Stabilization Operations and Nation-Building: Lessons from United Nations Peacekeeping in the Congo, 1960-1964

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President George W. Bush initiated the war in Iraq on the basis of the optimistic notion that the United States would be able to build a stable democratic government there. In a novel resurrection of the domino theory, the administration assumed further that once an Iraqi democracy was established, democratic government would spread to other countries in the Middle East. When planning for the post-war occupation of Iraq, the U.S. drew upon the example of allied occupation of Germany after World War II for a model.[1] Yet a more appropriate example for what the U.S. was likely to encounter in its post-war occupation of Iraq—and one that foreshadows failure rather than success—can be found in the case of United Nations peacekeeping in the Congo from 1960-1964. This paper will analyze the relevance of the Congo operation for Iraq by providing a chronology of UN actions and a discussion of their consequences. By doing so we will highlight the difficulties of formulating policy for reconstruction in weak or failed states, as well as the difficulty of implementing that policy via nation-building or stabilization operations. However, before any discussion of the UN Congo operation, it is necessary to make some explicit comparisons with Iraq.

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IRAQ AND THE CONGO COMPARED

Similarities between Iraq and the Congo exist both at the broader diplomatic and foreign policy level and at the level of practical operations on the ground. From the standpoint of overall U.S. foreign policy, both the removal of a repugnant regime in Iraq and the UN operation in the Congo, despite being initiated at the behest of the Congolese government, brought up charges of illegitimate intervention. Both interventions created diplomatic problems within the camp of developed Western democracies. In Iraq, the division was over whether or not to intervene in the first place, while in the Congo, differences arose from disputes over the precise objectives of the UN mission. Both cases show that for policymakers, an absolute guarantee of sovereignty can conflict with other international goals of international security or human rights.

The two cases also featured tripartite cleavages and centrifugal forces in each country that created obstacles to the establishment of a centralized government. Thus, in the Congo, one had competing claims for power emanating from Stanleyville (now Kisangani), Leopoldville (now Kinshasa), and Elizabethville (now Lukumbashi). This produced a political dynamic much like the rival areas in Iraq variously dominated by Sunni and Shi'i Muslims and Kurds. Of course, the logical institutional response to such acute centrifugal tendencies is to either create three separate countries or forge some sort of loose federation to ensure a measure of autonomy and self-government for the three centers of power. In the case of the Congo, a unified state was thought to be preferable, because outside powers were viewed as the likely beneficiaries of the creation of three weaker states. UN officials feared that Belgium would retain control over the mineral resources in Katanga, while it was assumed the USSR would dominate any independent government formed in Orientale Province. Thus, for both anti-colonial and anti-communist reasons, a strong central government was the preferred outcome from the standpoint of the UN.[2] In Iraq, federation or division of the country into three separate states would likely be problematic for a variety of reasons, and forging a strong centralized state may seem to be more feasible.[3] However, if the Congo is any indication, the strength of centrifugal forces at work in Iraq may be such that any centralized state is likely to slip into a new dictatorship inclined to repress the demands of some of the country's factions. Such repression, at its worst, is more likely to lead to a predatory state than the idyllic democracy envisioned by the United States. Even in the best case, the United States is not likely to be able to establish a government that is legitimate in the eyes of the Iraqis. Catherine Hoskyns, history and politics professor at the Coventry Business School, similarly observed about the role of outsiders in shoring up the Mobutu coalition in the Congo:

> The backing of the West was sufficient at this point to keep the alliance in power, it was not sufficient to make its rule effective or acceptable to the majority of the Congolese.4

Hoskyns' observation about the Congo is the crux of the problem for any stabilization force composed of outsiders.

