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**Research Essay**

**Predicting the Next Stage of a Conflict**  
**Conflict Resolution in Peacekeeping Operations**

**Colonel EDJ Plante**

**AMSC 1 / Canadian Forces College**

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It became apparent that however repetitive the pathologies of destructive conflict might be, the physiology of a healthy human society could take on many different shapes. Theories of conflict, then, could be deployed; *a priori* blueprints for peaceful societies could not. Scholars may be able to illuminate a conflict, but *only the parties could finally resolve it.*<sup>1</sup>

Mitchell and Banks, 1996 -

## **Introduction**

Since the mid-1960s, the behavioral, political and social sciences involved in conflict resolution have experienced what could be called the equivalent to the revolution in military affairs. Such experts in this field as Mitchell and Banks have reported that thinking about conflict resolution, conflict management or alternative dispute resolution (ADR) is experiencing a boom in terms of both its literature and its practical application in many countries.<sup>2</sup> The theory and practice of conflict resolution covers a wide field from the individual level, organizational level and up to the international level. As Kelman has described in some of his work, it is quickly evolving into a multidisciplinary field.<sup>3</sup>

Within this discipline, there are considerable differences between theory and actual practice.<sup>4</sup> Kelman also shows the link between theory and practice by pointing out that theory is used in practice, then tested in practice and finally theory is generated by practice.<sup>5</sup> It is important to highlight the need for conflict resolution theory to be properly tested in practice. Under normal conditions, the theory should be tested prior to going to the field. Nonetheless, it is under real field conditions that one determines whether the theory is either effective or lacking. The proper testing of theory should accelerate its acceptance, rejection or modification as with any other kind of theory.

An Operational Commander who is tasked to implement an effective campaign plan for a peacekeeping operation has a vested interest in the conflict resolution theory. As the primary executor of key portions of the conflict management process at the operational level, he can make a significant contribution to the development, refinement or outright abandonment of the theory. Unfortunately, as David Last has pointed out, academia has produced a significant number of careful studies and research devoted to conflict treatment but too little of it has been read and understood by soldiers.<sup>6</sup>

One might argue that this might be because a lot of what has been produced was either too complex, too limited or did not translate into something practical or useful for an Operational Commander. However, he may benefit greatly by applying conflict resolution theory at the operational level. In the chaos of war and operations other than war, most commanders have not been interested in arguing whether they should discuss conflict resolution *or* conflict management. However, by having a greater understanding of the conflict resolution process, an Operational Commander might execute his mission more effectively and help in the process of migrating from peacekeeping to peace building.<sup>7</sup> What he can gain from this understanding and how it can assist him in fulfilling his mission still has to be demonstrated at this point.

One way of testing whether conflict resolution methodologies would be useful at the operational level is to apply a modern model of conflict resolution to an historical case to see if it could provide a useful roadmap for future operational commanders who will be involved in operations other than war. This is what this paper proposes to do. Thus, after discussing conflict management and conflict resolution theory, two typical conflict resolution models will be

discussed. Then, the 1960-1964 UN Operations in the Congo will be used as a test case to validate the applicability of a theoretical model of conflict resolution. In particular, the purpose of this validation is to determine whether a descriptive model could be turned into a predictive one for the Operational Commander within his theatre of operation. If this is the case, one might be able to conclude that such a model would be useful to an Operational Commander facing new but similar situations.

### **General Background on Conflict Resolution and Conflict Management Theory**

In broad terms, the goal of conflict resolution is to bring about a long-term or permanent solution to conflict by ultimately addressing the root causes of the problem. This implies that some change will have to take place. The process leading to this change is normally built around a number of threads that set the framework for conflict resolution to be effective. The major threads include a non-adversarial framework, an analytic approach, a problem-solving orientation, the direct participation of the parties in jointly shaping a solution and finally facilitation by a third party trained in the conflict resolution process.<sup>8</sup>

Fetherston, in her work *Towards a Theory of UN Peacekeeping*, provided an excellent summary of both the classification and strategy of conflict management. She highlighted the methods of conflict management originally developed by Bercovitch. He identified violence and coercion (both physical and psychological), various forms of bargaining and negotiation and the involvement of a third party (which he later clarified as either binding or non-binding) as the methods of conflict management. Further, she explained the four major strategies developed by

Mitchell. In his case, he listed conflict avoidance, conflict prevention, conflict settlement and conflict resolution as the key strategies of conflict management. The two former strategies were about activities prior to a conflict while the latter two were focused on post-conflict activities. In this context, conflict management has been used as the generic term to include all types of strategies employed to reduce or end conflicts.<sup>9</sup>

Fetherston then focused on conflict settlement and conflict resolution. Conflict settlement aims to reestablish peace (often described in the general conflict resolution literature as negative peace); that is, stop the fighting or the violence and promote a compromise. She characterized techniques such as intervention, imposition, conciliation, good offices, mediation, negotiation and peacekeeping as settlement techniques. She rightly pointed out that settlement procedures are all coercive in nature in the sense that one or all parties in the conflict are forced to give up something that they otherwise would want for the sake of the cessation of the fighting. Conflict resolution on the other hand is a non-coercive third party intervention strategy that aims to facilitate a self-supporting, long term end to violence (normally referred to as positive peace within the conflict resolution literature) within a framework that is beneficial to all parties.<sup>10</sup>

The nuance between all of these strategies is quite important within the theory and it is only discussed briefly here for illustrative purpose. It is also important to raise an interesting word of caution about the potential Western cultural bias of this theory. Mary Clark is the one who advanced this issue when she stated:

“...a caveat is needed. This theory, and the field of conflict resolution generally, is being formed largely out of the ideas and disciples of Western intellectual thought – and we must constantly keep this caveat in mind as we proceed, remaining open to, indeed, actively seeking, inputs and corrections from other intellectual traditions. There is no reason to

suppose that there is only *one* cultural solution to our human needs for social bonding and sacred meaning- and there clearly will be different cultural approaches within local environments, since they differ so widely.”<sup>11</sup>

This could be an important area of research given the discussion on the emerging trend that points to the majority of the conflicts being in non-western parts of the world.

