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**Research Essay**

**THE SUCCESS OF ONUC AND DAG HAMMARSKJOLD'S VISION**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

For far too many people, the United Nations operation in the Congo, ONUC, between 1960 and 1964 is viewed as a failure of the organization to fulfill its mandate and reach the desired outcome. Some will go as far as comparing the ONUC mission to the American intervention in Vietnam, which is obviously considered a monumental failure. Also more recently ONUC could be compared to the Bosnia-Herzegovina case, which gave a very negative tone to the employment and actions of the United Nations<sup>1</sup>. What in fact took place in the Congo, however, was a very clear demonstration of what the world would have to face three decades later. Of course the fall of the Berlin wall and the demise of the Soviet Union were far from predictable at that time.

The visions of those who were involved in ONUC, more specifically those of the Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjold, still resound in the history books today. More importantly they are astonishingly comparable to what is now known as modern conflict resolution theories and practices. What makes Hammarskjold different is that he was leading his mission to successful conclusion through a proper conflict resolution process when his untimely death curtailed his initiative.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that indeed, Mr. Dag Hammarskjold successfully applied modern conflict resolution techniques and practices to bring “settlement” to a conflict that took the entire world by surprise, given its complexity and reach, both externally and internally to the state of Congo. The focus of the paper will be on the successful political and diplomatic efforts of the mission, despite the obvious lack

of military efficiency. In order to do so, a brief overview of the historical background will be covered and will be followed by a discussion of the various elements of Conflict Resolution theory along with their application to the case by Hammarskjold during ONUC. It is therefore very important to understand the background events and history facts that led to the Congo crisis.

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The Congo was one of many emerging colonies looking towards independence from its colonial power. After early demonstrations and independence movements by the population as early as 1959, Independence Day came on June 30<sup>th</sup> 1960 but not as the world would have hoped. Almost immediately problems arose, commencing with military units mutinies which threatened Belgian personnel in the Congo.

Simultaneously, the secession of the richest province of the country, Katanga, erupted and became an immediate concern for the Congolese government. The Belgian reaction to the mutinies was to re-deploy their own military forces back in Congo, an action that infuriated the Congolese and the UN was requested to intervene. This intervention was to become dramatically complicated due to the emerging internal civil conflict in the province of Katanga and the firm desire of the UN to remain uncommitted in internal affairs of the Congo. In addition, further deterioration of the Congolese government that created a full-scale constitutional crisis made it almost impossible for the UN to maintain any degree of impartiality in the disputes.

Despite these enormous difficulties, and the unpredicted involvement of the Super Powers, the Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold, gave the UN intervention a momentum and a focus which indicated a very likely quick resolution of the conflict and thereby avoiding a most certain bloody civil war in the Congo. From the origin of the crisis in July 1960 to his tragic death in September 1961, Hammarskjold convinced the world that the peaceful solution was the only alternative to the dispute. The conflict did get resolved eventually, but it took three additional years after his death and the use of military force to suppress the secession movement in Katanga in order to achieve peace and stability in Congo. What took place during those three long years after his death indeed led to successful dispute settlement, but the intent here is to focus on the Secretary-General's efforts and his application of the conflict resolution process that made him so successful until his untimely death.

### **CONFLICT SETTING**

The geographical size of the conflict area was equal to that of Western Europe<sup>2</sup>. In North American terms, the Congo would cover the United States east of the Mississippi. At the peak of the operation there were approximately 20,000 UN military troops on the ground in Congo, a country with a population of just over 14 million. It becomes obvious that with such a small contingent and such a large area of operations and population, something other than "force" had to be the main "weapon" used to resolve the conflict.

As was the case of many other colonies in the third world, the Congo was seeking independence from its colonial power, Belgium. It could be said that Congo had one of

the highest levels of literacy in that part of the world<sup>3</sup>. It is also a fact that through the application of a total paternalistic approach towards the colony, Belgium had rendered the Congo incapable of embarking on the independence journey<sup>4</sup>.

What Congo should have been given from her colonial power, was a proper building scheme of both political and educational patterns so that some of the Congolese population could fill the levels of elite leadership in government and management, initially within the colony, and eventually as an independent state. Belgium, however, had ensured its supremacy of control over the colony and the eventual independent state, by preventing such political and educational patterns to take shape. Therefore, at the time of the independence movement, few Congolese were beyond post secondary education and only 17 had attained university degrees<sup>5</sup>. The level of professionalism within the Congolese population was so low that Belgian intervention and further exploitation, or continuance, was a guaranteed requirement.

