terms were used to describe what happened: liberation struggle, internal war, conflict, insurrection, rebellion, insurgency, revolution, uprising, guerilla movement, and rebel offensive. Theorists argue that these terms have different meanings and in fact they do. In this thesis, I have avoided the use of
the stage for the possibility of regime change. By 1994, Zaire's transition process had been blocked by Mobutu's repeated tactics of manipulation and co-optation. For lack of a better phrase, the transition was 'put on hold' until such a time when the struggles could begin anew. That is not to say that efforts to transform Zaire's political landscape had completely ground to a halt, but a jump start was needed - something to set the transition process back on course. This chapter explores the precipitant factors and the renewed struggle for regime change. Particular attention is paid to the emergence of the new AFDL coalition, the changes its existence brought to the political environment, and the months of the armed struggle. The process of transition changed in nature when the AFDL appeared on the scene. It was no longer a political struggle for regime change; it had the added quality of an armed political struggle.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first attempts a brief summary of the roots of the ethnic conflict in eastern Zaire. The second applies the mobilisation model to the AFDL coalition. Its interests, resources, leadership, mobilisation, and opportunities are assessed. A critical appraisal of the strategies employed by the AFDL in the course of the struggle constitutes the bulk of the third section. A discussion of the role of the opposition coalition and the external participants in the struggle will also be undertaken. Finally, the fourth section provides an analysis of the governmental counter-response to the AFDL's rebel advance.

Questions that are relevant to the chapter's objectives include:

1. What factors appear to have been most important in allowing the AFDL to emerge as an alternative bloc to both the government and the opposition coalition?
2. What factors contributed to the rapid success of the AFDL in its campaign to overthrow the Mobutu regime?
3. Why did the Zairean people resort to (potentially) violent means for achieving their political objectives in 1996? Why not earlier?
4. Was the struggle for regime change in Zaire at all compromised by the influence of regional actors?

Several of these terms - specifically internal war, insurgency, revolution, and guerrilla movement. However, other terms, including rebellion, uprising, and rebel offensive do accurately depict the struggles for regime change that took place and will be used periodically. Most often, I use a combination of "political-armed-struggle". Another point of clarification: the AFDL was initially referred to as a coalition of rebel groups - "rebel" in the sense that they had not been involved with the opposition movement, nor had they participated in the National Conference and early years of the transition process. Most importantly, however, they were an armed coalition of groups, this set them apart as rebels.
In general, political situations leading to regime change are highly diverse. The background conditions and the causal factors vary from case to case. The challenge in this case is to examine those conditions and factors that accompanied the regime change in Zaire. The combined impact of the following political factors prompted the struggle that began in eastern Zaire: the government's violent repression, a breakdown of relations between the government and the opposition coalition and the subsequent failure of the latter to effect political change, the population's sense of relative deprivation, and an openness expressed by the masses to new opportunities for mobilisation against the Mobutu regime.

Before we proceed to the first section, a few brief comments on the political environment in Zaire are in order. In the preceding chapter, the objective was to examine the Zairean political situation in the early 1990s. The role of the opposition coalition in its efforts to negotiate (nonviolent) political change within Zaire was assessed at length. By the mid-1990s, every possible method of seeking political reform through peaceful means had been thwarted by the Mobutu regime's repressive violence. Typical of neopatrimonial regimes, it appeared unlikely that a situation would emerge in which Mobutu was not the dominant political force. Unless the opposition coalition was willing and able to consider armed force as a means to political change, the options were limited. The decision, however, whether to follow an 'armed struggle' route was taken from the Zairean people when the rebellion began in the Kivu provinces. Noted author S.N. Sangmpam argues that sometimes, "[o]nly a military frontal attack of great magnitude, in a changed international context, [can] change the regime" (1997: 14). Perhaps armed force was the only remaining solution to a future without President Mobutu.

Under the right circumstances, the political situation in Zaire could bring about regime change. The question, then, concerned what were the 'right' circumstances. Already, the Union Sacrée had emerged in opposition to the Mobutu regime and demanded political reform. The majority of the Zairean population supported the opposition coalition. Even so, although the ability of the Mobutu regime to suppress the Union Sacrée waned in the mid-1990s, a lack of organisation, cohesion and resources prevented the coalition from effecting successful regime transition. With the emergence of the AFDL coalition, the dynamics of the struggle for a new regime changed to the advantage of the anti-Mobutu forces.

In a study of the Polish Crisis of 1980-1981, Valerie Bunce (1989) draws upon some conclusions that parallel the Zairean political crisis and regime change more than 15 years later.163 Bunce

163For further discussion of the political crisis in Poland in the early 1980s, see BUNCE (1989).
highlights some conditions that enabled regime transition. Bunce argues that Polish society was divided into organised groups (Solidarity) that were opposed to the government and widely supported in their opposition. Then, as the Polish state lost its coercive ability, the political situation took on definite qualities conducive to political change. What is most interesting, however, is Bunce's argument that in fact an external crisis exacerbated political tensions within Poland and began the process of transition.

If Poland's experience was compared to the situation in Zaire, what external crisis entered the Zairean political scene at a time when political transition was blocked, yet an opposition movement was still struggling for regime change? The ethnic tensions in the Great Lakes region, particularly in Rwanda and Burundi, compounded the political conflict in Zaire. The eastern provinces of Zaire have been a source of ethnic and political tension for decades. The secessionism of the 1960s and the Shaba uprisings of the 1970s not only illustrated the volatile nature of politics in the region, but more importantly, they placed primacy on the ethnic factor and access to resources. Therefore, a background to the ethnic political conflict in eastern Zaire in the 1990s is useful and necessary for an understanding of the onset of Zaire's regime change.

4.1: Roots of ethnic political conflict in eastern Zaire.

The year 1996 changed the course of events in Zaire for two co-dependent reasons. First, a new contending coalition, the Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaire (AFDL), emerged with the necessary resources mobilised to pose a threat to the weakening Mobutu regime. The appearance of the AFDL as a disciplined armed fighting force stood in marked contrast to the government's excuse for a military force. The regime was unable to suppress the new coalition with the same tenacity they had used to suppress the Union Sacrée. Why? The government's coercive capacity was no match for the military strength of the Alliance troops. From another angle, the failure of the Union Sacrée to negotiate political change had left the Zairean population open to other, more extreme solutions. Combined, these two factors encouraged the onset of an armed movement to overthrow President Mobutu.

There are three parts to this section: (a) the ethnic factor; (b) the precipitant factor, and (c) the refugee factor. In the first part, the objective is to trace the background of ethnic conflict in eastern

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164 The fact that the Mobutu regime was unable to suppress the AFDL, yet had managed to disable the opposition coalition, merits further discussion. In a later section that discusses the state of Mobutu's troops, I explore the tensions between government repression of the civilian opposition on the one hand, and the government's ability to repress an armed opposition on the other hand.
Zaire with respect to one group in particular: the Banyamulenge. The second part addresses what is referred to as the "precipitant" of the armed struggle. In other words, what event sparked the revolt that set the final phase of regime transition in motion? Finally, in the third part, the conflict generated by the refugee situation in eastern Zaire is explored. It could be argued that were it not for the refugee crisis in eastern Zaire, the extra motivation needed to effect regime change might not have arrived when it did.

One point to keep in mind is that timing played a significant part in the struggle for regime change in Zaire. To put it differently, political conflict had been rampant in Zaire for decades, especially in the eastern regions where ethnic hostilities pervaded most relations between groups. Attempted secession and rebellion have been common features in Zaire, yet they have failed to culminate in political regime change. Why? The cliche, "The timing was never right." presents an appropriate, if not somewhat simplistic, answer. The AFDL appeared at a time when the Mobutu government was more vulnerable than it had been since the Congo Crisis (1960-65). The "Transition" years had relentlessly, albeit slowly, weakened the power of the Mobutu regime. It would not take much to tip the balance in favour of the forces opposition to Mobutu's central government.

4.1.1: The ethnic factor in eastern Zaire.

In order to understand how Zaire's revolutionary struggle unfolded, we should be aware of the geopolitical context within which the AFDL coalition emerged. Political and ethnic conflicts in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa have an intertwined and complex history. While I cannot feasibly provide a thorough background, it is essential to understand that the seeds of revolution and radical political change were planted in the embroiled ethnic conflict that plagued the region. It was in eastern Zaire where the Katanga secession, the Kwilu rebellion, and the Shaba uprisings took place. The strongest elements of anti-Mobutu opposition in fact came from the Great Lakes region. In particular, the conflict caused by the indeterminate role and status of the Zairean Tutsis, otherwise known as the Banyamulenge, was significant. The next few paragraphs will illuminate the connection between the ethnic hostilities in eastern Zaire and the political armed

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165 See Chapter 2 for a review of the Katanga Secession and the Kwilu Rebellions (2.1), and the Shaba Wars (2.2.2.5.1), all of which originated in the eastern provinces of Zaire. Analysis and references are discussed for further information.

166 The Tutsi ethnic group in Central Africa has been a powerful force in the politics of the region for centuries. The tribe does not belong to any particular country, although most of the Tutsis live in Rwanda and Burundi. Significant portions of the Tutsi tribe have been settled in Zaire for generations. They are known as the Banyamulenge or people of the mountainous region ("Mulenge" was the name of the mountain where their ancestors settled in the 19th century).
struggle that emerged from the conflict. Indeed, the ultimate impetus for regime change came from political conflicts that had been generated by overlapping regional ethnic hostilities. Given that geography is important in the upcoming discussions of ethnic conflict in Zaire, the following map is a useful tool with which to identify and become familiar with the provinces of Zaire.

The provinces of Zaire


The Banyamulenge had been subject to discriminating government policies that restricted many of their basic citizenship rights, even though they had been established in Zaire for decades. Intermittent skirmishes in the Kivus between the Banyamulenge, other ethnic groups, and the government forces had resulted in the displacement of more than 300,000 people. In an attempt to re-assert its authority in the region, the Mobutu government implemented a series of strategic policies aimed at crushing ethnic dissident movements and "cleansing" the country of undesirable human elements, namely, the Banyamulenge. On the brink of a total breakdown of relations between contending groups in eastern Zaire, neighbouring Rwanda erupted in genocide in 1994. After the genocide, with a massive influx of Hutu refugees (more than 1.2 million fled to Zaire), the ethnic Tutsi communities in eastern Zaire found their vulnerability increasingly threatened.

In May 1995, the Mobutu government passed new legislation that forbade the Banyamulenge from acquiring more property. Land claims proved to be the most vexing issue of the conflict between
the different tribal groupings in eastern Zaire. The region was extremely overpopulated, especially with the added numbers of non-Zairean people living in the refugee camps. Land claims were therefore a contentious issue as land was in high demand. Six months following the May legislation, the government gave the indigenous tribes in eastern Zaire the right to kick the Banyamulenge off the land they owned. By May 1996, the Banyamulenge were pitted against a combined force of several groups, all of which sought the extermination of the Tutsi ethnic group, Zairean or otherwise. Not only did they have to contend with repeated attacks from a government that openly supported the Hutus and elements of its army working in cahoots with the rebel Hutus as well as an indigenous local population who saw the Banyamulenge as "foreigners", but they also had to face the Rwandan ex-Hutu FAR (Forces Armées Rwandaises) troops and the Interahamwe militia harboured in the refugee camps. To give an example of the violence that characterised the relations between the Banyamulenge and all other forces, some reports estimated that more than 2,000 Banyamulenge were massacred in a one-month period from September to October 1996 ('Genocide?', 1996: 46).

4.1.2: The "precipitant" factor.
After months of prolonged persecution, the final straw came when the Mobutu government stripped the Banyamulenge of their remaining citizenship rights. The provincial governments of North and South Kivu announced in a radio broadcast on 7 October 1996 that the Banyamulenge communities were destabilising the region and "if the [300,000-strong] Tutsi Banyamulenge did not leave Zaire within a week, they would be interned in camps and exterminated" (Nzongola, 1996: 393). The warning sparked a revolt by the Banyamulenge. In other words, seasoned political scientist Crawford Young observes that the rigid policy adopted by the Zairean government with respect to the Banyamulenge was widely perceived as the 'precipitant' factor which led to regime change in Zaire: "the armed insurrection...broke out because populations of Tutsi antecedents [Banyamulenge], long resident in Zaire, were threatened with extinction of their claim to Zairean citizenship and expulsion" (1997: 12).

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167In a country the size of Zaire, the fact that arable land comprises only about 3 percent of the total land has created sustained and intense conflict concerning the issue of property and land claims. See SOLOMON (1997).
168President Mobutu and the late president of Rwanda, Juvenal Habyarimana, were close political associates up until the latter's death in an airplane accident. After Habyarimana's death, the Mobutu regime continued its loyalty to the Hutus and assisted them in their fight against the Tutsis.
169The notion of a "precipitant" - an event that actually starts a revolution - is found in the work of Forrest D. COLBURN (1994: 40).
The political landscape in the region was immediately transformed. The Banyamulenge were joined in their struggle on the 21st of October (1996) by non-Tutsi rebel groups who had for years waged sporadic guerrilla warfare against the Mobutu regime. At the helm of the newly coordinated coalition of groups - the Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre (AFDL) - was Laurent Kabila, leader of the Parti de la Révolution Populaire (PRP). The emergence of the AFDL as a second alternative coalition to the government (Union Sacrée being the first) placed more pressure on an increasingly frail Mobutu regime. The "precipitant" event which sparked the armed struggle was linked to the refugee situation in eastern Zaire by the fact that land issues were at the center of the conflict initially.

4.1.3: The refugee factor.

Soon after the revolt began in October 1996, the international community recognised the severity of the crisis in Central Africa. The plight of the refugees was at the core of international concern. At a special session of the U.N. Security Council, demands for a humanitarian military intervention were made by several African leaders, the governments of Canada and France, and the U.N. General Secretary, Kofi Annan (Allen, 1997: 167; Braeckman, 1997: 129). The stated purpose was to protect the refugees and other innocent victims caught up in the ethnic political conflicts of the region. However, before a multinational intervention force could be assembled and despatched to the war-torn region, tens of thousands of refugees (more than 700,000) returned en masse to Rwanda of their own volition, with only minor prodding by the AFDL coalition's troops. More problematic were the vast numbers of refugees, including the ex-FAR Hutu troops and Interahamwe militia, who moved deeper (west) into the rainforests of central Zaire. Accusations of massive human rights abuses carried out by the AFDL troops against the Hutus who had remained in Zaire soon reached the press.

