

Archived Content

Information identified as archived on the Web is for reference, research or record-keeping purposes. It has not been altered or updated after the date of archiving. Web pages that are archived on the Web are not subject to the Government of Canada Web Standards.

As per the [Communications Policy of the Government of Canada](#), you can request alternate formats on the "[Contact Us](#)" page.

Information archivée dans le Web

Information archivée dans le Web à des fins de consultation, de recherche ou de tenue de documents. Cette dernière n'a aucunement été modifiée ni mise à jour depuis sa date de mise en archive. Les pages archivées dans le Web ne sont pas assujetties aux normes qui s'appliquent aux sites Web du gouvernement du Canada.

Conformément à la [Politique de communication du gouvernement du Canada](#), vous pouvez demander de recevoir cette information dans tout autre format de rechange à la page « [Contactez-nous](#) ».

Mediation or Intervention?
The UN Operation in the Congo 1960-64

By Colonel C.J. Corrigan

Introduction

In the continuum of conflict resolution there are many descriptors from the informal voluntary unassisted negotiation, through facilitation, conciliation, assisted negotiation/ third-party mediation, arbitration to formal mandatory adjudication.¹ T As early as the end of the Crimean War “a protocol to the 1856 Treaty of Paris . . . even suggested that governments could not legitimately use force before they had attempted mediation through a third power.”² In the greater context of the strategy of conflict management and the threat of the use of force there are the concepts of bargaining, game-theory, coercion, deterrence, brinkmanship, enforcement and compellence. “There are a number of ways of dealing with or managing conflict. These may range from avoidance and withdrawal, through bilateral negotiation, to various forms of third-party intervention.”³

Although it occurred almost forty years ago, the mission in the Congo(ONUC) represents a prophetic case study with lessons applicable to subsequent UN missions in Africa. It was the third UN peacekeeping mission, it was the first to mitigate in an internal conflict, and it was the first to use force to achieve the UN mandate. Thirty-four nations participated contributing to the almost 20,000 military and 6,000 civilian personnel over a four year period. It remained the largest of UN missions until the 1992 missions to Somalia, Cambodia and Yugoslavia. The ONUC mandate was: to ensure the withdrawal of the Belgian forces; to assist the government in maintaining law and order;

to maintain the territorial integrity and political independence of the Congo; to prevent civil war; and to expel mercenaries. “In spite of the deaths of 234 Blue Helmets and the secretary-general of the UN Dag Hammarskjold, who was killed in an airplane accident in September 1961, the mission succeeded in fulfilling its mandate.”⁴

Aim

The aim of this paper is to examine the UN peacekeeping mission in the Congo, locate its place on the spectrum of conflict resolution, assess its overall effectiveness and identify lessons learned for subsequent peacekeeping or peace support operations.

The events in the Congo have been described in four phases: the restoration of law and order and the withdrawal of Belgian forces outside of Katanga (July-August 1960); the constitutional crisis (September 1960-September 1961); the termination of the secession of Katanga (September 1961-February 1963); and, the consolidation of the Congolese government (February 1963-June 1964) followed with closure of the UN mission.⁵ The limitation of space precludes an exhaustive examination of this extremely complex UN mission that began with the events leading to the 1960 arrival of ONUC to its eventual departure four years later in 1964. The first two periods up until the death of Dag Hammarskjold were the most pertinent. This paper will focus on the first three phases and will cover the events, personalities, the theory of conflict resolution as appropriate, and the lessons applicable today in peacekeeping or peace support operations.

Why did the UN Mediate?

It has been said that there was no need for the UN military mission in the Congo and that Belgium should have been given the opportunity to manage the process of decolonization and independence. Some considered that the mission was a manifestation of UN 'empire building' by its Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold and his efforts to have the UN evolve to be the world's supra-national peacekeeping organization. Ian Scott, the United Kingdom's Consul-General in the Congo 1960-61, writes that, "I put forward a suggestion to London that the UN might consider taking a political initiative to help in resolving the crisis . . . I strongly believed that the finding of a political compromise between the centralists and the federalists was essentially a Congolese problem."⁶ The story has some prejudices: anti-Belgium, anti-colonialist, anti-West, anti-East, anti-Black, and pro-UN. Scott again writes that there:

had to be a Congo somewhere, sometime, in Africa. It was too good to be true that twenty or so new African countries should put on, in varying degrees of immaturity, the outward trappings of independent democratic sovereignty and take their place as equals in the world community without the act putting too great a strain on even one of them.⁷

Until the events in Rwanda earlier this decade:

the story of the Belgian Congo was the darkest chapter in European colonial history. A territory the size of Western Europe had been colonized and systematically looted for over seventy years . . . the colony was run by a bureaucracy of ten thousand Belgian civil servants. It was an economic exploitation machine, involving international corporations, enormous investments and profits and a complex water, rail, and air transportation system. A network of religious missions tended to the souls of the exploited.⁸

The strategic setting in the late Fifties was one of friction between the two nuclear superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Early in 1960, the shooting down

of the Francis Gary Powers US U-2 spy plane dashed the hope of East-West détente. The UN, led by Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, believed that it had a role to serve as a third-party mediator between the two divergent and increasingly competitive ideologies. “The relations of the United States and the Soviet Union were close to the breaking point; the UN in consequence was preparing itself for possible service as a buffer between the powers and in addition was looking to expanding its activities in Black Africa.”⁹

A quick synopsis of the events, sufficient to put them in context, follows.¹⁰

Phase One: the Restoration of law and order and the withdrawal of Belgian forces outside of Katanga (July-August 1960)