### **CONFLICT MOTIVES**

There are basically six reasons for which a state would enter into a conflict. Namely, in order of disputes generated between 1945-1995 they are territory, security, independence, ideology, ethnicity and resources<sup>6</sup>. Examining these causes in the Congo situation, it is clear that what the United Nations was going to face, was a large and complex mix of every aspect of conflict/disputes issues. The territory factor resided in the fact that boundaries set by Belgian authorities had no relevance to the actual historical tribal land settlements. It was a very common practice for colonial policies to purposely place tribes

of historic belligerent attitude in the same province<sup>7</sup>. The geographical assignment of Congolese military troops during the colonial period always favored colonial vice tribal interest<sup>8</sup>. The security and independence factors were manifested when the independence movement was followed by what the Congolese considered aggression, when Belgian troops deployed in Congo without Congolese approval. Up to that point, the situation was seen by the international community as a typical interstate dispute. The ethnicity problem would soon create multiple political confrontations. The resources factor would later be assessed as one of the most important of the conflict given the total economic control by a specific province of Congo. In fact, the Katanga province was the source of approximately 80% of the country's exports, and at the same time provider of 50% of the total revenues<sup>9</sup>. This resources factor played a primary role as the crisis developed, and created the longest conflict resolution barrier of the operation. These two final factors came to create havoc in this simple interstate conflict and imposed a levelled revenue

was being drawn into what would later be classified as an internal protracted conflict. Internal protracted conflicts have become the norm in today's "New World Order". Dag Hammarskjold did not know that he was to become a pioneer of conflict resolution management, as it is know today.

### **PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY**

As the Congo crisis continued to unfold in front of the entire world, its resemblance to today's complex conflict situations is evident. Adversaries basically have three options; confront violently, withdraw from the conflict or manage the dispute peacefully<sup>11</sup>. At the beginning of the Congo crisis, the belligerents, Congo and Belgium, both started with a desire to manage their differences peacefully facilitated by an impartial intervention of the United Nations. It could be argued that even the internal conflicts that started the crisis could have been managed peacefully. As the events unfolded, however, and the number of "actors" dramatically increased, the short and peaceful option became less likely. The Congolese were not prepared to consider the withdrawal option. Similarly the Belgians were not about to withdraw on their own will. It became evident that the "violent confrontation" option was the most likely option to be taken by the "actors" in the dispute. That was the most likely option unless somebody was willing to intervene, and attempt to bring all parties to acceptable terms of agreement.

What had taken place long before the crisis in Congo, was a diplomatic masterpiece known today as "preventive diplomacy", entirely orchestrated by the then Secretary General of the United Nations Dag Hammarskjold. He had previously initiated a



program of crisis prevention by assigning hi-level diplomats from the United Nations to areas of the world where potential uprising were likely<sup>12</sup>. This system allowed the organization to better forecast possible demand for intervention, and gave an increased level of intelligence, a seriously lacking asset for the United Nations at that time. The Secretary-General had been successful with this diplomatic technique in areas such as Guinea, Jordan, Somalia and Laos in previous years<sup>13</sup>.

Fully aware of the consequences that would be imposed on a newly, or soon to be, independent state such as Congo, the Secretary-General personally visited the country in January 1960. During this “preventive visit”, he very quickly appreciated that the Congo would be in desperate need of assistance from both its ex-colonial power, and also from the United Nations in matters such as technical and administrative expertise<sup>14</sup>. This expertise was in fact totally unavailable at the time from within the Congolese population.

In concert with his earlier initiative of assigning high level diplomats to possible trouble areas of the world, the Secretary General saw fit to send his Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Mr. Ralph Bunche, not only to attend the independence ceremonies as the United Nations official representative, but also to remain in Congo after independence day to oversee the drafting and putting in place of the technical assistance program by the UN. This move provided the Congolese government with an added element of stability and confirmed the intent of the UN to pursue actively the role of technical assistance provider. Despite the historical fact that the expected effect of stability did not fully

materialize as it was desired, the good will of the UN had been demonstrated to the Congolese diplomats and political leaders.

Of course Hammarskjold would have preferred to receive a request from the Congolese politicians or his diplomats about further details of the technical assistance plan, but instead the calls were for UN intervention against the “aggression” by Belgium<sup>15</sup>. In order to protect Belgian personnel and interests in the face of the post independence military mutinies, Belgian forces had been sent back in the Congo. This action was of course contrary to the “Friendship treaty” signed by the two sides earlier as an agreement leading to independence.

To add to the chaos quickly building in Congo due to the “aggression” by the Kingdom of Belgium, a secessionist movement emerged almost simultaneously in the province of Katanga. Another dimension had just been added to the problem, with the threat of internal conflict. This internal conflict dimension was an aspect of the dispute from which the UN would do everything possible to remain uninvolved.

As if this situation were not complicated enough, the Congolese government saw fit to request the possibility of assistance from the Soviet Union as a lever to further induce the intervention by the United Nations<sup>16</sup>. The request to the Soviet Union got a very positive response from Premier Khrushchev.

The earlier work by the Secretary-General, however, in the form of “Preventive Diplomacy” had enabled him to formulate his plan of attack for the emerging situation. In an historical decision Hammarskjold decided to invoke Article 99 of the Charter permitting him to bring to the Security Council’s attention his concerns in a matter, which to his opinion was threatening international peace and security<sup>17</sup>. This was something that had never been done before.