When questioned about the allegations that the Alliance was responsible, Kabila, in defense of the AFDL's position, claimed that the ex-FAR and Interahamwe troops were instead responsible for

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170 Two different labels have been applied to Kabila's PRP party: the Parti de la Révolution Populaire and the Parti Révolutionnaire du Peuple. While this tends to be confusing, the two names in fact denote the same party.

171 The number of refugees left in Zaire after the mass exodus to Rwanda in November is contested. Most reports suggest that there were more than 200,000 and as many as 350,000 refugees who remained in Zaire. Some of them went as far west as Congo-Brazzaville and Angola. Reports also claimed, however, that the majority of refugees did not make it far, dying either of starvation, disease, or systematic slaughtering, although the latter is also debated. For further discussion, see Allen (1997); Braeckman (1997); and Collins (1997a).

172 The accusations against the AFDL troops ranged from simple neglect of the needs of the people to a full-scale policy of extermination of the remaining Hutus in Zaire.
the massacre of Hutu refugees. Furthermore, Kabila attributed their deaths to other factors not directly associated to the AFDL's political struggle, factors such as disease and starvation. All the same, reports from various relief organisations, most notably Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), pointed to a deliberate Alliance policy of Hutu extermination. One MSF report observed: "[A]ssuming nearly 350,000 refugees fled westwards from the camps in Kivu, 190,000 remain unaccounted for; and [MSF] assumes that the bulk of these have died from privation, or been killed by AFDL troops, as a part of a 'strategy of extermination' of Hutus" (quoted in Allen, 1997: 169). Witnesses to the atrocities committed in the forests of Zaire had their stories confirmed by aerial satellite photos of mass graves in the region, although the identity of those responsible remained a contested issue.

What began as a localised rebellion against Mobutu's ethnic policies in eastern Zaire developed into a skillfully guided political armed movement to overthrow the Mobutu regime. This section explored the roots of the ethnic conflict, the history of the Banyamulenge's fight for citizenship rights, and the impact of the refugee crisis on the developing struggle for regime change. The next section will examine the appearance of the AFDL coalition through a theoretical model of group mobilisation.

4.2: The AFDL coalition and its mobilisation.

The Zairean polity was transformed with the appearance of the AFDL coalition. Unsurprisingly, questions as to its origins, its intentions, and its ability to mobilise support were raised. In this section, those questions will be addressed through an application of the mobilisation model that was introduced in Chapter 1 and subsequently applied to the Zairean case in Chapter 2. In brief, group-conflict theory is useful for its emphasis on contingent factors that explain political situations and in this case, political change. In essence, the contingent model of group interaction "assumes that one [group's] initiative prompts another actor's response and that political events cascade iteratively from one to another" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 24). In political struggles, groups are constantly acting and reacting to each other, hence the term interactive group-conflict. If we analyse the AFDL's struggle for regime change in Zaire as "a series of dynamic exchanges in which strategic actors take their cues from the behaviour of adversaries", then the neopatrimonial context in which Zaire's political games are played becomes more apparent (Bratton and van de Walle, 1992: 30). In part, the institutional heritage of neopatrimonialism in the Mobutu regime influenced the transition process in the early 1990s. It would also explain the demise of the Mobutu regime in 1997.
However, before we can look at these arguments more closely, the first priority is to discuss the political context in which the AFDL appeared. Then, the mobilisation model as it applies to the AFDL coalition will be examined at length to better understand the behaviour and political agenda of the AFDL in the struggle to bring about regime change.

4.2.1: The emergence of the AFDL.
The AFDL, unlike the Union Sacrée, was an opposition contender born outside the Zairian polity. It had therefore never advanced claims upon the government. Of equal import, the AFDL coalition stood in marked contrast to the opposition forces in another essential way: it was composed of rebel groups, armed and willingly violent, while the Union Sacrée had always maintained a nonviolent approach to its demands for political change. That is not to say that events orchestrated by the opposition coalition - such as strikes and demonstrations - did not turn violent. On the contrary, political violence was a regular feature of group interaction within the Zairian polity throughout the transition process. However, the violence that characterised many of the events organised by the Union Sacrée was initiated by the government troops. Indeed, the opposition coalition never had much choice in whether or not it opted for violence as a means to influence the transition process. It lacked the coercive resources used in most circumstances to instigate political violence. The point that needs emphasis is that the political violence which characterised the early 1990s was propagated not by the opposition coalition but rather by the government forces under Mobutu. In any case, group-conflict theory argues that violence is a normal feature in political processes of group interaction, regardless of the players. It just so happened that the AFDL was more prepared for violence - whether instigating it or reacting to it - than either the opposition coalition or the Mobutu government. An analysis of the AFDL's mobilisation will therefore be useful.

4.2.2: The mobilisation model.
The mobilisation model has been used throughout this project to describe the behaviour of both the government and the opposition, particularly in Chapter 2 detailing events prior to 1990. This section will break down the mobilisation model to its component parts in order to examine the AFDL coalition. Briefly, the parts are: (a) organisation - common values, identities, and a unifying structure, (b) interests - shared costs or benefits of a particular course of action, (c) mobilisation -

173In Tilly's group-conflict approach, he maintains that an alternative bloc - in this case, the AFDL - can emerge via three different paths. The first path is the one that the AFDL chose in Zaire: a new contender mobilises outside the polity. The other two paths involve existing contenders (either member or challenger) who reject the polity's existing operating procedures. For further discussion, see TILLY (1973: 442).
the extent of resources under collective control, and (d) opportunity - the likelihood of interaction with other groups (Tilly, 1978: 54-6). The fourth component, opportunity, will be discussed more in the subsequent section on the actual struggle to overthrow the Mobutu regime.

4.2.2.1: Organisation of the AFDL.
The foremost question that came to mind with regard to the unfolding armed struggle in Zaire was: What were the roots of the AFDL coalition? This question is more difficult than it appears at first glance. The AFDL was made up of several different groups, each with their own set of interests in the outcome of regime change. In order to determine the extent of common identity and organisation, we need to consider the groups, their leaders, and the governing structure of the coalition.

4.2.2.1.1: Participating groups.
There were four main parties integrated into the AFDL coalition: (a) Laurent Kabila's Parti de la Révolution Populaire (PRP); (b) the Alliance Démocratique des Peuples (ADP) led by Déogratias Bugera and comprised of the Banyamulenge and the Banyamasisi from North and South Kivu; (c) the Mouvement Révolutionnaire pour la Libération du Zaïre (MRLZ) from South Kivu led by Massasu Nindanga; and (d) the Conseil National de Résistance pour la Démocratie (CNRD) led by André Kisase Ngandu of the late Lumumba's Tetela tribe in the Kasai province. These four groups signed the Lemera protocol on October 18, 1996 that established the coalition and instructed Kabila as spokesman and leader of the Alliance.

In addition to these four groups, there were other elements of the Zairian polity that joined the coalition. Various military factions became involved. For instance, hundreds of ex-Katangese soldiers from the FLNC group (responsible for the Shaba uprisings of 1977 and 1978) returned to Zaire to fight alongside the Alliance troops.174 Added to this group were young Banyamulenge who had been living in Rwanda and training with the Tutsi-controlled FPR (Front Patriotique Rwandais). They returned to their homes in the Kivus to take up the cause of their families. Other groups that joined the AFDL coalition included opposition supporters who were frustrated by the failures of the Union Sacrée. And finally, members of the Zairian diaspora gathered their support for the Alliance. The AFDL was very much a conglomeration of different groups with diverse interests.175

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174 For a review of the FLNC group and its role in the Shaba uprisings, see Section 2.2.2.5.1 in the second chapter.
175 No mention has yet been made of the external groups involved in Zaire's struggle to achieve regime change. They will be dealt with in an upcoming section (4.6).
4.2.2.1.2: Kabila as leader of the AFDL coalition.

The appearance of the AFDL coalition brought together a leadership of previously unknown players in the Zairean polity. The most prominent "new man on the block" was Laurent Kabila. Little had been documented of Kabila's personal past, other than that he was a Luba from the northern part of Shaba. As for his political past, more information was available. Kabila studied political philosophy at a university in France, returning to Zaire (at that time, the First Republic of the Congo) shortly after independence in 1960 when he joined others who supported Patrice Lumumba and the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC). Soon after Lumumba's death in 1961, Kabila began to plot insurrection in eastern Congo. He was responsible for several rebellion attempts in the Ruzizi lowlands surrounding Uvira, a town on Lake Tanganyika. Implicated in the 1964 Simba massacre of more than 2,000 Zaireans in Stanleyville (now Kisangani), Kabila soon became known as a strong advocate of the nationalist agenda. Then in 1965, he met Ernesto Che Guevara of Cuba. Che worked and fought alongside Kabila at the latter's guerrilla base in the Uvira region for several months. A manuscript detailing the Cuban revolutionary's relations with Kabila invoked wide debate when the AFDL emerged with Kabila as its leader.176

In 1967, Kabila founded the Parti de la Révolution Populaire (PRP). The party was drawn from the nationalist ideology of Lumumba, but also had a strong Marxist component. In particular, Kabila was influenced by the Chinese communist strategy of market Marxism. He claimed to be a Marxist revolutionary. He even became a "war-lord" in the mountainous regions surrounding Uvira, instituting a Marxist structure of village government, agriculture, and education. Kabila's wealth in the 1960s and 1970s was credited to gold and ivory smuggling. For two decades, he remained active in his armed struggle against the Mobutu regime. He launched several guerrilla attacks that were successful in keeping the Zairean soldiers in the region at bay. Kabila's reputation as an anti-Mobutu nationalist put him in the international spotlight briefly in 1975 for the kidnapping of American students, who were later released in exchange for PRP militants. In the mid-1980s, Kabila dropped out of sight, apparently dividing his time between Dar es Salaam and North Kivu. He re-emerged in 1996 as spokesman and leader of the Alliance coalition.

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176Che Guevara wrote of his encounters with Laurent Kabila in an unpublished manuscript entitled Passages from the Revolutionary War. Che returned to Latin America (after having spent some time with Kabila in Central Africa) disillusioned with his (Kabila) rebel leadership. His diary, quoted in Vesely, revealed that "Kabila display[ed] none of the required discipline of a dedicated revolutionary..." (1997: 10).
4.2.2.1.3: Governing structure of the AFDL.

From the onset of the armed struggle, the Alliance coalition was an organised political movement with more resources and mobilisation potential than the Union Sacrée. Political theorists agree that organised groups stand a better chance of defeating other contenders, especially the government, when they effectively use their resources to mobilise and take advantage of opportunities. The opposition coalition did not have the necessary resources, but the AFDL did. Once this was evident, it did not take too much to persuade the Zairean masses to join in the renewed struggle primarily because the AFDL made regime change a salient issue.

As the armed struggle progressed, the AFDL established a de facto government in the city of Goma. This government comprised ten executive members, among them seven commissioner generals who administered throughout the "liberated" areas. Most of the members of the coalition's government belonged to the Zairean diaspora, or Zairean community resident outside Zaire. For example, the foreign affairs commissioner for Europe and Asia, Gaëtan Kakudji, arrived in Zaire from Brussels. Bizima Kahara, the foreign affairs commissioner for Africa, the Americas, and Oceania, had been working in South Africa as a medical doctor prior to the October advance. The finance commissioner, Mawamanga Mwana Nanga, was an American-educated economist living in the United States when the AFDL rebellion began. Other key AFDL government commissioners in the positions of mining, industry, information, planning and development were educated in the United States, France, and Germany.

It is important to note that the Zairean communities outside the country, particularly in France, Belgium, and the United States, had been supportive of the opposition coalition during its struggle for regime transition in the early 1990s. When the transition ground to a halt as a result of the Mobutu regime's repeated efforts to block the process, these "expatriate" Zaireans continued to lobby for political change in their respective countries of residence. When the AFDL emerged, the Zairean diaspora did not discontinue their support of the opposition movement. However their allegiance was easily transferred to the new coalition. After all, both the Alliance and the Union Sacrée were fighting against the same 'enemy': the Mobutu regime.

The diverse backgrounds of the Alliance's leadership structure initially worked to its disadvantage in political terms. The Zairean diaspora returned to take key leadership positions in the AFDL. That these new players had lived most of their adult lives outside Zaire and therefore did not have representation within the Zairean polity compounded the problems the AFDL had to confront with respect to gaining the support of the Zairean masses. This was due in part to the widespread perception of these unknown players as "foreigners". Furthermore, many indigenous groups
believed that local participation and leadership were primary. As a result, they should have been
given the senior positions, in exchange for their acceptance of the AFDL's alternative claims to
government. Eventually, the government structure, including its "foreign" elements, was accepted.
Local groups recognised that they were all striving towards the same goal: the overthrow of the
Mobutu regime. What the years of negotiated transition by the opposition coalition had failed to
do, perhaps the status of an 'armed' movement would have more of an impact on the political
struggle for a new regime without Mobutu.

The military command structure presented yet another facet of the AFDL’s organisation. Initially,
most of the army leaders - with the exception of the chief military commander, André Kisase
Ngandu - were mid-level Rwandan military officers "borrowed" for their experience and training
expertise. For example, one of the strategies the Rwandan military experience had taught them was
used effectively in Zaire. It was the idea that in times of war, the areas seized by the AFDL should
be run much as a police state. Tightly controlled grassroots cells called chembe chembe were set
up to re-educate the Zairean masses about political participation (Misser, 1997c: 11). The idea to
build the chembe chembe originated with the security commissioner, Paul Kabongo of the PRP,
who in turn had been taught by the Rwandan military commanders.

For a moment, we should explore the idea that the AFDL believed they had to "re-educate" the
masses about political participation. After all, participation had been encouraged in the Mobutu
regime through the party structure of the MPR. Moreover, the Zaireans had always been active
politically, from pre-independence, through the Congo Crisis and into the later decades during
which Mobutu consolidated his power. Although decision-making and public policy were typically
restricted to the inner ring of Mobutu's government, all Zaireans belonged to the MPR and thus
were made to feel as though they were participating in the political workings of the regime. What
was behind the AFDL's strategy of political re-education?