By January 1960 Belgium had decided to divest itself of its colony with independence to take effect 30 June 1960. The UN Secretary-General visited in anticipation of the UN providing some future technical assistance to the fledgling democracy in its transition to independence. In March the constitution known as the “loi fondamentale” established the Parliament and elections were held later that month. On 23 June the Parliament met for the first time and, after considerable debate, a compromise was met to have the two political rivals, Patrice Lumumba and Joseph Kasavubu, occupy the two positions of Prime Minister and President respectively. On the eve of independence, 29 June, the Treaty of Friendship between Belgium and its former colony was signed establishing the mechanism whereby the Belgian civil-service would continue to administer the new state. It also created the 25,000 strong military Force Publique that would have an officer corps made up completely of seconded Belgian officers. It was at this time that the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative, Ralph Bunch, arrived to set up the technical assistance program. Five days after the state achieved

independence, on 5 July, the army revolted and Prime Minister Lumumba refused the Belgian ambassador's request to permit Belgian troops to deploy to protect Belgians and other white European nationals. Lumumba renamed the Force Publique the Armee Nationale Congolaise (ANC), appointed an African commander, and instituted a program of extensive promotions and raises in an effort to win the support of the Army. On 10 July the Congolese government requested the UN to assist in establishing an army for national defence and to maintain law and order. On the next day Belgian troops deployed from their barracks on order of the Belgian ambassador. On 12 July Kasavubu and Lumumba, by telegram, asked Hammarskjold for military assistance to counter "Belgian aggression". In a cryptic message Bunche communicated to Hammarskjold, "I believe UN may be able to save this situation, chaotic as it is rapidly becoming, if some action taken quickly enough . . . Only some manifestation of a 'third presence' which definitely should be international, military, but not indispensably fighting men, can save the situation."¹¹ On 13 July the Secretary-General met with the Security Council and invoked for the first time, in accordance with Article 99 of the UN Charter, his duty to bring to the Security Council any matter threatening the maintenance of international peace and security. He proposed technical assistance to the Congo in the administration of security, the introduction of a UN force, and emergency food shipments.¹² The Security Council adopted Resolution 143 on 14 July which called for Belgium to withdraw its troops from the Congo and authorized the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps, in consultation with the Congolese government, to provide military assistance. Hammarskjold's principles for the employment of the Force were: that the Force was to be a temporary security measure until the Congolese government could

establish its security force; that the Force was to be impartial free from influence from the Congolese government and have its own UN chain of command through the Secretary-General to the Security Council; that the Host Nation should accept in good faith the purpose and intent of the UN Force and provide Host Nation Support as appropriate; that the UN Force was to have free access and freedom of movement throughout the Congo and be able to use the communications infrastructure and other facilities to meet its mandate; that the UN Force was not to act jointly or in competition with the Congolese government and in so doing be separate and free from interference from national authorities; that the UN Force was not to be party to internal conflict; that the UN Force was to be loyal to the aims of the UN; and, that the Force could use force only in self-defence.

Hammar skjold's wish was that the Force composition be derived firstly from African contributing nations. He also stipulated that the Force should also not include geo-historical former antagonists of the Congo or the region nor have troops from any member nation of the Security Council.¹³ Within twelve hours of the Resolution being declared, the Secretary-General was successful in garnering soldiers from the first contributing nations of Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, and Tunisia citing "swiftness in arrival is more important immediately than quantity."¹⁴ To allay the fears of the Europeans, the Force did grow to include non-Africans from Ireland, Sweden, and Canada. Bunche was initially in charge until the newly appointed Force Commander, Swedish Major General Carl von Horn, had arrived.

Bunche had to build up ONUC while he was also trying to cope with the twists and turns of the Congo crisis and Hammar skjold gave him all possible support. He got virtually everything he asked for, including a force of more than ten thousand soldiers. The military side was, however, poorly led and organized.

General von Horn was a vain and inexperienced commander . . . On the civilian side a staff was needed to run communications, hospitals, the central bank, airfields, police, and all the institutions of a large and complex country and civilian experts poured into Bunche's headquarters from all over the world.¹⁵

Underlying the efforts of the very gifted academic and career UN diplomat Ralph Bunche, were the issues of nationality and colour. As a Black American he was seen by some as being sympathetic with American views while at the same time accused of being pro-African. His biographer and UN protégé, Sir Brian Urquhart, writes that these views were unfounded. Bunche was a devoted exponent of the necessity of UN impartiality. Although Bunche's colour did add credibility to his relationships with the Congolese, his nationality did not play a part in his fractious relationship with representatives of the US government. In addition, Lumumba became increasingly irrational, was incensed that the UN Force was not acting quickly enough, and demanded that Belgian troops be withdrawn or that he would ask the Soviet Union for assistance. Increasingly the Soviets portrayed the Secretary-General, Bunche, and ONUC as US-run neo-colonialists. To the contrary, "Bunche, already pictured by the Soviets as an American stooge, found himself in constant disagreement with the US Ambassador, Clare Timberlake, and the British Ambassador, Ian Scott . . . Lumumba's ultimatums tended to confirm Washington's obsession with the imminence of a Soviet take-over, and Washington was, in secret, already making its own ruthless plans for Lumumba's removal."¹⁶ Madeleine Kalb writes that the "US Embassy in Brussels, replying to the [State] Department's query on July 19, after the [Lumumba] ultimatum had been issued, took a very strong line regarding Lumumba, recommending openly for the first time that the United States try to remove him from office."¹⁷ Resultantly it has been speculated that the murder in January

1961 of Lumumba, in Katanga by those apparently loyal to Kasavubu, was in fact a CIA conducted assassination. One of the conclusions of the 1975 US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence is that “CIA officers not only sought Lumumba’s ‘demise,’ they also sought to kill him.”¹⁸