By taking this historical, immediate and preventive action, the Secretary-General was framing the situation as a “Threat to international peace and security”, instead of having to argue the possible interpretation of direct intervention into the internal affairs of the member nation, which he wanted to avoid at all costs. Such an initial interpretation would have probably caused serious delay or withdrawal of support for the mounting of the operation. Invoking Article 99 allowed Hammarskjold himself to define the issue at hand and very diplomatically to avoid the inclusion of such terms as “aggressor”, which would have caused much controversy and debate, not to mention possible major obstacles in light of the desired United Nations intervention<sup>18</sup>. The actions of the Secretary-General leading to this point were mainly of a preventive nature, but were also futuristic in that they set the stage for the intervention itself. He indirectly “imposed” conditions that were to be acceptable to all parties for the eventual negotiations and mediations that were to take place. He did this in such a way that the parties involved recognized their point of view as well as possible grounds for compromise throughout the process. These measures adopted at the time by the Secretary-General, were simply the basis of negotiation and mediation, as we know them today. Today’s theories and literature

support them, going from fairness to full understanding of the underlying “interests” of the parties, as opposed to simply considering their “positions” in the dispute<sup>19</sup>.

Hammaraskjold acted with a great sense of urgency and dedication when addressing this conflict intervention by the United Nations. Conflict Resolution theory indicates that over the years, international conflicts tend to either be resolved quickly, or become long lasting with extreme costs both economically and in human lives. Normally, international conflicts will not extend to the “medium length” of one to two years<sup>20</sup>. Obviously, the intentions of the Secretary-General were to put an end to the crisis in the shortest possible time. But as has been seen, history transformed the Congo crisis into what is known today as a long, complicated, and protracted conflict. In point of fact international and internal deeply rooted dispute components form the biggest challenge for the United Nations conflict management process.

Following his historical move with respect to Article 99 of the Charter, and the immediate meeting and consensus at the Security Council, the Secretary General did not leave it to “staff” to make it happen. He personally made arrangements for the international contributions towards this United Nations mission. By the time 48 hours had gone by, the first contingent was already arriving in Congo<sup>21</sup>, even prior to the Command Structure arrival which had also been personally appointed by Hammaraskjold himself.

Continuity was a key element of the operation. Making Mr. Busche the Special Representative in Congo as Head of the Operation, as well as appointing General Carl. C.

Von Horn (already with UNTSO) as Head of the military component, were very positive measures taken to achieve the requirement for both political and military continuity<sup>22</sup>. By the fourth day, there were over 4000 UN troops in the Congo. At the peak of the operation the total would almost reach 20,000 troops. Given the size of the area that the United Nations contingent had to cover and the complexity of the conflict components, many right things had to be done at the right time to achieve the very positive end results of the operation. The Secretary-General was often criticized for his selection of troop contributor states, but in fact his use of ethnic compatibility was a brilliant maneuver that paid large dividends compared to the actual compromises made.

Without all the above mentioned preventive conflict resolution measures taken by the Secretary-General, the situation would have been intolerable and would have led to a bloodbath from the beginning. Hammarskjold was determined to bring the conflict to a peaceful solution and his approach throughout the process was consistent and convincing. He had already recognized that Africa was going to be the breeding ground for such conflicts, and in fact he was right. History now shows that Africa has been the area of the world with the most protracted internal conflicts flaring over the last 50 years for obvious reasons, given the de-colonization momentum<sup>23</sup>.

We are at a turn of the road where our attitude will be of decisive significance, I believe, not only for the future of this organization, but also for the future of Africa. And Africa may well in present circumstances mean the world. I know these are very strong words, but I hope that this council and the members of this organization know that I

do not use strong words unless they are supported by strong convictions<sup>24</sup>

In short, the Secretary-General was putting all the cards on the table with respect to his assessment of the situation at the time, and covered all aspects of the possible impact of this mission. Given the upcoming and forecast de-colonization disputes, this UN intervention would be a measure of how well stability could be established and maintained under those conditions. Its ability to operate in the absence of recognized government as well as its capacity to conduct an operation of this magnitude were going to be put to the test. For one of the first times, the coordination of a multitude of “other” agencies as well as the multinational aspects of the contingent was facing world scrutiny<sup>25</sup>. By far the most challenging test facing the UN was going to be the maintenance of impartiality, a position that was to be very costly to both the organization, and personally to the Secretary-General. Notwithstanding the difficulties ahead, nothing could reduce in any way the desire and resolve that Hammarskjold was to dedicate to this task. Once again an amazing parallel can be drawn and compared to what the New World Order has been experiencing since the end of the Cold War. Conflicts are increasingly of a protracted nature, deeply rooted in ethnicity, and political belief as well as disbelief, making it very difficult if not impossible for an organization such as the United Nations to assume the demanding mandates assigned by the “world”.