A full explanation is beyond the scope of this study, but two issues can be observed. First, there is
a finite line between political participation and political competition. In Zaire, the former had
been tolerated while the latter had not, as the ban on political parties up until 1990 illustrated.
Under the Mobutu regime, the Zairean masses had been taught about participatory politics only
insofar as their participation served a purpose: to keep the Mobutu regime in power. In this regard,
Zaireans had not been given the proper political education and the AFDL sought to change this.

177 For an indepth analysis of the notions of political participation and political competition, see DAHL
(1971, in particular Chapter 1); BRATTON and VAN DE WALLE (1997: 68-77).
Overlapping this first set of ideas, part of the AFDL's ideology was decidedly socialist-Marxist. As a result, the political re-education of the Zairians was intended to provide a way in which to introduce a new ideological base founded on the coalition's version of socialist democracy.

The complex issues of political re-education aside, the AFDL faced several other challenges within the lower army ranks. The obvious one was maturity. The average age of the AFDL forces was 16. Often too young to understand discipline and justice, these soldiers with their loaded guns were intimidating as they walked through the streets of AFDL-controlled towns. Another challenge concerned the ethnic factor. Although the troops were drawn mostly from Zairian indigenous groups (with the exception of a few Rwandan soldiers), ethnic segregation was a problem for the Alliance. How best to keep the troops focused on the collective goal rather than internal ethnic tensions was a constant source of stress. AFDL troops from Shaba complained of taking orders from Rwandan officers while recruits from the Kivu region lamented on the role of the Banyamulenge as rebel fighters, and so forth. One particularly galling phrase that was commonly used by the "borrowed" troops working alongside the AFDL troops claimed, "Vous, les Zairois et Nous, vos libérateurs!" (translated: "You, the Zairians and We, your liberators!") (Collins, 1997a: 280). To those with a history of opposition to the Mobutu regime, this slogan was not well-received.

Thus far, the diversity of the AFDL coalition's internal makeup has been revealed. The leadership structure, political and military, was a conglomerate of individuals representing various groups and political interests. As a result, there were times when the Alliance experienced some deep internal rifts. Still, the overall level of organisation in the AFDL was remarkably cohesive, given the speed with which it emerged as an active fighting force. It was certainly more organised than the opposition coalition had ever been in the six years since it had appeared. The collective political objectives of the AFDL coalition are partially what kept it organised and operational.

4.2.2.2: Interests of the AFDL coalition.

In review, interests are defined as "the shared advantages or disadvantages likely to accrue to the [group] in question as a consequence of various possible interactions with other [groups]" (Tilly, 1978: 54). In other words, a group's interests develop from its interaction with other groups. Given that the AFDL coalition was a mix of several different groups, the interests that developed were also the result of the interactions within the coalition itself. A diverse array of interests

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178I use the term "group" in place of the term "population" that Tilly employs because it is the AFDL group to which I am referring.
characterised the AFDL coalition. However, one idea merits attention: while there are diverse interests present at any moment during a struggle for regime change, there is a point at which a shared vision for political change takes precedence over special interests. This is the time when a coalition, such as the AFDL, has a real opportunity to make claims for political power. That same opportunity had arrived early on during the opposition coalition's transition struggle, but it was never acted upon primarily because there were no resources with which to translate the opportunity into action. In a study on political change in Latin America, O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) call this moment the popular upsurge; it occurs when "...an ephemeral activist coalition [to] which various social classes [ascribe] momentarily suspend[s] divergent interests in favour of the common goal of removing an incumbent regime" (quoted in Bratton, 1994: 62).179 In the case of Zaire, different parties and groups coalesced in the AFDL for one common objective: to overthrow the Mobutu regime and install a new regime.

Even so, let us look more closely at the conjunction of interests that defined the AFDL coalition. In its initial formation, the AFDL was comprised of the Banyamulenge, exiled Zairean, opposition supporters, army deserters, and foreign troops. In the case of the Banyamulenge, their interests ultimately lay with the defense of their rights to Zairean citizenship. The reasons that the opposition supporters lent their support to the AFDL cause stemmed from their frustrations with the delays and failures of the Union Sacrée to negotiate political transition. There were exiled Zaireans who had taken refuge in Uganda, Rwanda and other neighbouring countries who returned to Zaire to fulfill their political aspirations to participate in the overthrow of the Mobutu regime.

As for certain government troops, or "army deserters", their loyalties shifted to the AFDL out of fear and dissatisfaction with the respective brutality and lack of pay in the Zairean army. Recall that the Mobutu regime did not wield absolute control over the government forces, especially the regular gendarmerie. For instance, the riots in 1991 and 1993 were instigated by government soldiers who protested their lack of salaries. What loyalty did they have towards the Mobutu regime? Acquiring new membership from the old membership is therefore a common occurrence in situations that bring about regime change. Even the revolutionary Lenin wrote that political change would not be successful without the participation of at least some of the armed troops that supported the old regime. The last set of interests belonged to the "foreign" troops. Regional African governments with vested interests in the Zairean political situation lent their support and resources to the AFDL coalition's political cause. One way in which they did this was to send their own troops to fight alongside the AFDL's indigenous components. In particular, Rwanda and

179For further discussion on the popular upsurge, see O’DONNELL and SCHMITTER (1986).
Burundi grasped the opportunities presented by the AFDL's advance to eradicate the problems surrounding the refugee camps and to restore borders. All in all, the AFDL was a loose affiliation of groups with various interests somehow connected to the interests of the Banyamulenge. In the same way that the Banyamulenge were fighting to defend their land, protect their families, and their rights to Zairian citizenship, the other groups in the AFDL were fighting for political freedom, new government leadership, and access to resources. More importantly, they were all fighting for a Zaire without Mobutu.

4.2.2.3: Popular mobilisation and support for the AFDL.

The mobilisation of a group or coalition of groups refers to the extent of resources that the group or coalition controls (Tilly, 1978: 54). Two questions arise: (1) What resources did the AFDL coalition have with which to mobilise? (2) What methods did the AFDL employ to mobilise support and acceptance of its challenge to the Mobutu regime for political power? These two questions constitute the basis of this section's discussion.

4.2.2.3.1: The AFDL's resources.

History has revealed that "war" in all its variations is a costly endeavor. It takes a lot of hard currency and access to coercive resources to participate in armed movements to effect political change. Perhaps that explains in part the problems that confronted the Mobutu regime in the latter years - the state resources had dwindled to a point that there was no money to pay the salaries of the armed forces. Soldiers need to be fed, clothed, armed, and paid. They need military equipment that is essential to fighting an armed battle, such as ammunition for their weapons and fuel for their vehicles and tanks. Then there is the cost of recruitment and the organisational cost of public meetings for mobilising support. The AFDL coalition did not have an unlimited supply of resources. Therefore, the probability that the resources in its possession would actually be delivered was a crucial aspect of the coalition's mobilisation (Tilly, 1978: 71). The degree of organisation that the Alliance had with respect to the use of its resources was equally important. What resources were under the AFDL's control?

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180The governments in Kigali and Bujumbura sought to create a buffer zone from which to reduce the threat of Hutu extremists hiding in eastern Zaire. One way to do this was to support the AFDL coalition, given that it was essentially pro-Tutsi. Again, the external groups that participated in Zaire's armed struggle will be examined at length in a later section.

181Tilly writes that "[t]he major variables affecting the probability of delivery are therefore the extent of competing claims on the resources involved, the nature of the action to which the resources are to be committed, and how organised the mobilising group is" (1978: 71). In other words, the interplay between these three variables will determine the level of access to essential resources, especially in a "war" situation.
It was significant during the months of the armed struggle that the economic centers which generally provide much of Zaire's wealth were in the eastern and southern regions of the country. The mineral rich province of Shaba, the gold mines of Haut-Zaïre province, and the diamond mines in the Kasai Occidental province were strategic to the AFDL's ability to accumulate resources, especially coercive resources for the war effort. For this purpose, the proximity of the geographical roots of the armed revolt to the rich mining regions in eastern Zaïre gave an immediate advantage to the AFDL in its military offensive. The Alliance captured several mines early on in the struggle that generated ready cash to fund the rebel advance. The coalition reportedly possessed close to 200 tonnes of gold metal reserves that had been seized from the Kilo Moto mines near Bunia (Misser, 1997f). The prospect of substantial revenues from Zaïre's mineral wealth encouraged the AFDL to take every opportunity to increase its access to resources. As the AFDL expanded the territory under its control, its access to resources also expanded. The map below gives the geographical location of the gold, diamond, and other mineral mines in Zaïre.

The geographical location of Zaïre's mineral wealth, 1990

*Map 2: Zaïre's mineral wealth, taken from 'Zaïre: a bend in the river.' (1997: 1).*

In order to secure its access to resources and the maintenance of the mines it captured, the AFDL "government" needed an economic strategy. Concerning the gold mines in Haut-Zaïre, the
coalition's ability to make money from the mines to finance the rebellion required skills, equipment, and workers that the AFDL did not have readily available. Those that had been working in the mines fled soon after the fighting began in the region. Many of the foreign-owned mining businesses shut down operations to await the end of the fighting. In order to persuade the miners, especially the expatriate community, to return to the mines, the Alliance used what research analyst Hussein Solomon (1997) calls a "carrot-and-stick" strategy. The carrot offered was that "...rebels would leave mining concessions untouched in the areas they controlled, provided mining companies paid taxes to the [AFDL] administration"; the stick applied to "...those foreign mining companies who did not resume operations within rebel-held territory [and] risked losing their leases" (1997: 95). In other words, the taxes paid to the Alliance enabled the purchase of the necessary coercive resources for the armed offensive against the Mobutu regime.

Carole Collins reports in an article outlining the economics of war in Zaire, that the AFDL's economic policies in the early months of the struggle included measures "to end corruption and develop a more equitable (and profitable) relationship with outside investors" (1997b: 592-3). The "carrot-and-stick" strategy discussed above presented new opportunities for foreign companies to access the mineral wealth of Zaire. Many American and Canadian mining companies were quick to appear at the bargaining table with the AFDL.\footnote{Carole Collins (1997b) provides a detailed examination of the economic policies and reconstruction agenda of the AFDL during its eight-month campaign to overthrow Mobutu.} The bids they offered for concession rights further financed the war effort. Other measures, such as preventing the flow of smuggled goods across the borders into Eastern and Southern Africa encouraged opportunities for economic reconstruction in the areas under AFDL domination.\footnote{For further statistical data on the high levels of smuggling in Zaire, see Collins (1997b). One example she gives refers to the revenues generated through the export/smuggling of diamonds. Zaire's official production of diamonds for 1995 was estimated at $450 million U.S. funds. Diamond smuggling, not accounted for in the $450 million, amounted to as much as triple that figure!}

\subsection{4.2.2.3.2: The methods of mobilisation.}

The AFDL coalition launched an impressive campaign to mobilise the Zairean masses. At the top of its agenda was the obvious expansion of commitment to its cause. In the areas under its control, it organised political meetings that encouraged the participation of the local populations. For the most part, however, the Alliance did not have to work too hard to win the support of the Zairean people. The failure of the opposition coalition to negotiate political change had left Zaireans searching for new, more probable opportunities for political reform. Popular support was gained rapidly in the areas that the Alliance seized primarily because Zaireans were disillusioned with the Mobutu regime and the blockage of the transition process. More critically, local residents feared
Mobutu's undisciplined and corrupt army. The AFDL provided protection and a real opportunity to be a part of Zaire's political transformation. Allegiance was therefore quickly transferred from the *Union Sacrée* to the AFDL.\(^{184}\) As the *Alliance* troops marched from town to town claiming victory, they attracted a lot of sympathy from the local populations. Banners of support and roars of approval greeted the AFDL soldiers.

For a moment, the notion of rapid mobilisation should be addressed. The appearance of the AFDL coalition as a new challenger to the Mobutu government and the subsequent mobilisation of the Zairean masses occurred rapidly. How was the AFDL able to move with such speed? There were several factors that explained its rapid mobilisation. For instance, the fact that the AFDL forces did not encounter much military opposition (due to a lack of government resources with which to mount a counter-offensive) in their advance assisted their mobilisation. Furthermore, the support of regional players, the backing of foreign currency from the gold and diamond mines, and the widespread anti-Mobutu sentiment also enabled the AFDL to mobilise more rapidly. While there is no evidence to suggest that mobilisation must be sudden, if rapid mobilisation occurs, it "...does reduce the chances for the incremental challenging, testing, and coalition-formation which belong to the routine acquisition of power..." (Tilly, 1978: 201-2). Therefore, there were some advantages to the AFDL's rapid mobilisation, just as there were some disadvantages.

To most Zaireans, the AFDL coalition represented change. One critic notes, "Kabila [wa]s féted in Zaire first and foremost because he [wa]s not Mobutu" (*Zaire: Kabila's long march.*, 1997: 3). In an interview, Kabila was questioned in regard to the AFDL's strategy for gaining political support. He was quoted, "We [the AFDL] are mobilising, training and organising our people, women, workers, peasants, youth, intellectuals, etc., from the bottom up, to appreciate the new situation and contribute fully as willing citizens" (Abdul-Raheem, 1997a: 10). To this end, most Zaireans were willing to overlook the gray areas of Kabila's past and the sketchy details of a future political agenda for the time-being. In one sense, this willingness to overlook the past of Kabila is nothing new in the Zairean experience. Take for example Etienne Tshisekedi. In the 1960s and 1970s, Tshisekedi had been a part of Mobutu's inner circle of government ministers. Yet, at the height of the opposition coalition in the early 1990s, Tshisekedi was heralded as the leader who would relieve Zaire of the oppression faced under the Mobutu regime. The Zaireans had been willing to "forget" about his past.

\(^{184}\)An analysis of the relations between the *Union Sacrée* and the AFDL will be discussed in a later section (4.3.3).
Arguably, this behaviour stems from the neopatrimonial nature of the regime - a regime wrapped up in the personalised rule of one individual. Since the years prior to independence, hopes for political change have been concentrated around "a single charismatic individual as standard-bearer of the movement" in question (Nzongola, 1994a: 31). First it was Lumumba (pre-independence), then Mulele (post-independence and pre-Zaire), and finally Tshisekedi in the 1990s. Kabila became the "man of the hour" in the final phases of the transition struggle for regime change.