### Dynamic and Linear Models of Conflict Resolution

Based on the original work of Mitchell and Banks who have developed different conflict models, the dynamic protraction model as presented by Mitchell was selected for this analysis. This model is shown at figure 1. Mitchell explains that conflicts go through a sequence of stages starting with a latent stage and passing through a stage of prosecution or confrontation. Once engaged in this cycle, should resolution efforts fail, increasing levels of coercion and violence normally follow and conflict resolution normally initiatives become pointless. Although not explicitly stated, at this point one is forced to revert to conflict settlement in order to resolve the conflict.

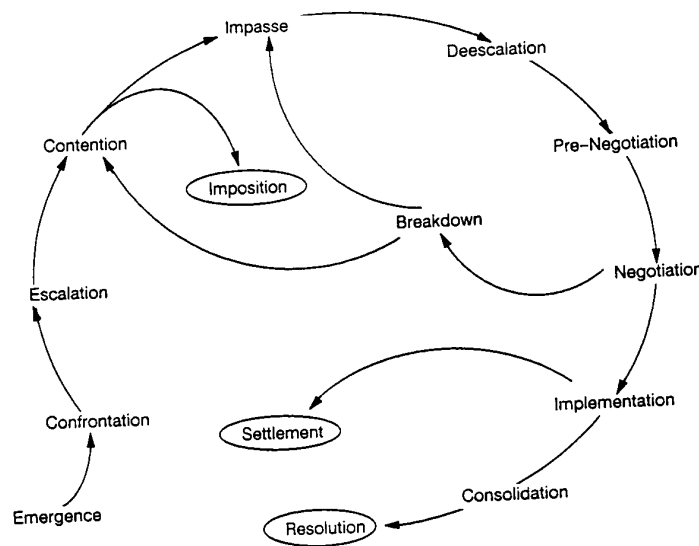


Figure 1- Dynamic Model of Conflict

Mitchell goes on to state that:

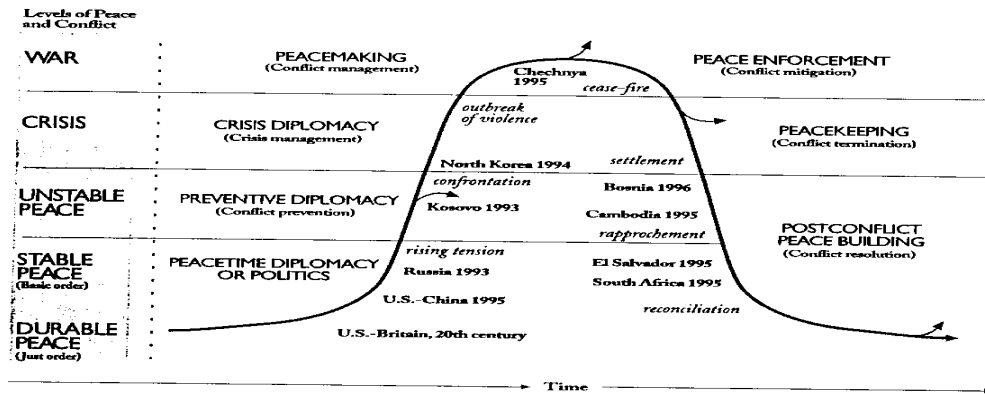
“Protracted conflicts can pass through a wide variety of stages in their “life cycle”. Moreover, this progression may not be linear, in the sense that some conflicts circle back to “earlier” stages and might pass through both malign and benign cycles of interaction several times.”<sup>12</sup>

This particular view of malign and benign cycles is now being incorporated in the concept of “nested conflicts” where a given conflict can be seen as part of a larger one. As such, trying to resolve the larger conflict without first settling the smaller one could well be impossible.<sup>13</sup> The dynamic model appears quite useful at this point as it provides the linkage between the various methods and strategies of conflict management. It also helps to understand the complexity of the conflict settlement process that is so prevalent today. Mitchell was well aware of this complexity as he went on to state:

“A further implication of the conception that protracted conflicts can pass through a complex and iterative series of stages is that *certain types of problem-solving or conflict-reducing activities may be more appropriate than others*, (my emphasis) depending upon the stage reached, or returned to, by the conflict under study.”<sup>14</sup>

From a slightly different approach, the linear model of the life history of a conflict such as the one developed by Lund and shown at figure 2, presents a good view of what one would call the different stages of a conflict.





**Figure 2- Linear Model of a Conflict<sup>15</sup>**

This model provides a good mapping of the terminology used by the UN, the diplomatic and military communities as compared to the terminology used in the conflict literature. Furthermore, this model presents an integrative view of all the players who are involved to ultimately resolve a conflict. It shows the potential linkages required as well as the most appropriate time to apply specific methods for a successful resolution of a conflict. It also shows the traditional range of tasks that can be performed by the military from the peace enforcement to the post-conflict peace building stages.

### **Choice of Dynamic Model**

The linear model provides a global or strategic view of conflict on a very coarse scale. While adequate to show the nominal stages of a typical conflict, the model is more appropriate for illustrative purpose than for analytical purpose. The time scale is too large to be of effective use in the day-to-day tracking of a specific conflict at the tactical or operational level. It provides a better understanding of conflict resolution at the strategic level.

The dynamic model is far more descriptive. Keeping in mind Mitchell's comments about conflict cycling back through some of the stages and realizing that peacekeepers often will face multiple parties, this model seems to be more suitable for use at the tactical or operational level. For these reasons, this descriptive model will be used to see if or how it could have worked as a predictive model in the case of the Congo conflict during the ONUC mission.

### **Opération des Nations Unies au Congo (ONUC)**

In July, 1960, the United Nations (UN) under the leadership of the Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld embarked on what was then its largest peacekeeping operation. The mission became known by its French acronym –ONUC. The operation, which was ultimately to last four long years, would almost bankrupt the UN and would become a watershed in the history of UN peacekeeping.<sup>16</sup> Looking back at history, it would seem to indicate that this operation was an anomaly that turned out to be a precursor to the type of peacekeeping operations that are now very common in the 1990s.