### **HAMMARSKJOLD’S APPROACH TO CONFLICT COMPONENTS**

In July 1960, the various components of the conflict that was to become a world concern were in place. In theory, three conflict components will always interact to create and

become the structure of the dispute. They are “conflict situation”, “conflict attitude”, and “conflict behavior”<sup>26</sup>. The situation was established and became an accepted factor in the long and chaotic process towards the resolution of the conflict. The attitude factor, which could have been dormant under colonial rule, would continue to fuel the diverging opinions on all sides. Mediating and/or negotiating when such deeply rooted beliefs affect a possible outcome became very difficult, and in some cases impossible. Finally, the behavior of the “actors” in the conflict was, as modern theory would predict today: Neutrals are very quickly considered as undercover agents of the opposition as soon as an element of the dispute gives the impression of favoritism towards the other side<sup>27</sup>. It became very obvious during the resolution dispute at the time, that Premier Lumumba was very concerned about the possible, apparent or real, loss of power due to the presence of large United Nations forces in Congo<sup>28</sup>. Throughout the entire period, the various leaders (actors) would continuously change or adapt their positions and support towards the third party intervention to ensure maximum advantages and benefits. This was a behavior expected from belligerents but most importantly, anticipated by the Secretary-General.

He therefore had to approach the dispute with a view to maintaining equilibrium of actions and consequences that would attempt to satisfy all sides and levels of the conflicts. In order to do so, he very clearly laid out his intervention principles so that his intentions would be well understood, and in this way diminish the possibility of parochial interpretation. The verb “diminish” is used because total elimination of that interpretation is impossible.

To address the fear of “loss of power” by the belligerents, the Secretary-General ensured that the UN force was to be regarded as a “temporary security force”, which, under Congolese permission, would operate only until local security units could once again perform their roles in a satisfactory manner. This way, the United Nations contingent would not be seen as a take-over army without any real intention to maintain power or control of the situation in the area. It was made explicitly clear that the UN was not there to become a possible party to internal conflict or to act upon Congolese government directions, and that in fact the force was totally under United Nations Command and Control throughout the operations. Through such statement, it was made clear to all parties of the dispute, that the position of the United Nations contingent was to be totally impartial and neutral, towards all aspects of the dispute. Such understanding would apply at least in theory, but not in perception and interpretations, as it was in many cases during the conflict period. Accessibility to the entire Congolese territory of operations by the UN force was required and had to be a guaranteed right for the effective application of the mandate. This guiding principle became a factor that prevented the United Nations from properly fulfilling their mandate when dealing with the Katanga province cessation issue<sup>29</sup>.

As a basic starting point, the UN force members were not initially authorized the “Use of Force” except in self defence, a very strong point of the Secretary-General who believed until his last breath that the mission could be accomplished without any use of force. It could be argued that this was a distinct possibility until Hammarskjold’s death while he



was, as usual, attempting to bring a peaceful solution to the cessation conflict in Katanga, despite the fact that UN Forces were engaged against mercenaries led Katangese Forces at the time of his death. This is not to say that his successor failed to bring the dispute to resolution without the use of force, but simply to underline the relatively peaceful momentum that existed until the death of Hammarskjold. Having clearly set the principles by which the organization was to operate, the impressive complexity of the conflict and actors involved became the next focus.

### **MULTI-LEVEL DIPLOMACY**

Many theorists and researchers are in agreement that political, economic and social differences are at the source of today's "protracted conflicts". Those conflicts also present a favorable platform for ethnic rivalries making the situation even more complicated for any third party intervention<sup>30</sup>. What Hammarskjold was facing when adopting the role of third party in the conflict resolution scenario presented by Congo in 1960, can be described as follows:

Third parties intervening in protracted social conflicts have three distinctly different challenges. The first is that protracted social conflicts undermine state power. The nominal authority of the state is fragmented by the competing claims of ethnic or political groups within the state or transcending state borders. For third parties intervening to control and prevent conflict while a political settlement is reached, they must now seek to control the sources of escalation and violence at multiple levels, from individual and group violence to the national level. In effect third parties have an almost infinite array of constituents to satisfy.

The second challenge for third parties intervening in protracted social conflicts is that the causes of the conflict are more intractable and difficult to assess. States articulate war aims; groups and individuals respond to numerous pressures which are different for each and change over time.

The third challenge is that protracted social conflicts are often defined in zero sum terms. Any gain by one party may be perceived by the others as a categorical loss to itself, even when the issues are not distributive in nature.<sup>31</sup>

The Congo crisis scenario was nothing else than a 1990s protracted social conflict, camouflaged in an international claim of aggression, that Hammarskjold skillfully detected and dissected into its multiple components. The number of levels of playing fields that faced the Secretary-General was simply amazing.

First there was the call of “aggression” between states where Congo was declaring Belgium as the aggressor state due to a non-agreed intervention within their borders. The Secretary-General’s tactful and diplomatic approach enabled him to negotiate his way into the launching of the mission, while avoiding a most probable level of opposition from UN members states, should the action by Belgium have been stated as aggression as claimed by Congolese authorities.