Dag Hammarskjold visited from New York on a fact-finding trip and conferred with Ralph Bunche. Congolese demands for the UN force to go to Katanga to oust Belgian troops and mercenaries grew increasingly strident. At this early stage, the “success of ONUC was, in fact, already threatened by three basic issues—the Katanga secession, the latest split between Lumumba and Kasavubu, and the Cold War, which divided the UN and was beginning to make the Congo a battleground between East and West, with ONUC in the middle.”¹⁹ The Soviet UN representative Vasily Kuznetsov demanded that the UN use force against the Belgian forces in Katanga, to which Hammarskjold remarked, “I do not believe, personally, that we help the Congolese people by actions in which Africans kill Africans, or Congolese kill Congolese.”²⁰ On his return to New York on 9 August, Hammarskjold was successful in getting the Security Council (UNSCR 146) “for the first time, to demand the immediate withdrawal of the Belgian forces from Katanga and to declare that the entry of the UN forces was ‘necessary’ although they would not in any way intervene in or be used to influence the outcome of any internal conflict, constitutional or otherwise.” This Security Council vote marked the last time during the Cold War that the Soviets would vote with the United States and the majority of the Security Council members.²¹

Increasingly Lumumba and Kasavubu were at odds. In an effort to calm down the irate Lumumba, Hammarskjold sent him a memo that reinforced the UN’s position of

impartiality and, upon the withdrawal of Belgian troops from Katanga, that resolution of political and constitutional issues between the central and provincial governments must be the sole purview of the Congolese.²² Near the end of August, Ralph Bunche was replaced by Rajeshwar Dayal of India. At this same time, the Soviets provided aid to Lumumba in the form of ten Ilyushin-24 transport aircraft to move ANC troops. The Soviets were increasingly more vocal in demanding the resignation of Hammarskjold leading to the Khrushchev shoe-banging incident in the General Assembly. Whilst Bunche, in the Congo, and Hammarskjold, in New York, were pleading for calm, the UN Force Commander von Horn was inclined to “shoot first and the US Ambassador Timberlake wanted the UN to “do something by force.”²³ By the end of August the UN had 16,000 troops in the Congo and Belgium had withdrawn all of its forces. Ralph Bunche’s two-month effort has received the following review,

In the Congo Bunche had also had to defend, and maintain in action, the basic principle of UN peacekeeping – maintaining peace without using force or taking sides. He had done this in the face of opposition from his own military and from Western representatives, including the United States, knowing very well that any other course would certainly have landed the UN in a bloody debacle which would have quickly put an end to the whole operation.²⁴

Phase Two: The constitutional crisis (September 1960-September 1961)

Despite the preceding, the rift between Lumumba and Kasavubu widened and on 6 September, in a crisis, the government split up with both laying claim to power. Joseph Mobutu, supported by the West, took control of the government and Lumumba continued to be supported by the East. The United Nations’ history *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping* describes this period as a “constitutional crisis”. This thirteen month period commencing with Kasavubu’s dismissal of Lumumba saw a

breakdown in constitutional authority, no legal government, and the country dividing into four factions each supported more by elements of the armed forces than by popular support. Immediately following his dismissal as Prime Minister by Kasavubu, Lumumba dismissed Kasavubu as President. Amid the confusion on 14 September Colonel Joseph Mobutu staged a military coup and put in place the Council of Commissioners that favoured Kasavubu to run the country. The effectiveness of this structure was limited as Lumumba refused to accept the Council as the legitimate authority. On 20 September the General Assembly by Resolution 1474, gave the Secretary-General the mandate to enact the resolutions and asked the Congolese to resolve quickly and peacefully their civil strife supported by a conciliation commission of the Advisory Council on the Congo.²⁵ The ONUC focus during this phase was to control this potentially explosive situation by preventing an outbreak in hostilities between the various factions and to protect the leaders in as impartial a manner as possible. The factions consisted of: the Mobutu led Council of Commissioners in Leopoldville; a “government” supporting Lumumba, yet lead by Antoine Gizenga in Stanleyville, which had some support from some states and which included the provinces of Orientale, Kivu and part of Katanga; and the secessionist Moise Tshombe and Albert Kalonji led movement in Katanga and South Kasai. ONUC troops could only protect the leaders in their residences and not when the leaders left their homes. On 27 November Lumumba, enroute to Stanleyville, was arrested by ANC soldiers loyal to Mobutu. This precipitated what were to be the unsuccessful UN negotiations to have Lumumba released that led to his death in January 1961. Ralph Bunche’s replacement as Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Rajeshwar Dayal, made several attempts with President Kasavubu to have Lumumba freed. “ONUC

could not do more without exceeding the mandate given it by the Security Council and without using force.”²⁶ Shortly after the death of Lumumba, the Security Council adopted Resolution 161 authorizing “ONUC to use force, as a last resort, to prevent civil war in the Congo. It urged that the various Congolese armed units be reorganized and brought under discipline and control, and urged the immediate evacuation of all Belgian and other foreign military and paramilitary personnel and political advisers not under United Nations command, as well as mercenaries. It also urged the convening of Parliament.”²⁷ Throughout the spring of 1961 attempts were made on two fronts to ameliorate the situation. ONUC continued to deploy troops throughout the Congo, reaching 18,000 by April, and implement the Resolution, whilst, the Conciliation Commission, made up primarily of those African and Asian nations that had contributed troops to ONUC, also searched for a peaceful solution. The Commission after seven weeks in the Congo concluded:

that, while there was among most leaders a general feeling of weariness and a sincere desire to achieve a peaceful solution to the crisis, a small number of other leaders, among the very persons holding the reins of power, appeared to prefer a military rather than a political or constitutional solution. Because of those leaders’ uncooperative and intransigent attitude, the Commission’s attempts to reconcile the opposing groups had not led to positive results. The Commission also came to the conclusion that the crisis only could be solved if Parliament was reconvened and a national unity government was approved by it, and that one of the main obstacles to a speedy solution was foreign intervention in the internal affairs of the Congo.²⁸