A summary of the major events that happened during the period leading up to and throughout the ONUC mission should help to place the ONUC mission within the global context. William Durch, who has provided an excellent summary of all the events that took place around the ONUC mission, indicated that the original task of ONUC was to buy time for the Congo until the Congolese could sort out their political affairs. It was also an attempt to prevent a direct clash of the superpower military forces.<sup>17</sup>

In the late fifties, the major Western powers were in the process of withdrawing from Africa. Belgium was in no great hurry to move out and after nationalist rioting in the Congo in 1959, the Belgian Government had originally developed a four year withdrawal plan. However, between 20 and 27 January, 1960, at the Brussels Roundtable Conference with Congolese representatives, the Belgian Government suddenly agreed to a quick transfer of power within six months.<sup>18</sup> This triggered a series of activities including national and provincial elections throughout the Congo from 11 to 25 May. The results of the elections gave an indication of the fractious nature of the country with over 14 parties electing representatives, mostly along tribal lines, to the Lower House.<sup>19</sup> On 23- 24 June, Patrice Lumumba's coalition cabinet was approved by the Chamber while Joseph Kasavubu was overwhelmingly elected first president. Congo became officially independent 30 June, 1960.

On 5 July, 1960, a mutiny took place in Thysville and quickly spread throughout the 25,000-strong

Within a month, almost 15,000 troops were deployed. The deployment reached its peak in July 1961 with 19,825 troops on the ground. In total, 34 countries contributed ground forces or support troops over the entire operation.<sup>21</sup>

The rapid expansion of troops resulted in ONUC devoting all its first efforts to organize itself rather than to help the host country. The initial deployment was poorly coordinated and resulted in troops being deployed in 77 separate locations. This resulted in a logistical nightmare given the size of the country and the lack of infrastructure. In due course, the troops were re-deployed and gradually concentrated in areas of greatest tension.<sup>22</sup> However, the arrival of UN troops allowed the Belgian Army to withdraw fairly quickly and by the beginning of August, all the Belgian troops were withdrawn from the Congo except for those military advisors who remained in the seceded province of Katanga.

On 5 September, the Congolese Government began to disintegrate. First, President Kasavubu dismissed Premier Lumumba and appointed the President of Senate, Ileo, to form a new government. Premier Lumumba and the Council of Ministers responded by accusing Kasavubu of high treason and voting to dismiss him. On 12 September, Colonel Joseph Mobutu, *Force Publique* chief of staff, proceeded to arrest Lumumba, who later escaped. Two days later, Mobutu imposed temporary military rule to neutralize both Ileo's and Lumumba's claim, to order Parliament to go home and to expel Soviets and other Communist diplomatic representatives. To resolve the crisis, on 20 September, Mobutu established the "College of Commissioners", with Kasavubu's approval, to administer the country until the end of the year.

The next eight months were spent trying to resolve the constitutional impasse. The situation was further complicated by the arrest, escape, recapture and subsequent murder of Lumumba in mysterious circumstances around 17 January, 1961. After the dissolution of the “College of Commissioners” on February 7, a UN resolution allowing for increased use of force brought the Congolese leaders to Tananarive, Madagascar from 6 to 12 March, 1961. They discussed a new constitution and requested the UN to curtail its forces and annul the 21 February Security Council resolution. This finally led to the opening of Parliament at UN-guarded Lovanium University; where 200 of the 221 elected members were assembled on 19 July, 1961.<sup>23</sup>

With the constitutional crisis finally over, the Government proceeded to deal with the reannexation of Katanga. These events were marred by a serious incident in which UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld was killed in a plane crash on 17 September, 1961 while en-route to negotiate with the rebels. The death of Hammarskjöld was most significant as the Secretary General had been playing a very hands-on role in the overall management of the crisis. His strong view about ‘non-violence’ and the ‘impartiality’ of ONUC was having a significant impact on the mission. His successor, U Thant, did not share the same attachment to these principles and he had a much different approach to managing the crisis.<sup>24</sup>

Following the crash, a short truce was negotiated as the ONUC regrouped. After a breakdown of the cease-fire and a new UN resolution there was renewed fighting, with the Congolese and UN troops ultimately managing to take Stanleyville in January, 1962. This prompted the Katanga Government to initiate negotiations to cease the conflict. However, these negotiations turned out to be a drawn out affair and in January 1963, the UN troops ended

Katanga's secession movement by force. The UN troops remained for another 18 months until their final withdrawal on 30 June, 1964.<sup>25</sup>

The historical assessment of ONUC indicates that it lacked every element that is now deemed essential for a successful peacekeeping mission. This would include effective support from the superpowers, continued support from the local parties and a clear mandate as well as adequate funding and resources on the ground. At the end, the Indian military commanders who were in charge of the bulk of the troops on the ground were credited for much of the military successes of the operation.<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that these successes came at a price as the ONUC casualties reached a total of 235, of which 126 were classified as killed in action.<sup>27</sup>

### **Analysis of ONUC Mission Against Model**

Looking back, the original mandate of ONUC consisted of two major elements. The first part was the withdrawal of the Belgian Army while the second was providing military assistance to the Congolese Government until its own forces were able to fully meet their tasks. Note that the tasks in question were never defined.<sup>28</sup> Mapping each of these missions in a separate copy of the dynamic model should allow us to see how well the descriptive model can fit.