A departure from what was going to be the standard approach to such conflicts in the years following the Congo crisis, was the intervention or the desire to intervene by the Super Powers at that time. While the Soviet Union perceived the Congo as a possible platform to further project their socialist paradigm into what was to become a fertile

ground for new growth, the United States sought to prevent such scenario. It is clear today that in fact many other conflicts of this nature could have taken place in the world between the Congo crisis and the end of the Cold War but were prevented by the Super Powers deadlock and the United Nations Security Council decisions. Because of Hammarskjöld's desire for action, and his relentless efforts towards his objective of peaceful settlement, the Soviet Union criticized the position of the Secretary-General as having too much power and did in fact direct many vicious political and diplomatic attacks against the organization and the Secretary-General himself<sup>32</sup>. It must be noted that the Soviet Union responded favorably to the initial request for help from the Congo against Belgium and also provided the necessary material and equipment to support Premier Lumumba in his aggressive campaign in the Katanga province.

The Soviet Union chose the 1960-1961 period to fundamentally challenge what they believed was the built-in western bias of the world organization, partly because they believed their national posture was sufficiently impressive to command worldwide attention and respect, and partly because the Congo situation provided them with an excellent cause celebre<sup>33</sup>

To add a third level to the international spectrum of belligerents, the so-called North-South fault line played a definitive role in the process. The period was ripe for de-colonization processes and indeed many emerging nations had recently joined the UN or were in the process of doing so. The de-colonization brought a feeling of alliance among European states as former colonial powers in one camp and among emerging states in the

other<sup>34</sup>. One of the blocking issues of the Katanga matter was the reluctance by those colonial powers; namely Belgium and to some extent France, to retract their national and para-national elements from the province given their deep rooted economic and political interests.

The secession movement in the Katanga province was adding the first element of internal conflict, but in a country made up of over 125 tribes with little state loyalty, it is surprising that other secession movements did not arise. One must however take note that further divisions did exist, and the Katanga – Kasai independence movement led to bloodshed, another element with which Hammarskjöld had to deal. At the time of the constitutional crisis phase in Congo, there were four differing political entities, all of which claimed to be the governing body in Congo.

To add to this already complex forum to be mediated, we must include the United Nations as an organization and the Independent Office of the Secretary-General himself. On many occasions during the crisis period, Hammarskjöld had to face seriously divided opinions on the floor of the United Nations. Such divisions would lead to a wide variety of demands from the various parties, ranging from demands for his resignation as expressed by the Soviet Union<sup>35</sup>, the deliberate removal of committed troops from non aligned participating countries due to divergence of opinion,<sup>36</sup> to simplistic criticism from Belgium to point out that the Secretary-General on one occasion spent six days with Congolese authorities while only six hours with Belgium government officials to discuss conflict resolution matters<sup>37</sup>.

To further demonstrate the complex levels where the United Nations mission had to intervene, a cease fire between Armee Nationale du Congo (ANC) and the secessionist troops had to be negotiated as well as UN intervention between pro-Tshombe gendarmes and anti-Tshombe tribal populations<sup>38</sup> in the Katanga province. This is a far-reaching departure from the East-West or North-South fault lines discussed above but which were recognized by Hammarskjold as necessary to reach his aim of a peaceful solution to the overall problem, while at the same time maintaining impartiality.

As a direct result of the intense divisions between the members of the UN during some periods, the Secretary-General had to take action based on what he believed was the desires of the “body”, simply because he could not justify sitting and watching while possible irreversible consequences could develop<sup>39</sup>. It could be said that Hammarskjold induced the direction that he required to achieve his mission, and that the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions were nothing less than his own vision’s requirements, articulated through the “organization”.

I have a right to expect guidance. That guidance can be given in many forms. But it should be obvious if the Security Council says nothing I have no other choice than to follow my convictions ... Implementation obviously means interpretation.<sup>40</sup>

## **RESOLUTION MANDATE IMPACTS**

Some direction, he was indeed given, but for the most part he actually went to mold it himself and got it ratified by the Security Council. To accomplish his peace-oriented mission in the Congo, the Secretary-General was given a series of mandates by the Security Council and the General Assembly for implementation.

The first Security Council Resolution called upon the government of Belgium to withdraw their troops from the Congo and also authorized the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps to restore law and order<sup>41</sup>. Everything was to be done in consultation with the government of the Congo. However, in making his interpretation of the Resolution, the Secretary-General did not allow this consultative aspect of the mandate to limit in any way the required actions to be taken by the United Nations Force<sup>42</sup>.

The results from his first actions were very positive, stating that the very rapid deployment of UN forces in the Congo had an immediate calming effect on the population (Resulting dividends mentioned earlier). His degree of urgency towards the quick implementation of the mission had already paid off, despite critics citing the lack of formal planning and organization<sup>43</sup>. Hammarskjöld's compromise between speed of action and overly careful selection of troop contributor nations and heads of the operations had already brought success.