Two Congolese political efforts occurred in March and April. The first, the conception of Tshombe, was a conference at Tananarive Madagascar that recommended that the political solution to the Congo situation was a confederation consisting of sovereign states. The non-attendance of Antoine Gizenga coupled with ongoing rivalries and tribal friction negated the effectiveness of the conference and its recommendation. In

April, the more successful Coquilhatville meeting took place at the request of President Kasavubu with Tshombe attending with a view of having the proposals of the Tananarive conference ratified. Again Antoine Gizenga was absent. This meeting recommended that the Congo become a federal state. It was commonly understood by all attendees that their recommendations would require Parliament's approval. On 12 May President Kasavubu stated that Parliament would meet soon and he requested assistance and security from the United Nations. Three months of tireless ONUC fence mending between the opposing factions finally ended with the opening of Parliament on 22 July and, on 2 August, a government of national unity was approved thus ending the constitutional crisis.²⁹

But was there really a constitutional crisis or was it a crisis perceived by the UN? Ambassador Ian Scott implies the latter. Of this period he writes, "the history of the year July 1960 to July 1961 was largely a history of the Congolese Army . . . Lumumba called for help from the United Nations when the Army mutinied within days of the Independence of the country; and an enormous and costly effort was made by the United Nations in response".³⁰ Rather than reaching "accommodation with a military coup d'etat . . . [the UN] was caught up in a legalistic approach to problems which were not legal . . . that the agony in the Congo was prolonged."³¹

Phase Three: The termination of the secession of Katanga (September 1961-February 1963)

It is important to recall that the original Resolution 143 of 14 July 1960 called for Belgium to withdraw its troops from the Congo and authorized the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps, in consultation with the Congolese government, to provide

military assistance. It was not until 9 August 1960 that Hammarskjold was successful in garnering Security Council Resolution 146 that explicitly extended to the immediate withdrawal of Belgian forces from Katanga. In addition, Resolution 146 declared that the entry of the UN forces was 'necessary' but they could not intervene in or be used to influence the outcome of any internal conflict.³² This was because the Secretary-General initiated the UN operation with his use of Article 99 of the UN Charter for the purposes of the preservation of international peace and security. Therefore, the UN could not be seen to be a party to the domestic aims of any faction. Although later in August, Belgian forces did withdraw from Katanga, the secession of Katanga continued to have an international peace and security dynamic. Internationally there was little support for secession with Belgium firmly opposed. The UN role was to facilitate reconciliation and encourage the removal of outside influences that aided and abetted the secession of Katanga. Key to this effort was the protection of Katangese from the brutalities being committed by the secessionist gendarmerie.³³ Despite the Security Council Resolution 161 of 21 February, the expulsion of mercenaries from Katanga remained problematic. The Belgian government cancelled visas of mercenaries and/or withdrew their passports. However Tshombe continued to recruit mercenaries after the Congolese government of Prime Minister Adoula passed an ordinance on 24 August requesting ONUC assistance in expelling all foreigners supporting secession. A series of ONUC round-ups occurred with some mercenaries repatriated or expelled while others went into hiding and reorganized to offer resistance to ONUC's efforts. Sporadic attacks on the UN by forces loyal to Tshombe followed and on 13 September after considerable fighting in Elisabethville, Tshombe asked for a cease-fire. However, his troops did not comply. It

was four days later that the Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold, in an effort to mediate between Leopoldville and Elisabethville, was killed in a plane crash enroute to meet with Tshombe. His task was taken up by his Chief of Civilian Operations Mahmoud Khiari while the process was underway in New York to install U Thant as Secretary-General. A cease-fire agreement was delivered on 20 September which was to take effect on 13 October but did not.³⁴

The Congolese government dispatched the ANC to Katanga in November. The request by the Congolese for UN transport to expedite this move was denied by ONUC as it would have resulted in the UN supporting the central government and, in so doing, cause the loss of impartiality.³⁵ On 24 November 1961, Security Council Resolution 169 “strongly deprecated the secessionist activities in Katanga and authorized the Secretary-General to use force to complete the removal of mercenaries.”³⁶ This period in Katanga was typified by the gendarmerie and mercenaries restricting the freedom of movement, abductions, and the murders of ONUC personnel. In early December the UN decided to restore its freedom of movement and to counter the Katangese efforts to cut-off and destroy the UN forces at the Elisabethville airport. UN reinforcements were flown in and the situation was stabilized in three days. Over the next few months, a series of efforts to end the secession by Tshombe and Adoula, facilitated by the UN and the US Ambassador, met with failure in June 1962. It was now Secretary-General U Thant’s turn to again try and mediate in August with his proposed Plan of National Reconciliation. The plan met the approval of both Adoula and Tshombe.