The first mission, withdrawal of the Belgian Army, is fairly straightforward to track. Emergence of the conflict was triggered by the rush to independence without sorting out the division of power between all the parties and failing to provide the new Congolese Government with the ability to administer the country. The confrontation stage started as the *ANC* rebelled against its Belgian-led officer corps and with the initial violence against Belgian citizens in the

Congo. The escalation stage began with the Belgians' unilateral response to the violence by deploying their own troops. The contention stage followed as the violence spread across the country, with the Congolese Government calling for assistance and the UN responding with the resolution for Belgian withdrawal and creation of ONUC (this part could be considered part of the de-escalation stage). The impasse stage is bypassed in this case as the conflict progressed to de-escalation and implementation. As the UN troops arrived, they quickly replaced Belgian troops and the Belgian Army first withdrew to its barracks. As the Belgian troops completed their withdrawal by early August, 1960, this particular conflict was resolved. However, it is important to note that the Belgian Army is not withdrawn from Katanga as this province had declared its secession from the Congo on 11 July 1960 thus creating a new conflict that should be mapped separately.<sup>29</sup>

The second mission, supporting the Congo Government, can be mapped along a similar line. The first few stages are the same as for the first model. However in this case, once the contention stage was reached, the situation on the ground really became complicated. Events happened too fast and resulted in new conflicts emerging that had not been forecast. For example, as mentioned earlier, the secession of Katanga appeared as the emergence of a conflict to one party and as a settlement to the other. The arrival of ONUC was seen by the Congo government as a tool to help them implement reunification while the ONUC had no specific mandate to assist in executing that task. A major impasse was then created as the various parties jockey for power. At this point, the central government was basically split in two and a number of new conflicts emerged that all needed to be resolved. The ONUC ended up spending close to a year, from September, 1960 to August, 1961, in restoring the authority of the central government. This is

where the concept of conflicts within conflict becomes useful. So, with the larger conflict at the impasse stage, a number of local conflicts took place. Only when these conflicts were resolved, could the larger conflict move to the next stage. At the pre-negotiation stage, an activity at the strategic level, the UN resolution allowing for increased use of force set the ground rule for the following stage. Such ONUC activities as protecting the major political players and strongly encouraging them to the negotiating table were key points at the negotiation stage. Escorting and protecting all the members of Parliament at the UN-guarded Lovanium University starting on 19 July 1961, allowed the initiation of the implementation stage.<sup>30</sup> At the tactical level and in response to the local situation, the ONUC was also very effective in arranging cease-fires, neutral zones and protected areas.<sup>31</sup> These activities would map into the tactical version of the model especially when one remembers the Mitchell's comments when he explained that for protracted conflicts, there could be a number of both malign and benign cycles.

Once the central Government was restored, the ONUC then moved to the next phase of operation based on a revised mandate as it proceeded to bring Katanga back into the Congo. This operation lasted from August, 1961 to February, 1963 and can be seen as one conflict that would map against the model. Only a few key activities of this particular conflict will be highlighted. In November, 1961, a new mandate of the UN authorized the ONUC to use force and within a few weeks a negotiated peace accord was negotiated with the Premier of Katanga, Thsombe, who appeared to capitulate (negotiation stage). This was followed by almost a year of protracted negotiations where the details of Katanga's reintegration were sorted out (breakdown and impasse stages). Given the lack of progress in these negotiations, in August, 1962 the UN Secretary General, U Thant, proposed a new Plan of National Reconciliation. This proposal languished for a



while until the UN imposed economic sanctions that led to an embargo on import of Katanga's copper (confrontation and escalation stages). The use of military force by ONUC finally brought the secession to an end in January, 1963 (contention and imposition stages).<sup>32</sup>

As a final test of the applicability of this model, a specific tactical conflict involving Canadian troops was quickly reviewed. The initial event happened 18 Aug, 1960 when eight Canadian Army personnel were disarmed and assaulted at Ndjili Airport by local *ANC* forces (a clear case of contention). This incident was immediately questioned by the Canadian Prime Minister who wrote to Premier Lumumba pointing out that the Canadian troops were there at his own request and should not be subject to such treatment. Although Lumumba acknowledged the Canadian Prime Minister's request immediately, a similar event happened two days later when *ANC* personnel again assaulted a Canadian officer and an Indian Air Force officer. The *ANC* then attacked the ONUC Stanleyville contingent advance party the next day (again including a Canadian officer). It might be possible to argue that these last two incidents could be blamed on undisciplined *ANC* troops or on difficulties in communicating with them and could be part of the "fog of war." However, these incidents were a clear indication that as far as the *ANC* troops were concerned, they were still at the contention stage and one should have expected that similar events were likely to happen. Thus the events of 27 August when two more attacks happened could have been anticipated. In one case, seven more Canadian were beaten, threatened with death and paraded through the mob-controlled streets of Stanleyville; in the other one, four more Canadian were dragged out of their aircraft along with five USAF personnel and severely beaten. Based on the model, the latest two incidents, at least, should have been predictable.<sup>33</sup>

Based on the latter discussion, it would appear that the dynamic model would require a number of adjustments. In particular, when a breakdown occurs, it would seem probable that the parties might revert to the confrontation or escalation stages instead of the contention or impasse stages. Furthermore, in a protracted conflict, one might expect to cycle between the impasse and confrontation stages a number of times. Although it might have been implied, these courses of action were not shown in the original model.

Another important failure of this specific model is its inability to cater to the impact of personalities in the conflict resolution process. The death of Secretary General Hammarskjöld and the subsequent appointment of U Thant had a major impact on the overall resolution of the Congo conflict. Such a factor is not evident in looking at this model.

Along the same line, the model would need to include arrows to show the outside inputs that can have an impact on the resolution of the conflict. The example of the UN resolution is illustrative of this type of input. It would be appropriate to indicate that these inputs could come in at any stage of the conflict.

As far as the use of the model for predicting what might happen, the example of the Canadian incident might be considered quite inconclusive. Firstly, one might argue that the specific nature of the incident was most probably unpredictable. Secondly, given that there were limited consequences in this particular case, it could be said that the time between the incidents was too great. On the other hand, until some credible signs from the *ANC* were provided, the ONUC personnel should have expected and been prepared for the worse. Here again, preparation

itself might have changed the courses of action of the *ANC*. From this discussion, one might say that if not predictive, the model certainly might allow the Operational Commander to be more perceptive and sensitive to the events.