The second Resolution (22 July 60) was a reminder by the Security Council to Belgium that the withdrawal of their troops was in fact non-negotiable, but most importantly to permit Hammarskjold to play his conflict resolution card towards appealing to the requirement of the Congolese authorities who were critical of the Belgian troops withdrawal status. Hammarskjold also introduced the issue of territorial integrity and political independence of the Congo and the role the United Nations had to play in that domain, basically refraining from any intervention. His third desire was to address some of the basic issues of the situation by calling upon specialized agencies to render assistance to the Congolese government, an intention he had since he visited the Congo six months before the declaration of independence<sup>44</sup>. For a man without an overall plan, as so often criticized, his actions were carefully structured and most importantly timely.

A series of additional Security Council and General Assembly Resolutions permitted the Secretary-General to address each aspect of the problems that he identified as an obstacle to his goal, which remained the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

- 09 Aug 1960 Recognized the requirement to have Belgium withdraw from the province of Katanga in order to fulfil his mandate<sup>45</sup>; and Reinforce the non-participation of all parties in the internal affairs of the Congo.
- 20 Sept 1960 Recognizing that the solution must come from the ‘actors’, appeal to Congolese to seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict; Appeal to the member nations for economic contribution to the UN; and Recognized the need to address the problem of arms smuggling in the Congo<sup>46</sup>.

- 21 Feb 1961 Assessment that recent events (Lumumba's death) have increased the danger of internal conflict and require an increased level of power for the UN forces, and authorization of use of force if necessary to prevent civil war; (it will continue to be Hammarskjold's belief that a peaceful solution is still the aim); and  
Recognized that not only Belgian forces must withdraw from Katanga but also the foreign mercenary elements as well<sup>47</sup>. (The UN must be able to enter that province to prevent civil war)
- 15 Apr 1961 Recognizing the requirement for the "actors" to reach their own solution, calls for the convening of Congolese parliament at earliest opportunity<sup>48</sup> (which took place Aug 61)

As had been the case for all resolutions for the ONUC mission, they were all a careful orchestration of directions and compromises destined as an attempt to satisfy demands partly and acknowledge beliefs of all parties in some way, while at the same time ensuring that no one party to the dispute would see their demands completely looked after<sup>49</sup>. A fundamental principle of effective conflict resolution theory was being skillfully applied to the process itself.

Later events continued to show the Secretary-General's foresight and vision and led to a number of initiatives, both before and after his death, bringing all parties involved in the conflict to an ever closer and compatible position, and eventually to the full implementation of the UN mandate in the Congo. However, it took a very dedicated individual to ensure mission focus, and project so much energy and talent towards a most worthy cause, peace and security in the world.



## **HAMMARSKJOLD AND THE WORLD**

An obvious reason of Hammarskjold's increasing popularity in the world at the time of the crisis was the enlarging number of member states where he was the second or third best known leader in the world. He was known for his keen and dedicated interest in taking all necessary actions to solve all emerging crises as well as his firm belief that committee work could only slow down the requirement for rapid reaction and prevention of an incident.<sup>50</sup>

This increasing popularity and his success at tackling many issues at the same time became so well known that within the United Nations, a sense of letting the Secretary-General "handle it", or better know as "Let Dag do it" attitude was very common. It allowed him the necessary freedom of action to formulate the desired intended plans for eventual sanction by the body of the United Nations as necessary<sup>51</sup>. Hammarskjold implemented such an approach to the Congo crisis, and expediency was again rewarded as described earlier.

Of the many diplomatic qualities of the Secretary-General at the time, the most commendable was without a doubt his ability to maintain total impartiality to all facets of the conflict, and therefore preserved the basis of possible compromises that led to eventual dispute resolution.

Day in and day out the secretary general was able to maintain a degree of impartiality that was only short of amazing<sup>52</sup>

This exemplary demonstration of impartiality came with a price for the Secretary-General. But despite obvious and continuous objections and opposing stands by many member states, Hammarskjold never let his position slip from strict adherence to this basic principle, regardless of damaging results from selective states. As seen earlier, lack of members' consensus, reduction of contributing troops as retaliation against his position, personal attacks and demand for his resignation never led to a compromise on his recognized stand for total impartiality with all parties of the conflict. Instead, it created a strong desire for active intervention and actions, which became the trademark of the Secretary-General during his tenure in that most respected position. While the results he achieved speak for themselves, his approach and methods have also received some limited critical reviews by authors such as Carole Collins in "Fatally flawed Mediation: Cordier and The Congo Crisis"<sup>53</sup>

Hammarskjold fully understood his dynamic role as Secretary-General and clearly demonstrated the requirement for continuous and active participation of all parties, in attempting to reach a consensus or compromise. One could easily conclude that "Interactive Conflict Resolution", was already part of the conflict resolution process, 40 years ago. Indeed, Dag Hammarskjold made it clear that the United Nations was not simply an instrument of conference setting, but rather a dynamic instrument to be utilized in order to maximize the many opportunities of dispute resolution capabilities<sup>54</sup>.