Even so, one fallback to the Alliance's rapid mobilisation was the lack of a political agenda. Political issues needed to be addressed at some point; the Zairean masses would not be supportive indefinitely unless answers to their political questions were provided. This was a lesson learned from the failures of the Union Sacrée. Perhaps had they had a political agenda and ideology aside from simply removing Mobutu from power, they would have had more success. As a result, the AFDL's political agenda underwent strong criticism from internal elements of the population for its lack of specific details. There was a difference however: the AFDL had the coercive means to effect regime change; the Union Sacrée had lacked those resources. To this end, the AFDL leadership justified its vague political programme by pointing to the nature of its organisation and membership. Moreover, the AFDL was preoccupied with maintaining a cohesive, disciplined fighting force. Once the objective of removing Mobutu from power was accomplished, Kabila argued, the AFDL would focus on political issues.

Still, there was a fragile unity in the coalition based on one political objective: to liberate the entire country from Mobutu's dictatorship. The argument that the AFDL used was the same one used by the revolutionaries in Nicaragua and Cuba: "[We] are not fighting for something but only against something" (Colburn, 1994: 46). In other words, the AFDL was fighting against the Mobutu regime, not necessarily for any political objective in particular. The AFDL's political platform included little more than an anti-corruption campaign, plans to hold elections after one transitional year, and promises to develop an economy that promoted private business ventures to benefit the Zairean people. Generally, the AFDL appealed to the Zaireans' sense of moral duty to improve the terrible conditions under which they lived. As to whether a new Zairean state would be built upon federalism, coalition or majority government, the AFDL's agenda was unclear; "Above all, the nebulous nature of the AFDL's [political programme] may be a symptom of a movement that is still searching for its own identity" ('Zaire: Tripartite power struggle.', 1997: 12663). If that was the case, then the real political struggles in Zaire had barely begun.

One of the AFDL's initiatives for mobilising support was a strategy of military recruitment. In order to recruit new members, the coalition had to convince the potential recruits that it was in their
interests to join. Monetary rewards were therefore used as an enticement mechanism: new recruits were promised a monthly salary paid in foreign (USD) currency. Eyewitnesses testified that truckloads of new recruits in the eastern region could be seen on their way to AFDL training camps. The success with which the Alliance was able to mobilise support through its recruitment campaign could be attributed in part to the breakdown of the infamous "passivity syndrome" to which the Zairean people had been subject. Herbert Weiss explains that in earlier decades, "There had been astonishingly little violent political protest in Zaire. This passivity syndrome was [a] reaction to the bloodletting which occurred in the mid-1960s [the Congo Crisis]" (1997: 36). Nzongola concurs with Weiss' statement in his argument that political marginalisation was so great in Zaire in part because the masses had been "...incapable of making their own revolution" (1994a: 2). Hence, the government's ability to repress the masses did not constitute the only handicap to active participation in the Zairean polity. The AFDL was challenged to overcome these obstacles in order to expand the commitment to its cause.

To summarise this section on the AFDL's mobilisation, two things can be said. First, the components of the mobilisation model that were examined - organisation, interests, and resources - facilitated the ease with which the AFDL achieved its political campaign to overthrow the Mobutu regime. Second, the commitment of the Zairean masses to the alternative claims advanced by the AFDL enabled the armed struggle to occur without excessively high levels of political violence. The next section, in its discussion of the military offensive, will illustrate how the AFDL was able to defeat the Mobutu regime with minimal armed struggle.

4.3: The AFDL's armed political struggle for regime change.

Operating under the leadership of Kabila and in sync with the Banyamulenge, the AFDL began its political campaign against the Mobutu government forces in October 1996. The ensuing months were filled with dramatic and unforeseen events. By the end of the year, the AFDL forces had in their possession the key urban centers of Uvira, Bukavu, Goma, and Bunia in eastern Zaire. A mood of growing national mobilisation for political change was transforming the Zairean polity. The AFDL coalition had clearly gained ground in terms of territory, support, and resources by mid-March 1997. Two months later, in May 1997, the Mobutu government was overthrown by the AFDL forces. In less than a year, the AFDL's armed movement had come to an end in terms of having accomplished what it set out to do: remove President Mobutu from power.

This section engages in a discussion of the armed struggle itself through an examination of the military strategies and tactics of the AFDL's offensive campaign to overthrow the Mobutu regime.
In order to understand how the armed struggle unfolded, it is necessary to follow a chronological development of events during the rebel advance towards Kinshasa. With that in mind, the first objective is to discuss the basic military strategies employed by the AFDL in its eight-month campaign. Following that, I will assess how the military strategies were then implemented during the armed offensive. In other words, the events that transpired as the AFDL gained territory and power will be examined. A third objective is to evaluate the role of the opposition coalition in the course of the armed struggle. Finally, the fourth part of this section will explore the role of external actors in the AFDL's campaign to overthrow the Mobutu regime. All in all, the political struggle in Zaire during the months in which the AFDL was engaged in actual armed combat against the government forces occurred so rapidly that not only were Zaireans unprepared for the changing political landscape, but the rest of the world was equally surprised at the rapid transformation of the Zairean political landscape.

4.3.1: The AFDL's military strategy.
In its advance across Zaire from east to west, the AFDL coalition employed several effective strategies and tactics that facilitated its political cause. In fact, the Alliance leadership's superior grasp of military strategy throughout the rebel advance was one of the reasons it achieved success as rapidly and bloodlessly as it did. While the intention is not to detail every strategy employed, a few will be mentioned to corroborate the AFDL's military prowess.

For example, one competent tactic that the AFDL employed required nothing more than access to radio communication. Using the radio to broadcast its message, the AFDL military command would announce its next military move. In this way, the population was forewarned and the government forces were given a chance to decide how they intended to respond. The AFDL was able to do this primarily as a result of (a) its confidence that the access to coercive resources it controlled would not be compromised, and (b) its knowledge of the incompetence of the FAZ (Forces Armées Zairoises). In a recent comprehensive study on the series of related crises in the African Great Lakes, Glynne Evans substantiates the use of the strategy outlined above. She concurs that the AFDL broadcasted "the imminent fall of towns while leaving an exit route open [for Mobutu's troops] and making a serious attempt to enlist the support of the civilian population" (1997: 62).

Another successfully implemented tactic employed by the AFDL was the three-front maneuver. The AFDL forces would approach a city or area on three sides, leaving one side open. In essence, this strategy ensured that an exit route was always left for the government forces. The AFDL military command did not want to use violence more than was necessary. Thus, by providing an
opportunity for escape, the *Alliance* also eliminated the amount of fighting and bloodshed. For example, in the final advance on Kinshasa, the AFDL troops proceeded on three fronts, first capturing the strategic Ndjili airport on the eastern outskirts of the capital and then blocking the main route from the Bas-Zaire province which effectively closed all other exits.

In the areas seized by the AFDL coalition, the military command insisted upon disciplined and fair behaviour from its troops in order to consolidate its power. The *Alliance* leadership sought to bring a sense of 'order' in the daily lives of the people. Zaireans had been subject to routine intimidation and violence from the Mobutu government and its army. The term 'order' is therefore used to contrast with the past disorder that the Zairian troops had created. The AFDL leaders wanted to assure "...Zaireans that a new order [had] been established and the era of looting, robbery and arbitrary violence was now over" (Braeckman, 1997: 131). The idea behind this strategy of enforced military discipline was to instill in the Zairian people a new sense of stability, unhindered by Mobutu's corrupt armed forces. The *Alliance* was equally concerned with developing its credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of the Zairean people. One way in which this was done was through the public meetings held in areas it controlled. The people were given a chance to participate in local elections for a new administration (Collins, 1997a: 279). These tactics employed by the AFDL fostered the perception of a coalition committed to and created for the Zairean masses. The strategies were therefore instrumental to the implementation of the AFDL's military offensive. With widespread commitment to its claims, the *Alliance* had access to better resources and more power with which to mount its political campaign against the regime. The following section will examine the events that took place during the eight-month military advance.

4.3.2: The AFDL's military and political offensives.
Throughout the AFDL's offensive campaign, Kabila was adamant about the nature of the struggle. He was often quoted: "We [the *Alliance*] are engaged in a national democratic revolution to liberate Congo-Zaire" (Abdul-Raheem, 1997a: 10). Accordingly, he emphasised that while the revolt was sparked by a localised ethnic crisis in eastern Zaire, the objectives of the AFDL coalition were national. The forcible overthrow of Mobutu was the primary national objective. The installation of a new government, a new constitution, and political elections were other objectives. As a result, every city, town, and village were important to the AFDL's military and political agendas.

By the end of October 1996, less than two weeks following the onset of the rebel advance, the AFDL had gained control of the major urban centers in the easternmost parts of North and South Kivu. Moving steadily north, the troops seized Uvira, Bukavu, and then Goma with little opposition from the government forces. The scene was identical in every case: as the AFDL troops
approached, the government forces fled ahead of them, looting and pillaging along the way. As the end of the year approached, the *Alliance* troops had moved as far north as Bunia, a strategic town on the border with the Sudan and Uganda. Not only was Bunia important for its geographical location in the far corner of northeastern Zaire, but the immense Kilo Moto gold reserves were located near Bunia.\(^{185}\) The fight for Bunia between the AFDL troops and the government forces lasted more than a week. Even so, the AFDL had the upper hand and won the battle.\(^{186}\)

Meanwhile, the fighting between the government forces and the AFDL troops impacted upon another facet of the struggle: the refugee camps. AFDL attacks on the Mugunga refugee camp a few kilometres north of Goma in mid-November (1996) resulted in a massive evacuation of the area. The refugees began their exodus back to Rwanda. Reports that more than 700,000 refugees were on their way home elicited a sigh of relief both from the AFDL coalition and the international community. The United Nations had planned to launch a multinational intervention force for humanitarian purposes.\(^{187}\) However, with the refugees returning on their own to Rwanda, the U.N. canceled its plans for an intervention force. Unfortunately, the plight of the refugees who did not return to Rwanda in mid-November was dismal. Figures provided by relief agencies such as *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) and Oxfam suggested that between 250,000 and 300,000 refugees were still in Zaire, caught between the AFDL troops advancing westwards and Mobutu’s caricature of an army.

At some point during the first two weeks of 1997, the head of the AFDL’s military operations, André Kisase Ngandu, was killed under questionable circumstances. The reasons for his death as well as the identity of the people responsible were debated. His death raised fears of a split in the AFDL coalition between three factions: the ex-Katangese soldiers, the *Banyamulenge* and other Tutsi elements, and the Zairean diaspora. An ongoing dispute between Kabila and Kisase raised suspicions that Kabila might have somehow engineered his death. Kisase had been quite critical of the *Alliance’s* military dependence on the *Banyamulenge*. He believed that army recruitment should

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\(^{185}\) The area surrounding Bunia was potentially very wealthy. Not only was gold in abundance, a Belgian oil exploration company, Petrofina, had reported its discovery of significant oil reserves in the area, too. See 'Zaire: Digging in.' (1997).

\(^{186}\) Reports from Western intelligence sources claimed that between 200-300 soldiers died during the battle for Bunia.

\(^{187}\) At a summit meeting in Nairobi on the 5th of November 1996, eight African countries (excluding Zaire) called for a neutral military intervention force to assist the return of the refugees to Rwanda. The Western community opened talks for a multinational force to provide humanitarian aid shortly thereafter. Canada offered to lead an intervention force and American President Bill Clinton begrudgingly announced that the United States would contribute 4,000 troops to the multinational force. The U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1080 which detailed plans for the intervention force. Before plans could translate into action, however, most of the refugees returned of their own volition to Rwanda.
instead be directed at the indigenous Zairean groups to ensure their support and participation in the political struggle. Internal dissent within the AFDL leadership was a growing concern. While one commissioner made promises to the masses, another commissioner made contrary promises. Clearly, the leadership did not always have one voice.

Consequently, several explanations for Kisase's death were given. Gaetan Kakudji, Kabila's cousin and one of the foreign affairs commissioners, reported that Kisase was killed in an ambush set up by the mystical Mai-Mai militia who opposed the AFDL.188 The leader of the ADP party, Déogratias Bugera, told reporters that Kisase had been wounded in a skirmish with the Hutu Interahamwe, and was recuperating in a private hospital. Still other AFDL members claimed he was killed in a dispute over a gold mine in the region surrounding Bunia. When questioned about Kisase's death, Kabila replied without explanation that he was dead. Regardless of the sketchy details surrounding Kisase's death, the accusations and uncertainties placed tremendous strain on the unity of the Alliance coalition.

Nevertheless, amidst these potential internal challenges, the AFDL troops continued their military offensive. They marched from Bunia towards Isiro, another town about 300 kilometres west. Increasingly evident was the fact that the Alliance troops - despite some internal tensions - were more organised and better equipped than the government forces. Indeed, evidence of the government's insufficient and inefficient coercive resources was illustrated by its inability to mount a military counter-offensive. The government's insufficient means of coercion were due to a shortage of financial resources with which to maintain a military force. One argument suggests that there were no excuses for insufficiency, given that the mining and exportation of mineral resources generated significant revenues for the Mobutu regime and should therefore have been appropriately used. In reality, the main reason that the Mobutu regime had both insufficient and inefficient coercive resources was due to its notorious record of corruption. Other related factors such as low morality in the soldier units and a lack of discipline and training obstructed the government's ability to mount a military counter-offensive against the onslaught of the AFDL troops.