### **Applicability of Conflict Resolution Model**

One could be tempted to ask where and why the mapping of all these events would be useful to an Operational Commander. Considering how a typical peacekeeping operation normally evolves, could one identify areas that would benefit from using such a descriptive model? If the model could either paint a better picture of the events or provide the Commander with information or knowledge he otherwise would not have, it would be appropriate to conclude that the dynamic model would deserve some further considerations.

On a practical level, the continuous change in the composition of a peacekeeping force brings about a number of discontinuities. In the case of ONUC, during the four years of the conflict, close to 40 countries contributed troops at one time or another.<sup>34</sup> With such a number of countries involved, trying to keep track of what was actually happening would have been a challenge. The use of a proper descriptive model would assist the Commander to ensure that reports are consistent from nation to nation. This is even more important when one also considers the continuous rotation of troops within each contingent. For example, Durch reported that over the course of the ONUC operation, the entire Nigerian and Ghanaian armies as well as two-thirds of the Ethiopian and Malaysian armies cycled through the Congo.<sup>35</sup> With such a change of personnel, a good descriptive model should help in providing consistent, clear and better reports.

If reports are generated at the tactical level, they need to be analyzed at the operational level. Picking up on the concepts advanced by Fetherson about the need for the troops to be better trained in third party peacekeeping, which is qualitatively different from normal military activity, there is a need to place that training within the conflict management framework.<sup>36</sup> As such, if this conflict resolution training is provided at the tactical level and the tactical staff does generate the appropriate reports for the operational level, it follows that there is a need for expertise at the operational level. Otherwise, all of the inputs at the tactical level would be for naught unless they could be placed within a bigger picture. Thus, tactical descriptive reports would need to be analyzed at the operational level by officers who would need in-depth understanding of the conflict resolution theory.

As noted by Stephen Ryan, peacekeeping is going through some major changes. The traditional “neutral” buffer role between consenting parties is being replaced by a multiplicity of functions and is bringing about a more complex environment. Given the trend of the UN playing a far more active role in resolving conflict, there is a lot to be gained by building on the existing research in conflict management. He has argued that there is a need to close the gap between the conflict management experts and the practitioners in the field. There is a growing gap between the *ad hoc* approach so long favored by the UN and the more structured and disciplined approach now required to deal with the new complexity of UN missions.<sup>37</sup> The use of an acceptable model based on good understanding of the conflict resolution theory would bring additional credibility to the Operational Commander in his interchanges with the strategic players.

Based on the example of the repeated assaults of Canadian troops, a sound understanding of the conflict resolution theory coupled with a good analysis of activities against an adequate descriptive model would point to the potential courses of action within a stage of a conflict. There is still a need to develop a proper descriptive tool to track key events against the conflict model. Thus, by keeping track of the key events at the tactical level and with proper analysis, the Operational Commander might predict the next phase of the conflict envisaged by the parties and develop potential courses of action accordingly. This might prevent an incident from further escalating the conflict while avoiding any disastrous outcome for his troops.

It should be clear that a single tool could not provide all the answers to such complex issues that come out of protracted conflicts. However, the models described above should help in correcting our tendency to look at issues in a linear and sequential way as well as in a bipolar mode. In a bipolar mode, people look at the good versus the bad or having only two protagonists involved. People tend to look for a definitive start and stop to all events and they normally try to go through all the steps. After the facts, one can normally point to a sequence of “easily” identifiable ‘events or actions’ which can be immediately pigeonholed and characterized. The world is never so simple as the events surrounding the ONUC mission so aptly demonstrated.

It must also keep in mind that the events in question will happen in a “conflict” environment. This means that the peacekeepers will be operating against a backdrop of miscommunications, filtered information, rumors, unreliable witnesses, etc... They will have to contend with events at the tactical level which can not be immediately connected without proper analysis. They also will have to deal with the “secrecy of intent” of the parties involved who, for example, might want to exploit the element of surprise when it suits their own purpose.

In real life, there is probably a need to integrate both the dynamic and linear model approaches as the former seems applicable at the tactical level while the latter seems more appropriate at the strategic level. Given the complexity of the problem, the Operational Commander would gain much by being able to keep an accurate scorecard of what is happening around him. The UN Secretary General appears to have recognized this fact at the strategic level in trying to become more proactive in conflict prevention. He indicated in his 1995 report:

“I accordingly created a Department of Political Affairs to handle a range of political functions that had previously been performed in various parts of the Secretariat. That Department has since passed through successive phases of restructuring and is now organized to follow political developments worldwide, so that it can provide early warning of impending conflicts and analyse possibilities for preventive actions by the UN as well as for action to help resolve existing conflicts.”<sup>38</sup>

Finally, if the last ten years are any indications of what is to come, dealing with complex intra-state conflicts is most likely to become more common. The latest proliferation of conflicts that have made the events in the Congo pale in comparison. There were more than forty violent conflicts reported at the beginning of 1996. Figures for 1995 indicated that there were about 23 million internationally recognized refugees with another 27 million that were internally displaced.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, recent research would even go as far as to demonstrate that close to 90% of the casualties in modern ethnic conflicts are civilian casualties. This seems intentional, as the aim of the belligerents in such conflicts is to attack the civilians on the other side.<sup>40</sup>

In the face of such human misery and suffering and under the glare of cameras, politicians and diplomats have been under increasing pressure to act. As a result, in the early 1990s, the UN

saw a significant expansion of its peacekeeping activities as well as a major shift in its role and tasks.<sup>41</sup> Although that pace has now somewhat diminished, the nature of peacekeeping itself is being redefined at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. Furthermore, the complexity of peacekeeping was also increased as a number of negotiated settlements involved not only military arrangements but also a wide range of civilian-related matters.<sup>42</sup>

There is no reason to assume that what the turmoil experienced over the last decade will change in the near future. Kaplan, in his article “*The Coming Anarchy*” paints a very bleak future for the twenty-first century.<sup>43</sup> The world faces a growing gap in the distribution of wealth between the First World and the Third World. The income gap between the rich and the poor even in the poorest countries is also increasing. The stress on the environment resulting from the population growth is another emerging factor. The reemergence of the tribal culture is probably the most explosive of these factors, especially where the maps, as drawn mostly by the West, fail to match the local population distribution. There is no doubt that there are very uncertain times ahead.<sup>44</sup> It can be expected that the diplomats and politicians will be called repeatedly to negotiate with reluctant belligerents in order to resolve the resulting conflicts. Therefore, there is little doubt that an Operational Commander will be called upon to intervene at the last minute, with minimum time to prepare and often with ambiguous instructions. At that point, a good understanding of conflict resolution will be essential when developing his campaign plan.