## **POLITICAL MASTERY**

A man of great political insight and experience, he always carefully gauged the political limits of his support before undertaking a new course of action<sup>55</sup>

It could be argued that the practice of “quiet diplomacy”, as was often practiced by Hammarskjold is still not favored by many diplomats today. The real challenge, however, comes in the ability to differentiate between the efficiency of public diplomacy as window dressing, and that of careful measuring of parties position and interests which will eventually lead to better understanding of the conflict situation and behavior of the “actors”. Such privacy enables the capability to reach compromises and “entente” without the perception of losing grounds in the negotiation with all parties present<sup>56</sup>. Hammarskjold was a master of that art, and given the complexity of the crisis along with the large number of “actors”, it was a perfect setting to put it in full use. His efforts led to numerous achievements towards conflict settlement or steps towards closing the gap of opinions.

“It is diplomacy, not speeches and votes, that continue to have the last word in the process of peace-making”<sup>57</sup>

As a man of action, and with full understanding of the lack of consensus within the members of the United Nations, the Secretary-General saw fit to initiate the formation of what became the African Advisory Committee. The committee was formed from the recommendation of the Secretary-General and was to make the necessary

recommendations to the Council on the situation in the Congo, and also propose necessary actions for conflict resolution<sup>58</sup>. Composed of representatives from all troop contributing states, Hammarskjold had further reinforced his desire to have the African Solidarity come up with the possible solution, as opposed to allowing the perception that it would be his solution, or that of the third party intervening, in this case the perceived Western biased United Nations.

The African Advisory Committee further recommended the formation of a “Conciliation Commission”, yet another more formal step to bring all parties to the same table and possibly reach a compromise in the dispute. Through this Advisory Committee and the Conciliation Commission, Hammarskjold obtained the desired information to further advance the process of dispute resolution. The Commission confirmed that most parties involved were at a stage where they were seeking a peaceful solution to the situation, with only a very few still preferring a less amiable approach. It is also through this pair of conflict resolution bodies (Advisory Committee and Conciliation Commission) that the Secretary-General finally showed the world that the source of the problem in Katanga resided in the intervention of foreign nationals. This way, Belgium could no longer ignore the situation, despite its obvious colonialist and economic interests. The third element essential to Hammarskjold’s solution was also recommended by the Commission in stating the necessity of reconvening the Congolese parliament at the earliest opportunity<sup>59</sup>.

The recommendations of the Commission paired with the Resolution of February 1961, which for the first time introduced the “use of force” by the United Nations, gave the necessary momentum to additional negotiating efforts with all parties. The positive results of these efforts lead to the Tananarive Conference (March 1961) (better known as Tshombe Conference), and the Coquilhatville Conference (April-May 1961)(better known as Kasavubu’s Conference)<sup>60</sup>. The creation of additional common grounds between the wearying parties lead to what Dag Hammarskjold considered essential, the reconvening of parliament which took place in August 1961, under complete external protection of all parliamentary members by the United Nations<sup>61</sup>. Once again Hammarskjold had forced the belligerent parties to propose their own solution to the disagreements. This is not to say that there were only agreements to such a parliamentary approach, but that all parties were willing to commit to it under the auspices of the United Nations protection.

The perimeter of the zone in which parliament was to meet and in which parliamentarians, employees of the two chambers, and the United Nations military and civilian staff were to reside... was sealed off with barbed wire and electrified fences...at night the perimeter was floodlit and specially trained dogs were used<sup>62</sup>

Much work remained to be done, but the road to positive resolution of the dispute was looking towards a very possible achievement in a peaceful manner as Hammarskjold had hoped right from the beginning. What took place in the following months, most importantly his death, greatly reduced the momentum gained until then, and as history

has shown, the conflict was eventually resolved much latter, and not necessarily in the way and at the speed at which the world had been lead to believe it would... but eventually it did...

## **CONCLUSION**

Despite public perception that ONUC's mission was a failure, it could be argued that by its presence alone the United Nations basically prevented a very bloody civil war from erupting in Congo, and eventually reinstated stability and government in the country, and possibly in the entire African continent as well<sup>63</sup>.

"Looking at the large majority of international conflicts since the beginning of the 1990s, one comes very quickly to the conclusion that these conflicts have basic common grounds, namely complexity, ethnicity, ideologies, deeply rooted, mutinous military forces, threats to foreigners, collapsing infrastructure, and paralyzed government"<sup>64</sup>. In addition all such conflicts tend to extend for considerable periods of time. This situation description should be familiar because it is exactly what Dag Hammarskjold had to skillfully resolve almost four decades ago, a "Protracted International Civil Conflict".