It provided for: a federal system of government; division of revenues and foreign exchange earnings between the Central and provincial governments; unification of currency; integration and unification of all military, paramilitary and gendarme units into the structure of a national army; general amnesty; reconstitution of the

Central government giving representation to all political and provincial groups; withdrawal of representatives abroad not serving the Central government; and freedom of movement for United Nations personnel throughout the Congo.³⁷

Despite Prime Minister Adoula's central government's acceptance of the plan in November, Tshombe's Katangese forces continued to attack UN positions and restrict freedom of movement. Throughout November, December, and January 1963 ONUC forces successfully conducted a series of major operations to enter, dominate and gain control of all major towns, cities, and road networks in Katanga. On 21 January UN forces advanced to and peacefully entered Kolwezi. This series of setbacks caused Tshombe and his ministers to finally agree to implement the Plan of National Reconciliation in January 1963. Ralph Bunche writes: "Big day for the Congo operation. Peaceful entry into Kolwezi . . . That about winds up the military phase and takes us over the hump—after two and a half years!"³⁸ This concluded the secession of Katanga and the UN's military conflict resolution effort. What remained was the last phase of ONUC's efforts, primarily civilian focused, on the consolidation of the Congolese government, establishing its authority nation-wide, and the retraining of civil servants, military and security forces. The Secretary-General's Report of 29 June 1964,

affirmed his earlier conclusions that most of ONUC's objectives had been fulfilled . . . He observed, however, that the maintenance of law and order, which was one of the main attributes of sovereignty, was principally the responsibility of the Congolese Government . . . the Secretary-General concluded, a further extension would provide no solution to the Congo's severe difficulties. The time had come when the Congolese Government would have to assume full responsibility for its own security, law and order, and territorial integrity.³⁹

The United Nations Force in the Congo commenced its withdrawal on 30 June 1964.

Conflict Resolution

Was the UN operation in the Congo an example of third party mediation, intervention or a combination of both? In assessing what took place, it is necessary to examine the UN events in the construct of conflict resolution.

Wehr and Lederach in their writings on concepts of mediation,⁴⁰ describe the concepts of outsider-neutral, the international mediator, and the insider-partial. The first two concepts are applicable to the Congo. In defining the outsider-neutral concept they write, “One common conceptualization of mediation roots the mediator’s effectiveness in externality (coming from outside the conflict situation) and neutrality (having no commitment to either side in the conflict) . . . Mediators’ neutrality is reinforced by their coming from outside the conflict, facilitating settlement, then leaving.”⁴¹ It is important to note that according to this model, “the assurance of neutrality in mediation creates the necessary perception of mediator legitimacy, professionalism, and fairness . . . Neutrality and impartiality are defined negatively, in terms of what the mediator *is not*. The third party is *not connected* to either disputant, is *not biased* toward either side, has *no investment* in any outcome except settlement, and *does not expect any special reward from either side*.⁴² In defining the international mediator, they write, “The complexity of international and intercultural disputes calls forth perhaps a greater variety of mediator roles; hence we find the mediator-broker and the mediator-conciliator . . . each conceptualization emphasizes a different role played or function performed by international third parties.”⁴³ However in referring to the lack of precise definitions in

their review of this field, they also write, “Neutrality is on occasion to be translated as evenhandedness, or even balance . . . as ‘balanced partiality’”.⁴⁴

In so writing, they open the door to some acceptance of partiality. “In fact, in some cases mediator connectedness and bias prove to facilitate settlement.”⁴⁵ Keith Webb posits that “intervention is not a neutral act.”⁴⁶

The Legal Basis for UN Mediation

Understanding that Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold launched this mission after having invoked for the first time Article 99 of the UN Charter, an examination of the legal basis of the Secretary-General’s powers warrant review. Three articles of the Charter are relevant. “Article 7 . . . establishes the Secretariat as a principal organ on par with the Security Council and the General Assembly. It is reasonable to interpret the Secretariat as meaning the Secretary-General. It is upon the Secretary-General, not upon the Secretariat, that the charter confers specific functions. All staff members are appointed by and subordinate to him.”⁴⁷ The political function of the Secretary-General is best described in Article 99.

He “may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten international peace and security.” This article . . . “gives the Secretary-General the basis for political judgement, and even action, in his own right.” It is noteworthy that the article uses the broader term “matter” and not “situation or dispute.” The Secretary-General may place on the provisional agenda of the Security Council any matter, not just an open conflict. By implication, the Secretary-General has the authority to investigate difficult situations or simmering conflicts and determine whether they constitute a threat to international peace.⁴⁸

Article 100 ensures “the international and impartial character of the Secretary-General and his staff. They ‘shall not seek or receive instructions from any government

or from any authority external to the organization.”⁴⁹

Defining ONUC

The UN peacekeeping mission in the Congo can be viewed as “the most advanced and sophisticated experiment in international co-operation ever attempted”⁵⁰ up to that time, or “the bloody war to suppress the establishment of Katanga as a separate state by Moise Tshombe”.⁵¹ Was the ONUC mission necessary?

As referred to previously, the Dag Hammarskjold saw the need to act as a third-party mediator between the East and West and to act as a buffer between the super powers and to minimize the potential for global nuclear war. Yet Ian Scott asserts that the operation was an effort in UN “empire building” and that Belgium and the Congo should have been given the opportunity to deal with the situation in the context as either a civil war or coup d’etat, perhaps much in the manner that Edward Luttwak recently posited on premature peacemaking,

An unpleasant truth often overlooked is that although war is a great evil, it does have a great virtue: it can resolve political conflicts and lead to peace . . . Hopes of military success must fade for accommodation to become more attractive than further combat . . .

Since the establishment of the United Nations and the enshrinement of great-power politics in its Security Council, however, wars among lesser powers have rarely been allowed to run their natural course. Instead they have typically been interrupted early on, before they could burn themselves out and establish the preconditions for a lasting settlement.⁵²

In the context of the previously described concepts of mediation, Scott’s assessment of UN “empire building” may negate the outsider-neutral qualifiers of no investment in the outcome and no expectation of reward. The UN’s position on the Congo represents a blend of both concepts of outsider-neutral and international mediator.