### **Operational Commander’s Mandate(s)**

The Operational Commander can benefit immensely from a solid understanding of all the theoretical work on the subject of conflict resolution as well as the conflict management process.

By using a good descriptive conflict resolution model, better insight can be gained on the nature and status of the conflict. This insight can assist him in developing a successful campaign plan. This might also help him in developing a stronger interface with the political and diplomatic world at the strategic level. Furthermore, he might gain additional credibility at the strategic level by using theory being espoused by academia.

As mentioned earlier, Stephen Ryan has commented on the changing nature of peacekeeping. He advanced the argument that the new functions being assigned to an Operational Commander can now be grouped under three major headings: traditional military peacekeeping functions, governmental and political functions and civil functions. The traditional military functions include supervision of agreements or settlements by observation and monitoring, supervision of withdrawal of forces, maintenance of buffer zones, etc. Governmental or political functions include such tasks as maintenance of territorial integrity, provision of law and order, ensuring political independence, assisting in the establishment of viable government, election monitoring or ensuring security of the population during the electoral process. Finally, a number of civil functions such as humanitarian assistance, monitoring and regulation of the flow of refugees, support to NGOs among others.<sup>45</sup>

While a number of military people have disagreed with the concept of employing the military for governmental and or civilian functions, there is no doubt that the operational Commander could be subject to a lot of pressure to contribute in these areas. Knowing exactly if, when or where to accept such tasks is a difficult challenge. Many of these functions can happen at any stage of a conflict from preventive diplomacy to post-conflict peace building. However,



implementing any one of these functions at the wrong place and time could be very counterproductive. It might ultimately lead to the total failure of a mission. This is particularly critical when the element of impartiality is perceived to be broken by any of the warring parties to the conflict.<sup>46</sup> Knowing at what stage a conflict is and understanding the conflict resolution process should offer invaluable insight in determining what would be the appropriate timetable for these functions or if he should question the validity of the order when he is tasked to execute them.

## **Conclusion**

In looking at the basic elements of conflict management and applying a descriptive model of the conflict resolution to the ONUC mission, it was shown that the Operational Commander could gain valuable understanding and insight into a conflict. That information should help him in sorting out his main objective, identifying the centre of gravity of the parties involved, and developing his intent to accomplishing his mission. It should also assist him in determining appropriate timelines for implementing mandated functions.

Although the dynamic model selected was shown to have some deficiencies and could not really be used as a perfect predictive model, could arguably allow the Operational Commander to be more perceptive. A more refined model might offer some potential in predicting what the next stage of a conflict will be. Such information might be useful in preparing potential courses of action. It might also be useful in providing an edge that might give the troops the early warning they need to avoid unnecessary casualties.

Furthermore, one must consider Mitchell's comments that some problem-solving or conflict-reducing activities are more appropriate at different stages of the conflict cycle. To this,

one must add the increased number of functions being introduced to resolve conflict. Note that the number of players involved is also increasing. Hopefully, one can see that there is a need for an in-depth understanding of the theory of conflict management. This knowledge can be applied to determine the courses of action required at the operational level. It can also provide valuable information when make the adjustments to the campaign plan because of the changing situation on the ground.

One major difficulty in using a descriptive model approach is that it looks very much like 20/20 hindsight. On the ground and at the time, it is far more difficult to classify events. Given that an operational commander is most likely to be parachuted in with a broad and ambiguous mandate, his immediate focus is most likely to be the separation of the belligerents. However, with a clear understanding of conflict management and a good descriptive tool, he could avoid wasting a lot of energy and never moving beyond that stage of the conflict cycle. Some have even argued that he then becomes part of the problem as the conflict is often stalemated at this stage. By having the Operational Commander contributing the right way during the conflict cycle, there is a greater chance of reaching the conflict resolution stage sooner.

## END NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Mitchell and Michael Banks, *Handbook of Conflict Resolution-The Analytical Problem-Solving Approach*, London, Wellington House, 1996, p. viii.

<sup>2</sup> Mitchell & Banks, 1996, p. xi.

<sup>3</sup> Herbert C. Kelman in his foreword to *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice- Integration and Application*, edited by Dennis J.D. Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe, Manchester & New York, Manchester university Press, 1993,p.ix.

<sup>4</sup> Herbert C. Kelman in his foreword to *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice- Integration and Application*, p. ix.

<sup>5</sup> Herbert C. Kelman in his foreword to *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice- Integration and Application*, p. xi.

<sup>6</sup> David M. Last, *Theory, Doctrine and Practice of Conflict De-escalation in Peacekeeping Operation*, Thesis presented to US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1995, p.21.

<sup>7</sup> In this paper, the different peace mission terms are based on the NATO definitions as provided here:

- **Peace Enforcement:** Military operations to restore peace or to establish specified conditions in an area of conflict or tension where the parties may not consent to intervention and may be engaged in combat activities.
- **Peacebuilding:** Post-conflict actions in the aftermath of international or civil strife to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.
- **Peacekeeping:** The prevention, containment, moderation and termination of hostilities between or within states through an impartial third-party intervention organized and directed internationally for restoring and maintaining peace. This intervention is conducted using military forces, police and civilians and usually with the consent of the main belligerents.
- **Peacemaking:** The process of resolving disputes that could lead to conflict, primarily through diplomacy, mediation, negotiation or other forms of peaceful settlement.

<sup>8</sup> Herbert C. Kelman in his foreword to *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice- Integration and Application*, p. ix.