More embarrassing to the government, however, were the methods in which its coercive incapacity was revealed: as soon as the FAZ heard rumours of the Alliance troops' approach, they were put

188 The Mai-Mai or Bangilima guerrillas were an extremely nationalist Zairean group. Not only were they uneasy about supporting any coalition with ties to Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda, but they rejected orders from all other groups, government or otherwise. The Mai-Mai fought using a mixture of magic and sheer bravado. For example, before a battle, the men would sprinkle themselves with special water believed to protect them from bullets and other weapons such as knives and machetes.
to disorderly flight, looting, stealing, and raping as they ran from the AFDL soldiers (Braeckman, 1997: 130). The victories of the Alliance increased, as did the territory under its control. Steadily pushing westwards from Isiro, the next major target on the AFDL's military agenda was Kisangani, the provincial capital of Haut-Zaïre and the third largest city in Zaïre.\footnote{Kisangani was in a strategic location. Located on the Congo river about 1,000 kilometres upstream from Kinshasa, the river served as the main transportation link between Kinshasa and Kisangani. The AFDL troops could therefore more easily cross terrain by taking the riverboats, once they gained control of the city.}

4.3.2.1: The battles for Kisangani and Lubumbashi.
Kisangani was the interim headquarters for the Zaïrean armed troops. The FAZ had stockpiled weapons and other equipment, including 3 Czech fighter planes flown by Serbs, in Kisangani. The government forces had also prepared for the upcoming battle by surrounding the city's perimeters with landmines. As a result, the AFDL commanders approached the city with more caution and troops than had been used in any other battle for an urban center up to that point. The extra troops proved unnecessary, however, as the government forces faced a crisis of their own in terms of numbers of troops available to defend the city. Intelligence reports indicated that there were about 4,000 government soldiers of which only 1,500 were armed and at least minimally trained to fight. The Alliance troops, in contrast to the FAZ, had the numbers and better equipment. They also had the advantage of a huge support base in Kisangani. The city had been a bastion of opposition in the 1960s during the Congo Crisis; the people remained fiercely nationalist. Given that Kabila was sympathetic to pro-Lumumbists, the AFDL's fight for a new regime without Mobutu appealed to the Zaïrean masses.

The AFDL military command employed the three-sided maneuver discussed earlier to advance upon Kisangani, with the fourth side left unattended as an exit passage for the FAZ soldiers who fled. The bulk of the AFDL forces approached from the southeast. The other two sides, the north and the northeast, were only minimally armed. Even so, the AFDL forces seized control with very little fighting. Kisangani fell on March 14, 1997. Gaining control of Kisangani was a strategic victory for the AFDL for three reasons. First, the Haut-Zaïre province boasted a valuable cache of diamonds and gold. Kisangani was the business center from which the mines were based. Second, as was briefly mentioned above, the city had been the stronghold of Patrice Lumumba in the 1960s. A Lumumbist himself, Kabila tapped into the widespread regional support for a nationalist agenda. It appeared that President Mobutu had underestimated the power of past experiences and memories of the martyred Lumumba. Finally, the Kisangani victory was strategic because it had housed the temporary military headquarters of the FAZ, from which the government forces' military
commander, General Mahele, had hoped to launch the government's counter-offensive. Thus, Kisangani's fall was symbolic in that it revealed the larger game being played: a power struggle between the AFDL and the Mobutu regime for ultimate control of the country.

By the end of March 1997, the AFDL coalition controlled more than a quarter of Zaire. They had moved with lightning speed across Zaire, covering more than 1,500 kilometres mostly by foot. This was a commendable feat given the terrain through which the troops were forced to traverse. The troops continued their push towards the capital. Samuel Huntington argues in his depiction of an Eastern model of revolution, such as that of the AFDL in Zaire, "[t]he last phase of the [armed] struggle is the occupation of the capital" (1968: 272). The AFDL troops were therefore approaching the end in terms of their fight against the Zairean government forces. In preparation for the final advance, the troops split up. One group continued west towards Kinshasa. Meanwhile, another group headed south. The AFDL leadership planned first to consolidate its power base in the eastern regions by taking the second largest city in Zaire, Lubumbashi. Some AFDL forces had been left behind in Bukavu and were joined by the troops that had headed south from Kisangani. Together, they continued their advance to capture Lubumbashi, the capital of the mineral-rich Shaba province.

In mid-February (1997) the Alliance troops were joined yet again by ex-Katangese soldiers flown from Angola to assist the political campaign. The AFDL troops reached their destination and took the city of Lubumbashi on 9 April 1997 with little opposition from the government forces. At the same time, another division of the AFDL forces made their way west towards the diamond-rich Kasai provinces in central Zaire. Three days prior to Lubumbashi's capture, the AFDL seized Zaire's largest diamond center, Mbuji-Mayi, in the Kasai Orientale province. This landed a serious blow to the Mobutu government who up until that point had relied heavily upon the diamond trade as a source of ready cash. Following Mbuji-Mayi, the troops advanced further west to seize

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190 Huntington's portrayal of the Eastern model of revolution is useful for the pattern of political change it develops. Although his arguments refer to the occurrence of revolutions, they could also be applied to other types of political change, such as the armed struggle for regime transition. In essence, he argues that the Eastern pattern of revolution begins with "the mobilisation of new groups into politics...and ends with the violent overthrow of the political institutions of the old order" (1968: 266). In a nutshell, that is in fact what happened with regime change in Zaire. Moreover, the new groups that emerge are typically referred to as "rebel" groups and this correlates with the idea that the AFDL was a coalition of rebel groups opposed to the Mobutu regime.

191 Mbuji-Mayi's diamond business generated huge revenues. It was estimated that more than $20 million in diamonds were traded monthly in the city; between $300-400 million was one figure given for yearly output.
control of Kolwezi and Kananga, two vital urban centers in the Kasai Occidentale province. The following map shows the major towns controlled by the AFDL by mid-April 1997.

**Towns in Zaire under AFDL control**

*Map 5: Towns under AFDL control, taken from 'Zaire: tripartite power struggle.' (1997: 12661).*

4.3.2.2: The capture of Zaire's capital, Kinshasa.

By the end of April 1997, AFDL troops have been spotted in Bas-Zaire and in the Cabinda enclave of Angola. According to the Zairean newspaper *La Cité Africaine*, a combination of more than 7,000 ex-Katangese soldiers and Angolan troops were stationed in Cabinda, ready to march on the capital. As with Kisangani, the AFDL approached Kinshasa on three fronts. One front was Tshikapa, a town in the Bandundu province east of Kinshasa. Tshikapa was strategically important both for its food supply and its yield of high quality diamonds. A second front was Doweté, a crossroads town that controlled road access to the upstream river port, Mbandaka. Finally, the town of Ilebo on the Congo river served as a third front from which the AFDL troops advanced towards Kinshasa.

Moving in from all three fronts, the *Alliance* forces took control of the Ndjili airport on the outskirts of the capital on the eve of May 16, 1997. The effectiveness of the AFDL's military strategy enabled the seizure of Kinshasa the following day without the firing of a single bullet. There was no resistance from the Zairean government troops. In fact, several reports filtered in the press of soldiers throughout the city with raised white flags of surrender. The residents of Kinshasa welcomed the AFDL, much as had the residents in the towns that were taken all across Zaire. Many Kinshasa residents, known locally as *les Kinois*, danced in the streets, wearing white
headbands (a traditional symbol of opposition worn by student protesters) and waving green branches in the air. On May 17, 1997, the AFDL claimed a remarkable political victory. The AFDL re-christened Zaire the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

4.3.2.3: The possibility of negotiations between Mobutu and Kabila?
Throughout the armed struggle, the question did arise: what about negotiations between the AFDL and the Mobutu government? After all, discussions between the opposition coalition and the government to outline strategic plans for political change had occurred in the past, although with limited success. The Union Sacrée had negotiated with Mobutu for more than 5 years for political reform and transition and it had failed to effect any real change. The Zairean masses as well as most foreign governments had eventually agreed that Mobutu must leave the political arena in order for political changes to occur. The finer details of how that would happen and who would be involved were ambiguous. The experience of the "Transition" years had shown that President Mobutu was unwilling to relinquish his authority without a fight. Even so, after decades of political decay and corruption, the Mobutu regime was no longer in a position to offer any real resistance to a disciplined and organised fighting force such as the AFDL.

Initially, the AFDL was willing to open talks with the Mobutu government on one condition. Kabila insisted that talks between the Mobutu government and the AFDL would only be accepted with Mobutu's resignation. Mobutu rejected this AFDL ultimatum and countered that the government would only talk when the rebel advance ceased. Kabila then revised the AFDL's condition for negotiation. He announced the Alliance's willingness to negotiate with President Mobutu on the basis of a 5-point peace plan put forward by Mohamed Sahnoun, the U.N. and O.A.U. (Organisation of African Unity) special envoy. Sahnoun's peace plan included the following:

The immediate cessation of hostilities; withdrawal of all external forces, including mercenaries; reaffirmation of respect for national sovereignty of Zaire and other Great Lakes states; protection and security for all refugees and displaced persons; rapid and peaceful settlement of the crisis through dialogue, the electoral process and an international conference on peace and development in the Great Lakes ('Zaire: A Bend...', 1997).

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192 The observation that Western governments agreed to the necessary removal of Mobutu from the political arena in order for political change to occur is contrary to an earlier argument in Chapter 5 that suggested they, in particular, the American government, believed that his role in the transition process was indispensable. It is true that the initial position of the Western governments included an arrangement in which Mobutu played a key role. In time and as a result of Mobutu's blatant refusal to allow multipartyism a chance to take root, their positions were altered.
However, Kabila still emphasised that the AFDL had no intentions of declaring a cease-fire so that talks could begin. Rather, the Alliance bloc demanded that any negotiations precede a cease-fire. In contrast, the Mobutu government still insisted on a cease-fire before negotiations. The United Nations and other international organisations and governments hoped to persuade the two adversary blocs to accept a cease-fire and simultaneous talks. As the struggle progressed, the possibility of negotiations broke down completely. With victory only a matter of time, the AFDL coalition no longer saw any value in attempting to negotiate with the weakened Mobutu regime.

4.3.3: The opposition coalition: what role did it play?

The attention in this chapter has thus far been focused on the struggle between the AFDL coalition and the Mobutu government. What about the opposition coalition that for years had worked for political change in Zaire? This section is concerned with the role played by the Union Sacrée during the months of the rebel advance.

Undoubtedly, the ease with which the AFDL advanced across the country was facilitated in part because of the groundwork laid out by the opposition coalition, not to mention the widespread support for an opposition - any opposition - to the Mobutu regime. Veteran opposition parties such as Tshisekedi's UDPS had contended against the Mobutu government through nonviolent means for years prior to the armed political movement that the AFDL created. In contrast, the AFDL coalition had not even existed prior to October 1996. Given that the Union Sacrée fostered a widespread anti-Mobutu sentiment, the opportunities for an alliance between the two coalitions were very real when the AFDL coalition emerged in opposition to the Mobutu regime.

Unfortunately, evidence of a coalition between the AFDL challenger and the Union Sacrée was not forthcoming. The two coalitions never merged during the final months of the struggle. If ever there was evidence to doubt the argument that "[t]he wise revolutionary who wishes to produce a large transfer of power forms the minimum necessary coalition with existing members of the polity...", the case in Zaire provided that doubt (Tilly, 1978: 213). The AFDL seemed uninterested in the formation of an alliance with the opposition coalition in Kinshasa. If anything, the Alliance leaders looked upon the civilian oppositionists with disdain, questioning their tactics and pointing out their failures to negotiate political change during the first half of the 1990s.

193 If I were engaged in an analysis of what occurs following a transition outcome, this particular fact would provide insight into the reasons behind the political conflict that permeated the Zairean polity after the AFDL coalition claimed victory. However, this is not an analysis of outcomes and the interest in coalition-formation is between the opposition coalition and the Alliance. Therefore, it is exclusive to the months of the armed struggle.
The appearance of the AFDL as an armed coalition, coupled with its rapid mobilisation in terms of territory, support, and power, revealed the inherent weaknesses of the political opposition coalition that had existed since the beginning of the 1990s. The political climate months prior to the AFDL’s military advance was considerably tense; the transition process that the Union Sacrée had been attempting to negotiate with the Mobutu government had practically ground to a halt due to dissenting opinions among the opposition and government leaders. Rather than admit, however, to the feasibility of a new group with significant resources and mobilisation potential with which to support its cause, the opposition coalition initially opted for the condemnation of the AFDL rebel advance as a "Rwandan invasion" (Braeckman, 1997: 137). Still, the discordant voices that had normally characterised the opposition coalition were soon manifested in the diverse associations with the AFDL.

Some member groups of the opposition coalition feared being labeled as traitors should they condone the actions of the AFDL coalition and therefore remained quiet. Others, most notably the UDPS, boldly requested to meet and negotiate with Kabila and the AFDL. Tshisekedi, a loyal oppositionist leader, was widely supported in Kinshasa and the Kasai provinces from where he originated. However, his adamant refusal to accept that Kengo held the office of prime minister had weighted down public opinion of his credibility.194 Still others immediately gave their support to the AFDL primarily in frustration over the failed negotiations with the Mobutu government for political change. In fact, Braeckman reports that "[o]ppositional forces despatched envoys to Goma [AFDL headquarters] to negotiate adhesion to the AFDL even before the rebel capture of Kisangani on 14 March" (1997: 138). Pro-AFDL support was growing in Kinshasa and the opposition groups had begun to seek joint efforts with the Alliance bloc.

In short, the opposition coalition played a minimal role in the armed struggle in terms of active participation. Not only did the AFDL seem disinclined to invite the opposition coalition to join the military advance, but the latter appeared to have no desire to join the action other than to offer verbal support of the AFDL’s political objectives. Both coalitions agreed that President Mobutu hat to be removed and a new government installed. Yet neither were in accord as to the methods that should be taken to enable this situation to develop. In any case, the AFDL’s military advance was successful where the opposition coalition had failed: the government was weakening and a new

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194 Léon Kengo wa Dondo was elected Prime Minister by the HCR-PT in June 1994. At the time, Tshisekedi insisted that he was still the legitimate prime minister and refused to work within the apparatus set up for the transition process. His increasingly radical stance was frustrating to those oppositionists who were doing what they could to keep the process running, despite Mobutu's stalling tactics. As a result, most Zaireans were growing tired of Tshisekedi's seemingly childish antics.
political scheme was on the horizon. The *Alliance* also had the advantage of regional assistance whereas the *Union Sacrée* had never had that opportunity. In the following section, the difference the external actors made in the course of events of the struggle for regime change will be discussed.

### 4.3.4: The regional players: who helped the AFDL coalition?

For a political movement with clear, albeit limited, objectives, the AFDL's struggle for political power in Zaire marked a rare political/military experience in Africa; it was the only armed conflict to achieve so much in so little time. In less than eight months, the AFDL coalition of forces had marched more than 2,000 kilometres through some of the most dense, impenetrable rainforests on earth to oust a 32-year dictatorship. This was an amazing feat under the circumstances. All the same, the AFDL coalition would have been hard-pressed to achieve its objectives without a strong external support system. Aside from the internal groups that were influential in the struggle, regional players also had stakes in the developing regime change that took place in Zaire. In fact, several of Zaire's neighbours were integral to the successful implementation of the AFDL's political cause.