*Has the concept of a strong independent Secretary General's Office been ignored since ONUC? It served Hammarskjold so well, and in fact he probably was the last Secretary-General to use such approach, and so successfully. Have we closed the gap between all the academics that write about the power of negotiation and the actual practitioners who don't read about negotiating?*

... and almost all seem to have been written by members of the academic community rather than by practitioners. I have noticed that the practitioners don't read about negotiation and the academicians don't practice it. Unfortunately the two professions often seem like two ships passing at night<sup>65</sup>

*Are we practicing the required amount of "quiet" diplomacy that proved to be so efficient and crucial to the accomplishment of the political aim within this conflict resolution process?*

*Did we replace the level of political effectiveness of conflict resolution by a comparable or higher increase of military effectiveness?*

The outcome seems to indicate that the UN peacekeeping effort in the Congo should be judged primarily on how well it fulfilled its political objectives and only secondarily on its military efficiency. It is possible to conclude that, in certain situations, a UN force can be politically effective despite a lack of professional efficiency in the military sense. In the Congo, the political objective ultimately was achieved; the fact that the military instrument was not as efficient as it might have been merely delayed the achievement<sup>66</sup>

Despite the obvious similarity of today's protracted conflicts with the Congo ONUC Mission in 1960-64, it is discouraging to compare the amazingly positive results achieved by Hammarskjold, with the catastrophic recent outcomes of the Somalia, Rwanda or

ongoing Bosnia-Herzegovina missions, just to name a few disastrous cases. Because of the enormous costs associated with such conflicts, in human lives, economic collapses, environmental chaos as well as the dramatic refugees situation in the world, one can only hope that there will be many more like Dag Hammarskjold.

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### **Endnotes**

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations, The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations PeaceKeeping, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed ( New York: UN Dept of Public Information, 1996), henceforth Blue Helmets, 175.

<sup>3</sup> Durch 316.

<sup>4</sup> Richard I. Miller, Dag Hammarskjold and Crisis Diplomacy (The Oceana Library on the United Nations, Oceana publication, 1961) 266.

<sup>5</sup> Blue Helmets 175.

<sup>6</sup> Jacob Bercovitch and Richard Jackson, International Conflicts: A Chronological Encyclopedia of Conflicts and their management 1945-1995 ( Washington D.C: Congressional Quarterly nalclope



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- <sup>18</sup> King Gordon, The United Nations in the Congo : A Quest for Peace (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1962) 21.
- <sup>19</sup> Bercovitch and Jackson 25-27.
- <sup>20</sup> Bercovitch and Jackson 12.
- <sup>21</sup> Durch 334.
- <sup>22</sup> Blue Helmets 178.
- <sup>23</sup> Bercovitch and Jackson 9-11.
- <sup>24</sup> Miller 275.
- <sup>25</sup> Miller 275.
- <sup>26</sup> Bercovitch and Jackson 2.
- <sup>27</sup> Durch 315.
- <sup>28</sup> Miller 285.
- <sup>29</sup> Blue Helmets 177-178.
- <sup>30</sup> David Last, Theory, Doctrine and Practice of Conflict De-Escalation in Peacekeeping Operations (Cornwallis: The Canadian Peacekeeping Press, 1997) 16.
- <sup>31</sup> Last 17.
- <sup>32</sup> Miller 331.
- <sup>33</sup> Miller 331.
- <sup>34</sup> Bercovitch and Jackson 4.
- <sup>35</sup> Ernest Lefever, Crisis in the Congo: A U.N. Force in Action (The Brookings Institution, Library of Congress Catalogue, 1965) 56-57.
- <sup>36</sup> Durch 326.
- <sup>37</sup> Miller 277.
- <sup>38</sup> Blue Helmets 182.
- <sup>39</sup> Lefever 57.
- <sup>40</sup> Lefever 57.
- <sup>41</sup> Thomas. M. Frank and John Carey, The Legal Aspects of the United nations in The Congo ( New York: Oceana Publications Inc, 1963) 95.
- <sup>42</sup> Gordon 26.
- <sup>43</sup> Frank and Carey 95.

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- <sup>44</sup> Frank and Carey 96.
- <sup>45</sup> Frank and Carey 96.
- <sup>46</sup> Frank and Carey 97.
- <sup>47</sup> Frank and Carey 99.
- <sup>48</sup> Frank and Carey 101.
- <sup>49</sup> Miller 282.
- <sup>50</sup> Miller 319-320.
- <sup>51</sup> Miller 320-321.
- <sup>52</sup> Miller 324.
- <sup>53</sup> Collins, Carole. "Fatally Flawed Mediation: Cordier and The Congo Crisis", Africa Today , 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, Vol. 39, No.3, 1992.
- <sup>54</sup> Andrew Cordier and Wilder Foote, The Quest for Peace (New York and London: Columbia University Presses, 1965) 5.
- <sup>55</sup> Lefever 57.
- <sup>56</sup> Miller 322.
- <sup>57</sup> Miller 322.
- <sup>58</sup> Miller 299.
- <sup>59</sup> Blue Helmets 186.
- <sup>60</sup> Gordon 116-117.
- <sup>61</sup> Blue Helmets 187.
- <sup>62</sup> Gordon 119-120.
- <sup>63</sup> Cordier and Foote 7.
- <sup>64</sup> Durch 20.
- <sup>65</sup> Edward E. Azar and John W. Burton, International Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice (Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, 1986) 141.
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