<sup>9</sup> A.B. Fetherston, *Towards a Theory of United Nations Peacekeeping*, New York, St-Martin's Press, 1994, pp.104-105.

<sup>10</sup> A.B. Fetherston, 1994, p. 105.

<sup>11</sup> Mary E. Clark, "Symptoms of Cultural Pathologies: A Hypothesis" in *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application*, edited by Dennis J.D. Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe, p. 50.

<sup>12</sup> Christopher R. Mitchell, "Problem-solving exercises and theories of conflict resolution," in *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application*, edited by Dennis J.D. Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe, Manchester & New York, Manchester University Press, p.87.

<sup>13</sup> Ken Eyre, in a discussion as part of *A Conceptual Framework of Modern Peacekeeping Presentation*, Canada, The Lester B. Pearson Canadian Peacekeeping Training Centre, Presentation to Canadian Forces Command and Staff College, Advanced Military Studies Course, 15 Oct 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher R. Mitchell, "Problem-solving exercises and theories of conflict resolution," in *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application*, edited by Dennis J.D. Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe, p.87.

<sup>15</sup> Michael S. Lund, "Early Warning and Preventative Diplomacy", in *Managing Global Chaos-Sources of and Responses to International Conflict*, ed. by Chester A. Crocker & Fen Osler Hampson with Pamela Aall, United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996, p.386.

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<sup>16</sup> Alan James, *Peacekeeping in International Politics*, London, Macmillan in association with International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1990, pp. 292-293.

<sup>17</sup> William J. Durch, *The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1993, p.315.

<sup>18</sup> William J. Durch, , 1993, pp. 317.

<sup>19</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, Directorate of Intelligence, *Congo Republic: Background Information*, Ottawa: Army Headquarters, 1961, Annex B to part 3.

<sup>20</sup> William J. Durch, , 1993, pp. 317-319.

<sup>21</sup> William J. Durch, , 1993, pp. 335-336. **Note.** The figure for the total number of countries involved is suspect. Vaccaro (1998, p.76) reports that military forces from **35** different countries were fielded. James (1990, p.292) reports that **no fewer than 39** countries contributed military forces.

<sup>22</sup> J. Matthew Vaccaro, "UN Peace Operations in Congo: Decolonialism and Superpower Conflict in the Guise of UN Peacekeeping" in *"The Savage Wars of Peace"- Toward a New Paradigm of Peace Operations*, Edited by John T. Fishel, Boulder, Westview Press, 1998, p. 82.

<sup>23</sup> Helen Kitchen, editor, *Footnotes to the Congo Story-An "Africa Report" anthology*, New York, Walker and Company, 1967.

<sup>24</sup> Alan James, 1990, p. 297.

<sup>25</sup> Durch, 1993, pp. 342-344.

<sup>26</sup> Durch, 1993, p.347.

<sup>27</sup> J. Matthew Vaccaro, "UN Peace Operations in Congo: Decolonialism and Superpower Conflict in the Guise of UN Peacekeeping, 1998, p .82.

<sup>28</sup> Durch, 1993, pp. 326-327.

<sup>29</sup> Durch, 1993, pp. 324-325.

<sup>30</sup> United-Nations, "ONUC" in *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, New York, UN Dept of Public Information, 1996, pp. 182-188.

<sup>31</sup> James, 1990, p.295.

<sup>32</sup> *The Blue Helmets*, 1996, pp. 188-196.

<sup>33</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, Canadian Forces Command and Staff College, Advanced Military Studies Course, *Case Study No 3- Operation Mallard: The Congo, 1960*, restricted publication, 1998.

<sup>34</sup> James, 1990, p. 292.

<sup>35</sup> Durch, 1993, p.335.

<sup>36</sup> Fetherston, 1994, pp. 211-232.

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Ryan, "The Theory of Conflict Resolution and the Practice of Peacekeeping" in *A future for Peacekeeping?*, edited by Edward Moxon-Browne, Macmillan Press in Great Britain & St Martin's Press in USA, 1998, pp. 31-33.

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<sup>38</sup> Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace 1995*, United Nations Publications, New York, 3 Jan 1995, p.13.

<sup>39</sup> Ted Robert Gurr, “Minorities, Nationalists, and Ethnopolitical Conflict”, in *Managing Global Chaos-Sources of and Responses to International Conflict*, ed. by Chester A. Crocker & Fen Osler Hampson with Pamela Aall, United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996, p. 54.

<sup>40</sup> Gerald Hensley, UN Peacekeeping: A participant’s Point of View in *A Crisis of Expectations-UN Peacekeeping in the 1990s*, Edited by Ramesh Thakur and Carlyle A Thayer, Boulder, Westview Press, 1995, p.168.

<sup>41</sup> Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 1995, pp. 8-9.

<sup>42</sup> Boutros-Ghali, 1995, pp.9-18

<sup>43</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy”, in *The Atlantic Monthly*, volume 273, No 2, Feb 1994, pp. 44-76.

<sup>44</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy”, in *The Atlantic Monthly*, pp. 44-76.

<sup>45</sup> Ryan, 1998, pp. 31-32.

<sup>46</sup> Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 1995, p.15.

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## Annotated Bibliography

Boutros-Ghali, Boutros, *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace 1995*, United Nations Publications, New York, 3 Jan 1995.

Keystone document from then Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali who reported to the UN on the progress of his proposed reforms to improve collective security, international law, human rights and economic and social development. A significant portion of the report deals with peacekeeping.

Canada, Department of National Defence, Canadian Forces Command and Staff College, Advanced Military Studies Course, *Case Study No 3- Operation Mallard: The Congo, 1960*, restricted publication, 1998.

This is an excellent reading to summarize the Canadian contribution to the ONUC mission. It contains an extensive annotated bibliography.

Canada, Department of National Defence, Directorate of Intelligence, *Congo Republic: Background Information*, Ottawa: Army Headquarters, 1961.