In the next few paragraphs, regional interests and actors will be discussed insofar as they influenced the armed struggle between the AFDL troops and the Mobutu regime's forces. Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi had direct security interests in what transpired in Zaire and will therefore be examined first. Other countries, including Angola and Tanzania, played a more indirect role in Zaire's political struggles; nevertheless, their support was important. Finally, the secondary role of the Western community will be explored. The mix of regional interests in Zaire's political conflict limited the influence of Western governments and enhanced the potential for African solutions. In fact, the degree of relative autonomy that the Central African region enjoyed in trying to solve the conflict in Zaire taught a valuable lesson to the international community: Africans could find solutions to their own problems without the intervention of Western governments.

We must ask ourselves a question to facilitate the following discussion: Why did Zaire's neighbours involve themselves in what was obviously an internal political power struggle between indigenous Zairean groups? Given the extent and norm of contemporary political violence and war in Africa, the reasons for the high levels of interest in this particular revolutionary struggle were the focus of numerous discussions. One issue was clear: the overwhelming regional support for the AFDL coalition revealed an intense dislike of the Mobutu regime. Over the years, President
Mobutu had instituted a counter-productive foreign policy of destabilisation towards his neighbours.195

4.3.4.1: Direct security interests in Zaire's regime change.

While the conditions for regime transition and change in Zaire were in place prior to the escalation of regional ethnic tensions, particularly in Rwanda, it took an external catalyst - the ethnic conflict generated by the destabilising refugee camps - to actually set Zaire's political transition back on course. Arguably, Rwanda was indirectly responsible for the ethnic uprisings in Zaire and the subsequent appearance of the AFDL coalition. The Rwandan government's efforts to remove the Hutu ex-FAR troops and the Interahamwe militia (those mostly responsible for the 1994 genocide) from the refugee camps in eastern Zaire, coupled with the Zairean government authorities' bias against the Banyamulenge, are what initially fueled the revolt in 1996.

In mid-1996, Rwandan troops crossed the border into Zaire in preparation to purge the refugee camps of the extremist Hutus who had rearmed and launched attacks against the government in Kigali. When the AFDL troops began their trek across Zaire, they were joined by Rwandan forces. Rwandan military officers provided training and leadership to the AFDL troops. In addition, Rwanda supplied military equipment to the AFDL coalition. Rwandan Vice President and Defense Minister, Paul Kagame, defended his government's position in a statement that they had a 'moral obligation' to protect the Tutsi ethnic group - Rwandan and Zairean - from further extermination. In an interview, Kagame remarked, "We [Rwanda] went to Congo to sort out the problem...from its source. ...We had no choice." (Kanhema, 1997).196 Kagame also pointed out that Rwanda had made an appeal for assistance to the United Nations months prior to the eruption of an armed struggle in Zaire to prevent further ethnic fighting initiated by the militarised refugee camps in the eastern provinces. Exasperated by the Western community's collective unwillingness to address so fundamental a security threat, Kagame warned that Rwanda would take matters into its own hands if nothing was done to stop the Hutu ex-FAR troops and Interahamwe militia from mounting a full-scale invasion of Rwanda.

Another country with significant interests in Zaire's political struggles was Uganda. Aside from its close ties with the Rwandan government, hence its sympathy towards the security threat of the

195 For an account of the Mobutu government's foreign policy, see Schatzberg (1988); Braeckman (1992); and Leslie (1993).
196 Kagame claimed in an interview given after the AFDL had overthrown the Mobutu regime that in fact, the plot to oust the President of Zaire had originated in Kigali and not in Zaire. This stirred some controversy among heads of state, Western governments, and even within Zaire itself. The question was asked: How could little Rwanda defeat big Zaire?
Hutu génocidaires, Uganda had its own problems with rebel groups opposed to Yoweri Museveni's government. These groups had found a haven not only in the Sudan but more recently in Zaire as well. The rebel Ugandan forces had been using the airport in Bunia as a base, both to receive military supplies and to launch attacks in their ongoing fight against Ugandan government forces. President Museveni wanted these raids stopped. He admitted that there were Ugandan military forces in Zaire presumably for that purpose: to protect the borders between Zaire and Uganda. The Ugandan government supplied military artillery - tanks, armoured vehicles, weapons, and ammunition - to the AFDL troops.

Burundi was involved in the AFDL's revolutionary struggle for its own reasons. Plagued by ethnic violence and civil war since 1993, the Burundi government's primary interest in supporting the Alliance coalition stemmed from its desire to close the base camps of rebel Burundi forces in eastern Zaire. Burundian Hutu rebels with the Forces pour la Défense du Démocratie (FDD) had used Zaire as a launching pad from which their violent attacks on the Burundi government continued. The political and ethnic violence had gained international attention; the country was faced with international sanctions that limited its access to essential goods. In exchange for the smuggling of petrol into Burundi from Rwanda, President Pierre Buyoya allowed more than 3,000 Rwandan troops with their vehicles and equipment to cross its territory en route to Zaire. The Burundi army was responsible for several cross-border raids into Zairean territory in which one objective was to oust Zairean troops from their strongholds in the region. For example, a massacre of Hutu men, women and children in a church in eastern Zaire was blamed on Burundi government forces.

4.3.4.2: Other regional interests.

In addition to Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi, several other of Zaire's neighbours were indirectly involved with the AFDL's armed struggle. The role that Angola played in the AFDL's military campaign was reminiscent of its role in the late 1970's during the Shaba uprisings. Angola had become a haven for exiled ex-Katangese soldiers. The revolt that began in eastern Zaire was seen

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197 At the time of the AFDL revolt in Zaire, Uganda had been involved in its own war in the north against two rebel groups (the Lord's Resistance Army and the West Nile Bank Front) supported by the Sudanese Islamic government.
198 The military equipment that arrived from Uganda had been supplied to the Ugandan government by the United States. To offset criticism of direct involvement in the revolt, the American government explained that the armoured vehicles and artillery had been 'stolen' presumably by the rebels. However, there was clearly a consensus between Uganda and the United States to support Kabila and the AFDL.
199 Amnesty International made the accusation that Burundi security forces had massacred more than 500 civilians in a church in Nyarurama, a small Zairean town. For further information, see the numerous accounts of the events of the Zairean crisis as told by reporters in New African.
as a major opportunity for ex-Katangese troops to return to their country. The *Conseil National de Résistance* (CNR), based in Angola and headed by Emile Ilunga, assembled more than 1,000 troops. They were airlifted from Angola to Zambia, Rwanda, and finally Bukavu in Zaire. The Angolan government was equally supportive of the *Alliance* through the provision of soldiers, weapons, and military uniforms. Angola had been caught up in its own decades-long civil war. The MPLA government (*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola*) sought an end to Mobutu's assistance of the rebel group, UNITA (*União para a Independência Total de Angola*). Zaire under the Mobutu government had acted not only as a base camp for Jonas Savimbi's rebel UNITA troops, but also as a conduit for American covert support of the rebel group's activities up until the early 1990s.²⁰⁰ On the one hand, President Eduardo dos Santos was anxious to cut off UNITA's supply lines from Zaire and saw the conflict in the eastern region as a way to do this. UNITA, on the other hand, reportedly offered military assistance to the Mobutu government in the form of rebel troops.

Zambia and Tanzania played minor roles in the Zairian struggle for regime change. President Frederick Chiluba of Zambia was sympathetic to the *Alliance*'s cause and allowed the ex-Katangese soldiers to transit in Lusaka on their way to Bukavu. Tanzania, although not militarily involved in the revolution, was clearly pro-AFDL. There was a history of tension between the Mobutu government and the Tanzanian government that had been sparked in part by the use of the latter's territory as a home base for various rebels, exiles, and refugees seeking shelter from Mobutu's terrorisation. Tanzania sought to rid itself of all these 'foreigners' that had taken up residence in the country; support for the overthrow of the Mobutu government was therefore immediate.

4.3.4.3: Western governments and foreign interests in Zaire.

Since the end of the Cold War, foreign policy interests in Zaire have undergone strategic re-formulation. Western governments, particularly the United States, Belgium and France, closely followed Zaire's political struggles, though they shirked all but diplomatic involvement. Of the Western powers, the United States played the lead in its verbal support of the AFDL cause. Washington endorsed the role of Uganda and Rwanda in their provision of financial and military aid to the AFDL. President Clinton, however, was adamantly opposed to sending any American troops to the region other than in a capacity to provide protection for American nationals living in

²⁰⁰For an informative analysis of Zaire's role as facilitator of American support for the UNITA rebel movement in Angola, see KELLY (1993). In the early 1990s, American operations in Angola seized altogether. Consequently, Mobutu as an ally lost much of his value to the American government. Its interests in Zaire remained primarily economic.
the region. Belgium followed the American position somewhat more hesitantly, in light of a long history of backing France, who, in this case, was opposed to the Alliance coalition. France had been supportive of the Hutu government in Rwanda prior to the genocide. The French government used the U.N.-funded relief effort, Opération Turquoise, as a cover to re-arm the Hutu ex-FAR troops and the Interahamwe militia in the refugee camps.\footnote{French journalist and author, Colette Braeckman argues: "France was largely responsible for the refugee problem in eastern Zaire [and] rearming the former Hutu Rwandan army" (1997: 129).} France viewed the developments in eastern Zaire as a tragedy - an 'Anglo-Saxon plot' with the United States as front-runner in the support of the AFDL coalition.

Having said this, I must reiterate that the role and influence of the Western community in Zaire's political struggles have not been thoroughly examined in this project. The intention was not to undermine the role of the international community, especially the "troika", in Zaire's political affairs. Instead, the focus throughout this project has been upon internal political forces. The regional players were discussed at more length primarily because their influence was critical to the outcome of the political regime change in the latter phases. As one scholar remarked, the regional players had no choice but to assist in the struggle in Zaire; "Inaction [would have] led to the dissolution of Zaire and the attempted formation of many ethnically based states, spawning further problems with Zaire's nine neighbours since ethnic groups overlap these political boundaries" (McCormick, 1994: 227). Neither the Zairean people nor their neighbours in Central Africa wanted to see Zaire disintegrate. National unity was never a bargaining chip in the struggle. The regional players knew this as well as did the AFDL and the Mobutu regime.

This section has dealt with several important issues that influenced the course of the struggle to change the Mobutu regime in Zaire. The broad objective was to examine the events of the AFDL's struggle as it unfolded. Particular attention was paid to the military strategies adopted by the AFDL coalition as they advanced across Zaire, securing towns, strategic mines, and commitment to their political objectives. The rapid success with which the AFDL moved west was due in part to the financial and military assistance provided by regional players, in particular Rwanda and Uganda. Regional interests were a key aspect of the struggle. Most of Zaire's surrounding neighbours were sympathetic to the AFDL cause. Over the years, the Mobutu regime had not made many friends in Central Africa. Given that the nature of the Mobutu regime was predisposed towards a policy of self-interest and material rewards, Mobutu had pitted his neighbours against each other much as he had divided the opposition coalition during the National Conference. One classic example points to the relations between Angola and Zaire. During Angola's civil war, the
American government had supported the rebel group UNITA. In order to get supplies and other military equipment to the UNITA rebels, the Americans had used airports in Zaire as their conduit. Mobutu, anti-Communist to the core, had given the American government permission to carry out their covert operations through Zaire. With the tables now turned, the Angolan government was more than anxious to send troops and support to the AFDL rebel advance in its struggle to overthrow the Mobutu regime.

Unsurprisingly, then, the prospect of a new Zairean government was appealing, both for external and internal forces. In the assessment of the role of the opposition coalition throughout the struggle, it was shown that the Union Sacrée had more or less lost its viability as a contender for power in the ensuing months of armed conflict. The majority of the Zairean masses, as well as several member groups of the opposition coalition, transferred their commitment to the AFDL. The AFDL professed to stand for the same political objectives as the opposition coalition. Their advantage was that they also had the coercive resources with which to back up their claims. As a result, the Mobutu regime found itself in a new position: for the first time in its 30 odd years, its existence was threatened. In the upcoming section, we shall explore how the government responded to the AFDL's struggle for political power.

4.4: The government response to the AFDL offensive.

The response of the Mobutu regime to the AFDL's struggle was critical to the outcome of the transition process. The capacity of the regime to suppress its contending opposition was thoroughly tested in a situation where coercive resources were used by the leading contender. The Mobutu government had always relied upon coercion to maintain power. But never before had the government forces had to contend with an organised and armed movement to oust the regime. Even when the opposition coalition emerged in 1990, it posed little threat to the Zairean government as long as it lacked resources, especially of the coercive variety. With the appearance of the AFDL coalition, however, no longer could Mobutu rely on coercion alone to suppress the overwhelming opposition to the regime. In the power struggles that characterised the AFDL's offensive campaign against the Mobutu regime, it was clear that Mobutu faced several crises from different arenas - political, economic, diplomatic and military. The AFDL's mobilisation campaign revealed unequivocally that the government's military forces would in fact become its 'Achilles' heel' (Solomon, 1997: 93).

With that in mind, this section shall explore one government crisis in particular: the military crisis. In an armed struggle, the role of the armed forces takes precedence over other matters. That is not
to say that the political or economic aspects are not critical. On the contrary, the nature of the political and economic crises in Zaire impacted upon the military crisis. They were all connected by the common thread of neopatrimonialism.\textsuperscript{202} Even so, the Mobutu regime's military crisis determined moreso the end result of the power struggles than did the other crises. There were three aspects to the military crisis that merit discussion. First, the question of military leadership raised considerable tension within the army itself. Second, the character and organisation of the Zairean troops reflected a deeper problem within the government leadership structure. Finally, Mobutu's misguided perception about the nature and source of the political struggle further contributed to the military crisis.

Two related questions serve as the guideposts for the following discussion of the military crisis. Anthony James Joes writes that it is crucial to understand how and why a regime falls victim to a previously inferior contender, loses its military power, and is subsequently overthrown (1986: Preface, xi).\textsuperscript{203} In an application to the Zaire situation then, how did the Mobutu regime become subject to the superior military strength of the AFDL coalition? What factors determined its loss of power and enabled the overthrow of the regime and its incumbent ruler?

4.4.1: The question of military leadership.