Dag Hammarskjöld's invoking of Article 99 conforms to the UN acting as international mediator more specifically as mediator-broker/mediator-conciliator. However, the application of impartiality under Article 100 may be brought into question when applied to the balanced partiality qualifier of international mediator. The limits of mediation may have been stretched to that of intervention.

Given all of the international and internal struggles for power, it is perhaps not surprising that at one point or another every Congolese political faction considered ONUC the enemy. Hammarskjöld adopted a policy of political equidistance following the September 1960 collapse of the central government. But while UN leaders in New York may have convinced themselves that the Organization could deploy 20,000 troops and still be seen as neutral with respect to those affairs, preventing massacres of civilians did in fact constitute intervention . . . It was, as Special Representative Dayal concluded, "massive intervention in the guise of non-intervention." . . . Once central government was more or less restored in August 1961, the fiction of non-intervention was pretty much dropped.⁵³

Clearly Madeleine Kalb's assertion of the Central Intelligence Agency's role in "eliminating" Lumumba could qualify as third-party, although apparently not UN, intervention. However a letter written by Ralph Bunche to his wife coincidentally reveals that such an action by the CIA would have been complementary to UN exigencies.

That madman Lumumba is recklessly on the attack now-and most viciously-against Dag and the UN-and we will probably be in for a rough time since the public will be stirred up by the radio broadcasts. It is a tragedy, but it looks as though this greatest of international efforts will be destroyed by the insane fulminations of one reckless man. We may well be washed up here in a few days.⁵⁴

Questioning the UN's commitment to impartiality, Scott contends that "the refusal of the UN to recognize a change of government brought about by a military coup was a serious development . . . Dayal took the line that the UN had been asked to come in and help Lumumba and his government . . . the UN Headquarters continued to behave as if Lumumba's government was still the legal one."⁵⁵

Concluding Assessment and Lessons for the Future

An examination of the events of the Congo and the many wide-ranging assessments and in-depth analyses reveal a compelling argument supporting the need for the UN to act as a third-party international mediator. There is also perhaps a less compelling argument for the Congo to have been given the opportunity to resolve, on its own, its civil war and/or coup d'état. With the passage of nearly forty years and precious little improvement to the situation in this region of Africa, the lasting influence of the UN's mediation and intervention effort seems to have been fleeting. However, in its context, was ONUC a success? The following will be addressed:

- Did it meet its mandate?
- Was ONUC effective?
- The impact on the Congo
- Impact on other states
- Did ONUC promote international peace and security?

The mandate, as framed by a number of resolutions, was in summary: restore and maintain law and order; protect life and property throughout the country; transform the Congolese army into a reliable instrument of internal security; restore and maintain the territorial integrity of the Congo; prevent civil war and pacify tribal conflict; and, protect the Congo from external interference through the elimination of foreign mercenaries hired by secessionist Katanga. R.J. Hill's Operational Research Division Report on *Command and Control Problems of UN and Similar Peacekeeping Forces* refers to ambiguity in the ONUC mandate and the mandates of subsequent peacekeeping missions whereby imprecise or overly restrictive orders resulted in commanders stretching the

limits of their terms of reference and being in conflict with the Secretary-General and New York.⁵⁶ The force had the constraints of impartiality, non-interference, the need for consensus with the central government in advance of any significant action, and, on the use of force.⁵⁷ With the exception of the aforementioned attitude of Dayal, the mission can be assessed as being impartial. Certainly Bunche, Hammarskjold, and U Thant honoured the UN's tradition of impartiality and non-interference. The initial military commander, Major General von Horn was predisposed to using force and Conor Cruise O'Brien, the UN Representative in Katanga, did have to resort to force for force protection and for his force commander in Katanga, General Prem Chand, to restore law and order and bring about the military conditions for the secession to end. "As a matter of fact, the Secretary-General did not use all the authority he had because of the frequent lack of consent of the Central Government, inadequate military strength, partial opposition by some great powers, and his strong desire to avoid the use of force except as a last resort."⁵⁸

The operational effectiveness of ONUC must be rated as having been good especially in consideration of the challenges to unity of purpose, mounting, and sustaining any UN mission. Again R.J. Hill refers to ONUC's dual military-civilian command system where the terms of reference for the military and civilian chiefs were not clear and jurisdictional disputes between them occurred. He cites the following problems:

- The problem of maintaining solid and unified diplomatic support among the countries supplying contingents—a problem which may be termed the need for diplomatic homogeneity in the force.
- The difficulty of resolving intrinsic differences among the members of the force—the problem of differences of language, staff systems, and so on.

- The problem of ensuring security and discipline in a force composed of a variety of national contingents.⁵⁹

What remains remarkable by contemporary standards is the speed in which nations both committed and then deployed troops to the UN force. Within two days of the Security Council Resolution on 15 July 1960 the first troops arrived and the military force headquarters deployed under von Horn on 18 July.⁶⁰

In the spirit of the Security Council resolutions, ONUC did have an impact on the Congo. Where deployed, its presence brought about law and order and for the most part lessened the fears of the populace. Also tribal violence was lessened. But,

the United Nations did not succeed in what was perhaps its most important assignment—the training and reorganization of the Congolese army. As a result, the army was almost as irresponsible and unreliable after four years of peacekeeping as it was when the first UN soldier set foot on Congolese soil. What improvement there may have been in the army was due to the bilateral efforts of the United States, Belgium, and Israel. The responsibility for this major failure must be shared by the Congolese government and the United Nations.⁶¹