Original report from Directorate of Intelligence that provides factual information about the Congo including the geography, climate and infrastructure. Excellent discussion on the political system coupled with description of various political parties and their leadership. Includes results from first elections.

Clark, Mary E., "Symptoms of Cultural Pathologies: A Hypothesis" in *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application*, edited by Dennis J.D. Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe, Manchester University Press, 1993.

A thought provoking article from a biologist with quite a different view of the human aspects of conflict. The book itself is edited by some of the experts in the field of conflict resolution and should be required reading for anyone interested in gaining a broad view of the field of conflict resolution.

Durch, William J., *The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1993.

Only the chapter on the ONUC mission was reviewed. This chapter contains very detailed information but is somewhat biased as it tends to present a very pro US view that is not immediately apparent.

Fetherston, A.B., *Towards a Theory of United Nations Peacekeeping*, New York, St-Martin's Press, 1994.

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This book develops a conceptual framework for better peacekeepers by building on the key elements of conflict resolution, especially the role of third party intervention. The focus is at the tactical level with a strong emphasis on developing new skills for the soldier on the ground. As an aside, some of the supporting material comes from the graduate studies from a Canadian Officer, Major David Last.

Gurr, Ted, Robert, "Minorities, Nationalists, and Ethnopolitical Conflict", in *Managing Global Chaos-Sources of and Responses to International Conflict*, ed. by Chester A. Crocker & Fen Osler Hampson with Pamela Aall, United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996,

The article provides a global view on the question of minorities and ethno-political conflicts. This is a source for general reference data on a very narrow subject. The book itself is an excellent general reference on the subject of global conflict. The section on peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention is both thought provoking and current.

Hensley, Gerald, UN Peacekeeping: A Participant's Point of View in *A Crisis of Expectations-UN Peacekeeping in the 1990s*, Edited by Ramesh Thakur and Carlyle A Thayer, Boulder, Westview Press, 1995, p.168.

A detailed discussion on the problems and challenges involved in peacekeeping by a number of experts in international relations. A good general reference to gain an understanding of the subject. A number of the contributors are from Australia and New Zealand, including Mr. Hensley who is from New Zealand and presents issues that are similar to the ones faced by Canada.

James, Alan, *Peacekeeping in International Politics*, London, Macmillan in association with International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1990.

A short section on the Congo crisis, less than ten pages, was used as a secondary reference. The information is rather generic and events are well analyzed and summarized. It provided a counterbalance to the view from Durch. The book provides a broad coverage of peacekeeping missions up to 1989.

Kaplan, Robert D., "The Coming Anarchy", in *The Atlantic Monthly*, volume 273, No 2, Feb 1994.

A view of where the world is heading based on insightful observations from the author who has traveled extensively in the Third World. This article should probably be included in the anthology for AMSC and NSSC.

Kelman, Herbert C. in his foreword to *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice- Integration and Application*, edited by Dennis J.D. Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe, Manchester University Press, 1993.

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The article provides an excellent introduction to the field of Conflict resolution while the book is an essential reference on the subject. The book is based on a post graduate course where the leading experts in the field each presented their most important work.

Kitchen, Helen, editor. *Footnotes to the Congo Story-An "Africa Report" anthology*, New York, Walker and Company, 1967.

A collection of articles written by people who were on the ground as the Congo crisis was happening. Although not a scholarly book, it presents the view of some very knowledgeable people who were participants in or close observers of the drama in Congo as it unfolded. Light reading for those who might want to get a more personal account not yet filtered.

Last, David M., *Theory, Doctrine and Practice of Conflict De-escalation in Peacekeeping Operation*, Thesis presented to US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1995.

This is an excellent work on the subject of conflict resolution. The first two chapters provide a good analysis of the theory and doctrine. The last part of the work focus on contact skills required for practicing conflict de-escalation.

Lund, Michael S., "Early Warning and Preventative Diplomacy", in *Managing Global Chaos-Sources of and Responses to International Conflict*, ed. by Chester A. Crocker & Fen Osler Hampson with Pamela Aall, United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996.

The book is an excellent general reference on the subject of global conflict. This article is the first one in the section that introduces approaches to conflict management. This is at the strategic level as it discusses subjects such as preventive diplomacy, mediation and multi-track initiatives.

Mitchell, Christopher R., "Problem-solving exercises and theories of conflict resolution," in *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application*, edited by Dennis J.D. Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe, Manchester & New York, Manchester University Press, p.87.

The author provides problem-solving exercises and theory of conflict resolution while the book is an essential reference on the subject. The book is based on a post graduate course where the leading experts in the field each presented their most important work.

Mitchell, Christopher Mitchell and Bank, Michael, *Handbook of Conflict Resolution-The Analytical Problem-Solving Approach*, London, Wellington House, 1996.

A short book that deals with practical exercises to develop expertise in using the problem-solving approach as developed by the authors. This is a book for the experts.

Ryan, Stephen, "The Theory of Conflict Resolution and the Practice of Peacekeeping" in *A future for Peacekeeping?*, edited by Edward Moxon-Browne, Macmillan Press in Great Britain & St Martin's Press in USA, 1998.



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Only this chapter was reviewed. The author shows the gap between the peacekeepers and the peace and conflict research experts. He makes a strong case for a better dialogue between the two approaches. The author exposes many of the flaws and weaknesses of both camps and proposes that a dialogue be established to blend the theory, research and practice improve the situation.

United-Nations, "ONUC" in *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peacekeeping*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, New York: UN Dept of Public Information, 1996.

This is a publication of the UN that provides the official record of the ONUC. This is an excellent source for reference on the ONUC mission.

Vaccaro, J. Matthew, "UN Peace Operations in Congo: Decolonialism and Superpower Conflict in the Guise of UN Peacekeeping" in *"The Savage Wars of Peace"- Toward a New Paradigm of Peace Operations*, Edited by John T. Fishel, Boulder, Westview Press, 1998, p. 82.

This chapter reviews the ONUC mission against a model developed by the US military to assess the new paradigm of peace operations. The article provides general reference to the ONUC mission and helps to balance the views of Durch and James.