The military leadership was in need of some major restructuring. The government forces, otherwise referred to as the FAZ (Forces Armées Zairoises), were in need of a new Army Chief of Staff. General Eluki Monga Audu, a close colleague of Mobutu, had been in command. But he did not have the respect of the army or the population at large. His military leadership was corrupt, brutal and inefficient. More critical was the knowledge that the government forces under Eluki were incapable of providing security or defense of its population and territory.\textsuperscript{204} The skilled politician that he was, Mobutu knew that the FAZ would need a new commander if they were going to attempt a military counter-offensive to the AFDL rebel advance. Thus, he appointed General Marc Mahele Lieko Bokungo as new commander-in-chief.

\textsuperscript{202}For an excellent analysis of the interplay between the economic, political and military crises that the Mobutu regime faced in its final months, see Solomon (1992).

\textsuperscript{203}See Joes (1986) for an explicit analysis of the reasons why revolutionary struggles succeed and/or fail. He emphasises in his study the role of the government forces, arguing that the military aspects of a regime overthrow are "critical and primary" (Preface, xii).

\textsuperscript{204}An insightful study on the history of the armed forces under Mobutu is found in Michael Schatzberg's book, The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire (1988), especially Chapter 4. Although the research for the book was conducted more than 15 years ago, the information it contains is valuable to an understanding of the state of the armed forces in 1996 when the AFDL emerged as a fighting force against the government troops.
General Mahele was a highly trained military officer who had experience in fighting wars, having led troops in the second Shaba War of 1978 as well as the Rwandan war of 1990 (Misser, 1997d: 11). The people of Kinshasa respected Mahele in part because he was responsible for having restored order to the city after the riots of early 1993. His notoriety as a tough soldier, both feared and respected, had earned him a reputation unparalleled by others in the Zairean military command. While he proclaimed loyalty to Mobutu, Mahele was also a man committed to justice and the effective operation of government institutions. He publicly criticised the use of political power for personal gain. Still, President Mobutu recognised that Mahele had the respect of most soldiers and the military experience with which to guide the government troops. If anyone could instill discipline and order within the demoralised army camps, it was General Mahele.

Unfortunately, some of the decisions that the Mobutu government made during the armed struggle were not in its best interests. General Mahele was given command of the army, yet President Mobutu repeatedly interfered with the military command. While the two worked out their differences, key urban centers were lost to the AFDL. For example, Mobutu did not immediately relinquish control of the elite Division Spéciale Présidentielle (DSP), under the command of General Nzimbi, and the Garde Civile.205 This proved a fatal mistake in the battle for Bunia at the end of December 1996. General Mahele had pleaded for access to DSP weaponry needed by the FAZ to defend Bunia's airport, the most strategic location in the urban center. The regular government forces did not have sufficient coercive resources without the assistance of the DSP. Bunia and its airport fell into the hands of the AFDL after only a week of fighting.

4.4.2: The state of the Zairean army.

The Zairean army could hardly be characterised as a fighting machine. In fact, the state of the government forces under Mobutu in 1996 operated much like the Cuban army under Batista prior to the Cuban revolution in 1959.206 In Cuba, Batista's army was barely capable of actions other than those that intimidated, terrorised, and corrupted the Cuban population. The army was rotten to the core. Its officers were undisciplined and lacking in leadership. Batista complained in much the same way that Mobutu would decades later: "...how strange it was that military units were being continually surrendered without combat to an enemy who, in number and military capacity, could not possibly possess the strength necessary to immobilise the army" (quoted in Joes, 1986: 123).

205Mobutu's decision to withhold military power and therefore potential from Mahele was significant because both the DSP and the Garde Civile had better-trained soldiers and superior weaponry. Had Mahele been in charge of these two military units, the government forces might have had more opportunities to secure their power base.
206See COLBURN (1994) for a comparative study of several contemporary revolutions in the developing world, including Cuba and Nicaragua; JOES (1986) also gives an informative comparative analysis.
That Mobutu confessed to the inexplicable results of the military situation clearly illustrated his misguided perception of reality.

Internal rivalries within the army structures superseded any sense of unity. From the power struggles between the DSP, the Garde Civile, and SARM (Service d'Action et de Renseignements Militaires) to the privatized militias controlling certain areas, to the unpaid troops reduced to violence and intimidation of the local populations, the lawlessness and corruption of the Zairean army were blatant features of its (non-)existence. The image of the Zairean army as a disjointed force committed to looting, raping, and fleeing was one the Mobutu government needed to revise if it was going to attempt any counter-attacks against the Alliance troops. Adebayo Williams comments on the state of the army in an article on political struggle; he contends that "...armies founded on internal pacification are always better at bullying and terrorising the local populace than fighting a well-disciplined force" (1997). General Mahele was given the arduous task of attempting to prove Williams' observation incorrect.

Unfortunate for Mahele was that the Zairean army illustrated to perfection Williams' arguments. The years of government brutality against the Zairean masses had demonstrated that the soldiers were quite capable when it came to repressing and intimidating the civilian opposition groups. Yet the Zairean armed forces were unable to effectively counter a rebel coalition with the means to destroy them. The key difference between the two scenarios was the availability of coercive resources to either of the opposition forces. The Zairean army was like the bully in a school playground. When confronting a weaker playmate, the bully is strong and sure of himself. However, face-to-face with another potentially stronger bully causes the first bully, in a perverse way, to become the weaker individual. Tragic though it was, the Zairean army could threaten the local populations, but groups armed with weapons were no match for the government forces. The latter were clearly on the losing side.

Official records claimed that there were between 70,000 and 100,000 Zairean troops.\textsuperscript{207} However, this figure was more than double the reality, according to accounts by most analysts and journalists in Zaire (Wallis, 1997: 17). In fact, less than 20,000 soldiers were in active duty; the others were either dead or had deserted the army long ago. The Zairean regime had a "ghost of an army" in which morale was low and corruption exceedingly high. Few troops were prepared to defend the Mobutu regime when their salaries - if they were lucky enough to be paid - were less than USD$3.

\textsuperscript{207}Africa Watch compiled a relatively complete catalogue of various government forces at Mobutu's disposal, including the size, operations, and command structure. For further information, see \textit{Africa Watch} (1992: 33-37).
a month. General Mahele worked hard to find the resources with which to mount a counter-offensive but the Zairean army needed soldiers, training, weapons, and ammunition. Even with the arrival of mercenaries from Serbia, France, Belgium, and South Africa in January 1997, the government was hard-pressed for a unified and organised armed force.

4.4.3: Mobutu's misguided perception of the nature of the armed struggle.

From the onset of the AFDL rebel advance, it appeared that the Mobutu government did not grasp the gravity of the military crisis. The Mobutu government had a misguided perception of the nature of the security threat it faced in the Alliance coalition. Rather than accept that the AFDL's struggle was an indigenous attempt to enforce political regime change, Mobutu preferred to see the conflict as a Rwandan invasion of Zairean territory with the objective the annexation of the Kivu provinces. In so doing, Mobutu overlooked the real issues. First, there were no plans to violate the territorial integrity of Zaire. In fact, the Alliance went to great lengths in the public meetings it held to emphasise the desire to keep Zaire's territory intact at all costs. Another 'real' issue was that the AFDL, as a national coalition of groups, intended to remove Mobutu from his 32-year presidency. Kabila succinctly expressed the objectives of the Alliance coalition:

The war in which our troops are engaged has as its aim the removal from power of a government which has led its people to unprecedented poverty, a government whose army has lost its head and is no more than a soldiering force inflicting suffering on the people and pursuing individual ends. We have been forced by the obstinacy of Mobutu to have recourse to the same means that he uses to keep himself in power, which is nothing other than force ('Why we rebelled', 1997).

A report in Africa Research Bulletin released January 1997 suggested that the possibility that Zairean troops would win a war against the AFDL forces was practically nil: "While a well organised counter-offensive may block further rebel advances, or push them back, it will be another matter for government forces to retake all the lost territory" ('Zaire: Kabila "unstoppable"', 1997: 12552).

During the final AFDL advance on the capital, the Mobutu government was caught up in its own political battles. General Mahele denied accusations that the army was assuming a political role: "The army is apolitical. Its job is clearly defined in the constitution. The duty of the army is to defend the country and institutions" (quoted in 'Zaire: Kabila "unstoppable"', 1997: 12600). General Mahele was anxious to avoid a battle for Kinshasa; he knew that the power struggle was coming to an end and the only impediment was Mobutu himself. So, Mahele went to President Mobutu and told him that the army would no longer fight to protect the regime. A military official told the Zairean press that General Mahele, as commander of the troops, "...had no intention of forfeiting the lives of Kinshasans on behalf of Mr. Mobutu" ('Zaire's last hours.', 1997). In light of
these developments, President Mobutu left Kinshasa and returned to his palatial residence in Gbadolite. The remnants of his power base were passed to the divided administration. On the one hand, certain of Mobutu's closest associates played down the departure of the President by arguing that he was only stepping aside while the Zairean army went up against the Alliance troops. On the other hand, the army was loyal to General Mahele and had no intentions of fighting for Kinshasa. On the eve of the AFDL's victory in Kinshasa, General Mahele was assassinated, allegedly at the instruction of Mobutu's son, Kongolo.

Throughout the armed struggle, the government's efforts to maintain authority in fact revealed how inherently weak its political and military institutional structures were when faced with capable military opposition. The government faced a military crisis of grave sorts, despite Mobutu's efforts to resuscitate the armed forces by appointing a new military commander. General Mahele had the respect of the government forces and the people in Kinshasa. However, he could not repair the low morale and corruption that had permeated the army structures for decades. The government forces did not claim one victory the entire duration of the struggle. Initially, Mobutu was misguided as to the nature of the struggle. Rather than confront the possibility of a national armed movement with a political agenda, Mobutu chose to view the AFDL coalition as a "foreign" fighting force with limited objectives and capacity. The Zairean government and the armed forces paid dearly for the misguided perception of their leadership.

4.5: Concluding comments.

This chapter covered a complex subject - the final months of the political struggle to overthrow the Mobutu regime - in a relatively brief analysis. The broad intention was to examine the political forces at work in the unfolding events of Zaire's regime change. What began as a regional attempt by relatively unknown groups to end the government attacks on the Banyamulenge in eastern Zaire culminated in a popular political and armed movement to overthrow the Mobutu regime. The appearance of the AFDL coalition as an alternative contender to the government was rapid. Prior to its appearance, the conditions for regime change had been frustrated by a blocked transition process. When the AFDL coalition emerged with the resources to back up its political objective to oust the government, Mobutu was hard-pressed to engage in any genuine defense of an already collapsed regime. An armed struggle followed in 1996 between the contending groups, specifically the AFDL and the government, and ended in May 1997 with the overthrow of the Mobutu regime.

208 Soon after the AFDL claimed victory in Kinshasa, President Mobutu went into exile in Morocco. He died a quiet death by terminal cancer in September 1997.
Zaire's struggle, like the February Revolution in Russia (1917), was "largely unplanned, widely popular, and relatively bloodless" (Joes, 1986: 24). Ironically, very little fighting actually took place. The regime change in Zaire was one of the least bloody in contemporary African history. By the beginning of 1997, the Zairean masses readily accepted the political objectives of the AFDL coalition. They acknowledged the opportunities for political change that accompanied the AFDL's rebel campaign and were not alone in their anticipation of a political future without Mobutu. Regional interests corresponded with those of the internal populations. Zaire's neighbouring governments willingly supported the AFDL cause. Rwanda and Uganda provided direct support in terms of military training, equipment, and troops, while other countries including Burundi and Angola facilitated the movement of troops through their territories.

Confronted with an overwhelming opposition to its authority, the Mobutu regime made a desperate bid to maintain political power. However, the ability of the government forces under Mobutu to defend themselves, let alone the government institutions and the people, had deteriorated. Soldiers had neither the training nor the equipment with which to mount a counter-offensive to the AFDL's persistent drive westwards in the direction of Kinshasa. The state of the AFDL forces, in contrast, was adequately organised and disciplined. The armed troops were limited in number but they were trained and equipped to fight in a rebellion.

The armed struggle for regime change ended after only eight months of armed conflict. The Mobutu regime was overthrown in May 1997 amidst parades of victory through Kinshasa. The course of Zaire's history was dramatically altered with the birth of the new Democratic Republic of the Congo.
CONCLUSION.

The experience of regime transition and change in contemporary Africa is richly diverse. Causes and conditions, paths to transition, regime types, and transition outcomes vary across the continent. Whether engaged in comparative analysis or the examination of a single case, the study of African transition processes challenges every individual with serious intent to remain open to the overwhelmingly complex array of perspectives and features. This thesis engaged in an analysis of one African country's experiment with processes of regime transition and change - the case of Zaire. As a student of African politics interested in the changing times of the 1990s, I began this project without a ready-made explanatory framework with which to study regime transition, nor had I come across literature that presented one all-inclusive set of defining conditions that could simply be tested in the Zairean context of political change. Therefore, one of the first tasks became an active search for an appropriate perspective from which to examine regime transition and change in Zaire, one that preferably combined the most compelling elements from the various schools of thought.

Whether of a political, economic, or other nature, contemporary studies of Africa have contended that Zaire provides an excellent case-study for analysis. Why? Zaire has faced the multiple challenges of mass impoverishment, government bankruptcy, near-total breakdown of vital services and military competence, the increasing unpopularity of the regime, and an increased reliance on foreign assistance (Gould, 1980: xiii). In fact, Zaire is the quintessential example of the "malaise" that has characterised so many African nations. Personalised forms of government, inherent weaknesses of political institutions, economic degradation, aid dependency, systematic government repression and brutality, ethnic violence - these are features not only reflected in Zaire's historical experience, but commonly found throughout the rest of Africa. Thus, to paraphrase the words of one African research analyst, an understanding of Zaire facilitates a greater understanding of Africa.209

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the fall of the Mobutu regime. Having approached the end, then, what in fact have we discovered about the collapse of this, the greatest of African dictatorships? Are we any closer to an understanding of the dynamics of Zaire's political experiences, to an awareness of the conditions that reflected its political landscape, or even to an explanation of how transition and change are typically manifested in authoritarian government systems? Indeed, some valuable insights have been gained insofar as the Zaire case is concerned.