Without doubt the largest and most complex UN mission of its time had an impact on other states. Stability was achieved within this region of Africa that had a calming effect on the neighbouring states. Although the regional interests of the United Kingdom and France were served by the mission, the United Kingdom, somewhat prophetically, was opposed to the use of force in Katanga as it set a precedent for UN intervention in intrastate conflicts and state sovereignty.⁶²

In consideration of the ONUC's contribution to the promotion of international peace and security, the mission was successful in stabilizing Central Africa but was replete with lessons for the future.⁶³

Jocelyn Coulon elaborates on Hill's suggestions for improvement made over thirty years ago: the need for clearer mandates; missions should have a single, not dual

military-civil, chain of command; that standby agreements be in place for nations to provide troops to the UN at very short notice; and, that a planning/operations staff be permanently established in UN Headquarters to plan and execute UN operations. To varying degrees, all of Hill's observations, with the exception of the last (this staff structure was put in place 1992-93), have been relevant to subsequent UN missions because of "UN officials' lack of interest and learning from their mistakes and successes."⁶⁴

The mission in Cambodia, 1992-93, was plagued by poorly trained, led, and paid troops. Despite the peace agreement being signed in October 1991, the first contingents did not arrive until March 1992 and the mission was not fully operational until over a year later at the end of 1992.

The 1992-93 mission in Somalia suffered from too many bosses and an unclear chain of command. The lead nation, the United States, would take orders only from Washington and not from New York. "This attitude led to a split within the mission with the Italians refusing to obey the commander of the UN force. Secret negotiations with certain factions also created confusion about the objectives of the mission and led, ultimately, to a bloody confrontation between General Aidid's faction and the Americans."⁶⁵

The narrow mandate in the former Yugoslavia "protection of humanitarian aid and certain 'safe areas' – prevented the Blue Helmets from defending or even coming to the aid of civilians who were being shelled or subjected to 'ethnic cleansing,' with the notable exception of those in Sarajevo and Gorazde."⁶⁶ In Bosnia it took seven months

from the beginning of the war in April 1992 until November for only 1,500 of the planned 7,500 UN troops to arrive.⁶⁷

Hasty dispatch of UN troops demonstrates international resolve and stabilizes the situation. “Most experts consider the first six weeks to be the most important period for a mission, the time when it has to get organized in the field and establish an image of strength and credibility to the local population and the opposing factions.”⁶⁸ The most scathing example in UN history and indictment against the international community, concerned the five month period, April – September 1994, in Rwanda. It took five months since the withdrawal of 2,000 UN troops in April for the international community to recommit the first of 5,500 troops to return to Rwanda in September. During this period over 500,000 were killed and 3 million became refugees.⁶⁹ Of the fifty UN peacekeeping missions, UNEF II and ONUC, the fourth largest, remain the two quickest to deploy. ONUC had 11,000 deployed within a month⁷⁰ and 16,000 deployed within six weeks.⁷¹

With the benefit of historical hindsight the then modest success of ONUC as an international third-party mediation and intervention mission warrants redefining. It would appear that ONUC was more successful than has been previously assessed when compared to subsequent missions. This success however has not withstood the test of time. At time of writing, the Congo is on the brink of again requesting and receiving UN assistance. UN officials estimate that at least 25,000 soldiers and civilian personnel will be required to monitor the 10 July 1999 “cease-fire, which ended a year long civil war between rebels, who were backed by Rwanda and Uganda, and troops loyal to Congolese President Laurent Kabila.”⁷² The long saga of the Congo continues.

Endnotes

¹ Hoffman B. and Storie F. "Conflict and its Resolution: An Overview". Annex B to A/AS/JCO/Doc/S-5

² English, John A. *Marching Through Chaos*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1996. p. 38.

³ Bercovitch, Jacob. *Resolving International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation*. London: Lynne Rienner, 1996. p. 11.

⁴ Coulon, Jocelyn. *Soldiers of Diplomacy: The United Nations, Peacekeeping, and the New World Order*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998. p. 26. Contrast this positive review of Coulon's with William Durch's negative analysis in *The Evolution of Peacekeeping: Case Studies and Comparative Analysis*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993. p. 8.

⁵ United Nations. *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping*. 3rd Ed. New York: United Nations Dept. of Public Information, 1990. pp. 175-199.

⁶ Scott, Ian. *Tumbled House*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969. p. 77.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 131.

⁸ Urquhart, Brian. *Ralph Bunche, An American Life*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1993. p. 303.

⁹ Granatstein, J.L. *Canada and Peace-Keeping Operations: the Congo, 1960-64* Ottawa: Directorate of History, June 1966. (Historical Report No. 8). p. 1.

¹⁰ United Nations. *Ibid.*

¹¹ Urquhart. *Ibid.* p. 311.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ United Nations. *Ibid.* pp. 177 & 178.

¹⁴ Cited in Urquhart. *Ibid.* p. 312.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 316.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Kalb, Madeleine. *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa-From Eisenhower to Kennedy*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1982. p. 27.

¹⁸ Gibbs, David N. “Misrepresenting the Congo Crisis”, *African Affairs-The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol 95, July 1996. p. 454.

¹⁹ Urquhart. *Ibid.* p. 319.

²⁰ Cited in Urquhart. *Ibid.* p. 325.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.* p. 326.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 333.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 334.

²⁵ United Nations. *Ibid.* p. 183.

²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 184.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 186.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 187.

³⁰ Scott. *Ibid.* p. 132.

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 133.

³² Urquhart. *Ibid.* p. 325.

³³ United Nations. *Ibid.* pp. 188 & 189.

³⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 191-193.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 193.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 194.

³⁸ Cited in Urquhart. *Ibid.* p. 360.

³⁹ United Nations. *Ibid.* p. 199.

⁴⁰ Wehr, Paul and Lederach, John Paul. “Mediating Conflict in Central America”, in *Resolving International Conflicts-The Theory and Practice of Mediation*. Jacob Bercovitch. ed., London: Lynne Rienner, 1996. pp. 56-58.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 56.

⁴² *Ibid.* p. 57.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 58.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Webb, Keith. "The Yugoslavian Conflict, European Mediation, and the Contingency Model: A Critical Perspective", in *Resolving International Conflicts-The Theory and Practice of Mediation*. Jacob Bercovitch. ed., London: Lynne Rienner, 1996. p. 175

⁴⁷ Skjelsbaek, Kjell and Fermann, Gunnar. "The UN Secretary-General and Mediation", in *Resolving International Conflicts-The Theory and Practice of Mediation*. Jacob Bercovitch. ed., London: Lynne Rienner, 1996. p. 78.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 79.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Lippman, Walter. *Washington Post*, 21 July 1960, as cited in Lefever, Ernest. *Crisis in the Congo*. Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1965. p. 171.

⁵¹ Krock, Arthur. *New York Times*, 4 December 1964 as cited by Lefever, Ernest. *Crisis in the Congo*. Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1965. p. 171.

⁵² Luttwak, Edward. "Give War a Chance", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 1999. p. 36.

⁵³ Durch, William J. *The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping*. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc. 1993. pp. 345 & 346. Cites Dayal in Dayal, Rajeshwar. *Mission for Hammarskjold*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976. p. 116.

⁵⁴ Cited in Urquhart. *Ibid.* p. 328.

⁵⁵ Scott. *Ibid.* p. 100.

⁵⁶ Hill, Roger J. *Command and Control Problem of the UN and Similar Peacekeeping Forces. ORD Report 68/R5*. Ottawa: DND, April 1968. p. 2. See also Coulon, Jocelyn. *Soldiers of Diplomacy: The United Nations, Peacekeeping, and the New World Order*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998. p. 141.

⁵⁷ Lefever. *Ibid.* pp. 177 & 178.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 178.

⁵⁹ Hill. *Ibid.* p. 26.

⁶⁰ United Nations. *Ibid.* pp. 178 & 179.

⁶¹ Lefever. *Ibid.* p. 179.

⁶² *Ibid.* p. 181.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Coulon. *Ibid.* p. 142.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p. 143.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 172.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 173. Cites Durch, William J. and Blechman, Barry B. *Keeping the Peace: The United Nations in the Emerging World Order*. Washington: Henry L. Stimson Center, 1992. p. 34.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 171.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 172.

⁷¹ Urquhart. *Ibid.* p. 333.

⁷² “Annan Encouraged by Congo Peace”, *The Associated Press*. 14 October 1999.

Bibliography

Books

Bercovitch, Jacob. *Resolving International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation*. London: Lynne Rienner, 1996.

Coulon, Jocelyn. *Soldiers of Diplomacy: The United Nations, Peacekeeping, and the New World Order*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998.

Daniel, Donald C. and Hayes, Brad C. *Beyond Traditional Peacekeeping*. New York: St-Martin's Press, 1995.

Dayal, Rajeshwar. *Mission for Hammaraskjold*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

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

-
- Durch, William J. and Blechman, Barry B. *Keeping the Peace: The United Nations in the Emerging World Order*. Washington: Henry L. Stimson Center, 1992.
- English, John A. *Marching Through Chaos*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1996.
- Foote, Wilder. ed. *The Servant of Peace*. London: The Bodley Head, 1962.
- Garnett, John. ed. *Theories of Peace and Security*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1970.
- Gordon, King. *UN in the Congo*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1962.
- Granatstein, J.L. "Canada and Peace-Keeping Operations: the Congo, 1960-64" Ottawa: Directorate of History, June 1966. (Historical Report No. 8).
- Hill, Roger J. *Command and Control Problem of the UN and Similar Peacekeeping Forces*. ORD Report 68/R5. Ottawa: DND, April 1968.
- Hoffman B. and Storie F. "Conflict and its Resolution: An Overview". Annex B to A/AS/JCO/Doc/S-5
- House, Arthur. *The UN in the Congo: The political and Civilian Efforts*. Washington: University Press of America, 1978.
- Ignatieff, Michael. *Blood and Belonging-Journeys into the New Nationalism*. Toronto: Penguin Books, 1993.
- _____. *The Warrior's Honour*. Toronto: Penguin Books, 1998.
- Kalb, Madeleine. *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa-From Eisenhower to Kennedy*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1982.
- Kitchen, Helen. *Footnotes to the Congo Story*. New York: Walker and Company, 1967.
- Lefever, Ernest. *Crisis in the Congo*. Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1965.
- _____. *Uncertain Mandate*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967.
- McDonald, John. *Strategy in Poker, Business and War*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1963.
- Mitchell, Christopher, and Michael Banks. *Handbook of Conflict Resolution: the Analytical Problem-Solving Approach*. London: Wellington House, 1996.
- Rikhye, Indar Jit. *Military Advisor to the Secretary-General*. London: C. Hurst and Co. 1993.

Schelling, Thomas C. *The Strategy of Conflict*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1960.

Scott, Ian. *Tumbled House*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.

United Nations. *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping*. 3rd Ed. New York: United Nations Dept. of Public Information, 1990.

Urquhart, Brian. *Hammarskjold*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972.

_____. *Ralph Bunche, An American Life*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1993.

Van Horn, Carl. *Soldiering for Peace*. New York: McKay, 1966.

Journals/Press

African Affairs-The Journal of the Royal African Society

Associated Press