209 Specifically, Hussein Solomon wrote, "To understand Zaire is to understand Africa" (1997: 91).
For instance, we learned that the structural precedents of government during the Belgian colonial period had an influential impact on the political institutions that were erected during the Mobutu regime. We also ascertained, from the enormous literature on the Zairean state, that the role of President Mobutu was one of the most integral pieces of the puzzle; the political future of Zaire depended upon the fate of its dictator. As a result, my thesis sought to correlate the significance of Zaire's political past with the political institutions of the Mobutu era. I will briefly revisit these and other ideas developed in the four chapters, in light of what we have learned.

Through an approach that combined elements of structure and contingency, an analysis of the Zairean quest for political change focused upon how the nature of the regime in turn affected the nature, extent, and likelihood of regime transition. On the one hand, I insisted that the structural precedents of patrimonial authority inherited from the colonial regime determined in part the dynamics of political transition in Zaire. As Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo have argued, though, "the emphasis on institutional structures ...does not replace attention to other variables - the players, their interests and strategies, and the distribution of power among them. On the contrary, it puts these factors in context, showing how they relate to one another by drawing attention to the way that political situations are structured" (1992: 13). Therefore, the case also argued that the roles, behaviours, and interactions of the political agents, especially Mobutu, imparted shape to the process of transition.

One of the preliminary tasks concerned an explanation of the nature of the factors that were influential in Zaire's struggle for regime transition and change. To what extent were economic, international, domestic, and political factors formative in shaping Zaire's transition struggles? I maintained that all sets of factors were important (although unequally so) in the overall explanation of transition in Zaire. Indeed, the public demand for political reform grew out of popular protests against the hardships engendered by Zaire's economic crises. Moreover, the external environment - which shifted with the formal end of the Cold War in 1989 - affected the politics of Zaire, a country previously assured of economic support from its allies in the West.

Zaire's situation was further complicated by regional instability and violent domestic conflict that built upon an ethnic factor exclusive to Central Africa's indigenous populations. Having clearly ignored the painful lessons resulting from the civil war in Burundi and the Rwandan genocide, President Mobutu advised his politicians in eastern Zaire to deliberately use ethnicity and fear to mobilise support for the regime. In so doing, an environment conducive to rebellion was created. It came to a head when the Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la liberation du Congo-Zaire, or AFDL, emerged in collaboration with the Banyamulenge against the Mobutu government's
localised policies of racism. The AFDL armed rebellion became a skillfully conducted political movement that revealed starkly how little influence the Mobutu regime retained within its territorial boundaries. In an earlier study, Glynne Evans noted with significance that "the fall of the Mobutu regime in May 1997 was precipitated by a rebellion sparked by sub-regional developments moving in from Zaire's eastern borders, not by political collapse in the capital, Kinshasa", although the situation in Kinshasa certainly helped (1997: 9).

Clearly, regional developments, the role of the international community, and economic conditions influenced the unfolding process of transition and change in Zaire. Nonetheless, these factors did not play the guiding role in Zaire's transition struggles. Instead, they helped to create the conditions under which political change in Zaire was implemented. The real impetus for regime transition and change arose from the internal political struggles which had been incubating since Mobutu's rise to power and as a result of the institutionalisation of neopatrimonialism. The push for political changes did not stem from events in Eastern Europe, donor pressures, economic collapse, or other external factors. Certainly these factors were important; however, their role was secondary to that of domestic and political conditions.

An explanation based primarily on domestic political factors necessarily involved a breakdown of Zairian politics into appropriate time frameworks. Arguably each time period was important and contributed to the overall analysis. For instance, the Belgian colonial era was integral to my analysis in that during this period, patrimonial authority was ingrained as a politically viable form of government. The legacy of patrimonialism, adapted in its new form as neopatrimonialism in the postindependence era, was perhaps the single most influential force behind political regime change. At the same time, the first few years of independence from 1960-1965 set the pace and determined in part the nature of political interaction in the upcoming decades. It brooks no dispute that this period represented a generalised failure of gigantic proportions in Zaire's political sphere. There were lessons to be drawn by taking stock of that period, lessons which could be put to good use in understanding what happened during the Transition years of the 1990s. The study would have been incomplete without an examination of events that occurred in the 1970s. It was during those years that President Mobutu institutionalised the neopatrimonial practices inherited from the colonial period. The policies of l'authenticité and Zaïreanisation, in addition to the practices of patronage and kleptocracy, formed the foundation of Mobutu's personal dictatorship. All in all, each period of Zaire's history revealed peculiar aspects of political life that together accounted for the growing mood of mass discontent and frustration with the Mobutu regime.
One objective throughout the thesis, to which I have already alluded, was to explain the importance of the regime's neopatrimonial nature in shaping the dynamics of transition. Like many other African countries, the regime in Zaire was founded on the institutional heritage of patrimonial rule that characterised the era of European colonial domination. In one sense, first-generation African leaders merely imitated the only form of government, aside from traditional authority structures, they had previously encountered - that of the colonial administration. The political system of Zaire under Mobutu represented a contemporary form of patrimonialism, whereby the regime governed the country much as a father was expected to rule his household, only with the added distinction of rational-legal institutional authority, hence the term "neopatrimonial". The regime attempted to closely control all political and economic activity, but it did not abolish locally based authorities which maintained the patron-client linkages that were so essential for the incumbent regime's survival. In the absence of highly institutionalised and effectively penetrating political structures, the structural precedents inherited from the colonial regime included the informal concentration of power in the hands of one individual (President Mobutu), the "political relationships based on personal loyalty, patronage, and coercion", and the use of state resources for the personal gain of Mobutu's ruling elite (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 270). These informal institutions determined the patterns of behaviour that individual actors and groups adopted in the course of their interactions, and lent themselves to the structural foundation of political life in Zaire.

It was argued that regime transition in Zaire hinged to a large extent upon the fate of the incumbent, President Mobutu. As long as he was able to manipulate the process of transition and use the informal institutions of a neopatrimonial regime to the advantage of his ruling elite, it was unlikely that political liberalisation and change would occur with any lasting impact. Within African circles, Mobutu epitomised the character of a personal dictator whose skills at manipulation, coercion, and co-optation were unsurpassed in the game of political opportunity. Accordingly, what mattered most in Zaire's transitional struggle was the ability of the contending forces to influence Mobutu and the ruling elite in order to make "use of the structure of opportunities and constraints embedded in inherited political institutions" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997: 272).

That being the case, another related objective was to explore the role of the opposition forces in the process of transition and change. Typical of neopatrimonial regimes, the opposing Union Sacrée coalition in Zaire was compromised by a lack of organisation, limited means - financial and coercive - with which to compete effectively, a self-serving leadership, ethnic divisions, and a tendency to depend on the patronage system created by the incumbent regime. More importantly, the level of cohesion that existed within the opposition was a significant determining factor in the
unfolding process of transition. The opposition forces demanded political reform and more political freedoms, yet were unaware of what reform measures were needed or what these freedoms entailed. The primary motivation was simply the idea of a government system without Mobutu. Still, given the limited amount of political competition tolerated by Mobutu's neopatrimonial regime, Zaire's opposition groups lacked experience in the game of politics and had instead been tutored in the ways of clientelism and corruption. Even had the regime been willing to accept piecemeal attempts by contending groups to enter competitively the political game, the institutional precedents that fostered political competition in the long run were not yet established.

Eventually, anti-Mobutu demonstrations in urban centers and the persistent efforts of the Union Sacrée to negotiate transition stretched thin the resources of the Mobutu regime. Still, as recently as early 1996, anyone who predicted that the path from violent ethnic politics in Central Africa would lead by mid-1997 to the collapse of Africa's most durable dictatorship, would have been rejected. The straw that broke the camel's back, so to speak, was the appearance of the AFDL coalition in eastern Zaire. The AFDL emerged specifically in reaction against the Mobutu regime's treatment of ethnic-related tensions in eastern Zaire. Initially, the AFDL coalition did not have an alternative political agenda in mind. Yet as the AFDL marched west towards Kinshasa, the regime's Forces Armées Zairoises were no match for the strength and discipline of the rebel forces. Government troops, divided by corruption and losing faith in the regime, deserted their posts while the AFDL gained strength and support as an armed political movement with emerging national objectives, the first being to remove President Mobutu from power.

The Mobutu regime withered in the onslaught, hastened by a collapsed economy, few resources, minimal support outside the elite circle, and the President's terminal cancer. The AFDL defeated the regime after only eight months of fighting. The Cuban Revolution (1959) had similar results. Fidel Castro triumphed because of "forces of decay gnawing at the Batista army from within and without...", not necessarily because he defeated the Batista regime (Joes, 1986: 206). The AFDL was successful in overthrowing the Mobutu regime not so much because of its superior military strength (although that was an important factor) but moreso due to the collapse of the incumbent regime. Mobutu fled the country on May 16 and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was born again on May 17, 1997.

This thesis clearly avoided any discussion of the outcome of Zaire's regime change in May 1997. From the beginning, I emphasised that we would not address the post-Mobutu political landscape, largely because of the time factor, both in terms of the thesis parameters and the actual timing of the regime change in Zaire. As the research and writing of this project got underway, less than
three years had passed since the AFDL overthrew the Mobutu regime and installed a new government. The new regime, however, had inherited a crisis-ridden economy, a disillusioned society, and an almost non-existent political culture. In the years since the regime change, the new Democratic Republic of the Congo has seen little stability, democracy, or peace. Pessimists raised the question: Was the Mobutu regime merely exchanged for a new authoritarian regime in a liberal guise? Within a year of the takeover, the new government had not fulfilled its promises for political change, elections, and economic growth. Even so, optimists argued that it would take years to undo Mobutu's brutal legacy; the new regime needed to be given a chance to prove its willingness and desire for political liberalisation and democracy in the new Congo.

Regardless of the comments made concerning the changes that had taken place in the Congo, circumstances in the country continued to deteriorate. In August 1998, the tensions erupted in a civil war that is still being waged today between the Kabila government and rebel groups. The conflict has destabilised the entire Central African region, drawing most of the countries surrounding the DRC into the strategic war. Events of the past two years have reinforced the notion that transition experiments in regimes founded on neopatrimonialism are fragile and quite possibly lack a sense of permanence. Since the fall of the Mobutu regime, the climate in the DRC has been fraught with internal tensions and too unstable to sustain the harsh realities and challenges of building a democratic government. Indeed, the political conflict is still unfolding and therefore subject to rapid and unprecedented shifts in both content and direction. Possible scenarios for the political future of the DRC remain grim as long as the factions from each side of the war refuse to honour peace agreements.

What lies ahead for the Congo is therefore unknown. Its present remains a challenge of survival for the Congolese people, caught up in the brutality of a war that is no longer even their own. Douglass North concluded that, "Today's and tomorrow's choices are shaped by the past" (1990: vii). Perhaps, then, more attention should be paid to the legacies of the Congo's previous existence. The answers to the Congo's political woes lie somewhere - they simply must be found.
APPENDIX 1.

"Phases" of the transition process in Zaire.

1. Sources of state crisis

* loss of political legitimacy
* international pressure to open political forum and reduce human rights violations
* economic collapse signals decline of business
* power struggles within ruling elite; disunity
* state violence and repression towards the masses
* inefficient government management and corruption

2. Formation of contending groups

* Mobutu government announces multipartyism (1990)
* contenders for political power (opposition groups) are legalised
* opposition groups flourish; coalition Union Sacrée
* national conference for political reform opens (1991)

3. Sources of mobilisation

* widespread anti-Mobutu government sentiment
* violent persecution by government troops
* factors such as population growth and urbanisation exceeding economic opportunities
* masses want a democratic government, while Mobutu refuses to relent to their demands
* by mid-90s, failure of negotiated transition through conference leads to alternative methods

4. The prospect of regime change is at its strongest

* withholding of international support/assistance pending government reform and elections
* lack of finances to equip and train armed troops
* conflict within the armed units themselves
* President Mobutu's terminal illness
* opposition groups gaining strength; formation of coalitions with viable alternative claims and support
* emergence of the AFDL rebel group

Diagram adapted from a similar one of phases of political change found in Revolutions of the Late Twentieth Century, edited by Jack GOLDSTONE, Ted GURR, and Farrokh MOSHIRI (1991: 324-327).
APPENDIX 2.

Key political events in Zaire from 1960-1990.

1960

30 June. Independence granted to the Congo from the Belgian colonial authorities. Joseph Kasavubu becomes President, Patrice Lumumba is Prime Minister, Joseph-Desiré Mobutu becomes Secretary of State, then Chief of the Armed Forces.

16 September. Army Chief Mobutu succeeds in his first coup d'état. He restores power to President Kasavubu and removes/exiles Lumumba from the prime ministership.

1961

17 January. Patrice Lumumba, as leader of the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC) is assassinated, allegedly by Mobutu's troops.

1963

----- The Kwilu rebellions in the eastern regions of the Congo. Antoine Gizenga assumes control of the North, Pierre Mulele (a Lumumbist follower) takes over the central region, and Gaston Soumiaolat and Laurent-Desiré Kabila control the eastern regions. The rebellions are stopped only with foreign intervention by official Belgian paratroopers and other mercenary troops.

1965

----- Mobutu, still as Army Chief, has regained control of all eastern regions with the exception of that controlled by Kabila in the mountainous terrain off of Lake Kivu.

24 November. Mobutu succeeds at his second coup attempt and assumes control of the country. He declares himself President.

1967

----- The Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (MPR) is created and designated sole political party, thus banning all others. The MPR represents the Party-State under the leadership of Mobutu.

1968

2 October. Rebel leader and hero Pierre Mulele returns from exile (under an amnesty invitation) and is subsequently executed in Kinshasa.

1971

27 October. The Congo becomes 'Zaire' under Mobutu's campaign of authenticity.

1973

----- The policies of Zaireanisation and radicalisation further implant Mobutu's dictatorship and have disastrous effects upon the Zairean economy.

1977

----- Shaba I: the first uprising in the province of Shaba (former Katanga) from Zaire.

1978

----- Shaba II: the second uprising. It fails due to foreign intervention requested by Mobutu to restore stability in the region.

1982

----- Etienne Tshisekedi forms an (illegal) opposition party, the Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social (UDPS). He is placed under house-arrest, imprisoned, and tortured through several years until 1990.

1990

24 April. President Mobutu announces an end to single-party rule and opens the political forum to multipartyism.
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