Given the similarities between the Congo and Iraq at the policy level, the two cases are likely to share some features from the standpoint of practical occupation operations. Both cases inhabit a twilight zone that lies somewhere between peace and war. Consequently, it is difficult to develop rules of engagement (ROE) that can serve to win the support of the people while eliminating those who attack government representatives. In the case of the Congo, because the UN force was labeled a peacekeeping force (in an era before the term "peace enforcement" had been coined), the rules of engagement strictly prohibited the use of force, except in self-defense. All the factions vying for power in the Congo adopted the tactic of attacking UN troops in order to provoke an overreaction whose brutality might lead to the withdrawal of the UN force. Even clearly articulated ROE were sufficiently ambiguous such that it was hard not to break these rules in the heat of action. In addition to the ROE restricting the use of force to self-defense, UN troops in the Congo were also expected to uphold a UN mandate that included the guarantee of free movement for all UN troops. With the Congolese establishing roadblocks to prevent UN troop movements, the UN had to choose between whether to violate its strict ROE by engaging in offensive actions to remove the roadblocks or to leave part of the UN mandate unfulfilled. Within such a context, chain of command problems are likely to become severe because of differences between instructions from headquarters (whether UN or U.S.) and interpretations of commanders on the ground. Any stabilization operation that is pulled in several different directions will likely also accentuate problems in the chain of command.

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Another similarity between the Congo in the 1960s and Iraq today revolves around the fact that each has porous borders, which complicate operations for intervening forces. In the case of the Congo, the newly independent country was surrounded by countries still under European colonial control—the Portuguese to the West (Angola), Belgium to the Northeast (Ruanda-Urundi), and Britain to the East (Uganda, Tanganyika) and to the South (Rhodesia). Even with official

authority to deport foreign mercenaries who were contributing to unrest in the country, the UN did not have de facto control of the borders necessary to prevent the mercenaries from returning. Iraq's borders today are similarly porous. Even assuming U.S. allies in Turkey, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia are willing and able to control their borders with Iraq, Syria and Iran also provide an avenue into the country for terrorists wishing to fight U.S. troops.

Despite the substantial resemblance between current Iraqi operations and the UN peacekeeping operation in the Congo, there are also notable differences worth mentioning. First, the Congo operation took place during the worst tensions of the Cold War, and superpower rivalry did have an impact on UN policies and choices. The Iraqi stabilization process happens in a more benign international environment, at least from the standpoint of great power tensions. Second, one could say that the Congo operation began as a stabilization effort that escalated to war. In contrast, U.S. policy in Iraq began with war and ended with a stabilization effort. Whether these differences might allow Iraq to succeed where the Congo failed remains to be seen. With these comparisons as a starting point, let us look more closely at the UN peacekeeping operation in the Congo.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ON THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE CONGO

Of all the countries that gained their independence as part of the broad wave of decolonization that took place in the post-World War II era,[5] perhaps none was less prepared for independence than the Congo. As a colony, the Congo was unique because it had been held as the personal property of King Leopold II of Belgium, whose ownership was granted international recognition at the Berlin Conference of 1885. Although King Leopold sold the Congo to the Belgian state in 1908, it continued to be administered directly from Brussels, while the local colonial government remained undeveloped. The colonial administration was further weakened by decentralization. Some provinces, notably Katanga, had their own vice-governors and some degree of autonomy from the central colonial government in Leopoldville. Several facts highlight just how unprepared for independence the Congo was in 1960. Until 1957, virtually no political activity by Africans was permitted. At the time of independence, there were only a dozen or so Congolese who were college graduates, and there was not a single Congolese doctor, engineer, or officer in the *Force Publique*.[6]

The lack of preparation for independence was magnified by the inherent management problems posed by such a large and diverse country. The Congo was the second largest country in Africa; its 900,000 square miles made it larger in area than Western Europe. The population of 13 million was divided among several hundred different tribes such that when political parties began to form in the late 1950s, they naturally coalesced along tribal lines. By 1960, there were 120 official

political parties. The Congo relied on Belgian personnel for almost all important economic and administrative functions, and Belgian officers were in command of the 25,000 member *Force Publique* that combined the functions of army and police force. Given all these conditions, the Belgians fully expected to retain effective control of the country after independence. A Belgian officer addressing the *Force Publique* troops in Thysville exemplified this attitude by writing on a blackboard: "Before Independence=After Independence." This action undoubtedly fueled the frustration of the Congolese soldiers who already had the impression, in the words of one eyewitness, that "independence had passed them by," and caused something of a mutiny within the *Force Publique*.[7] For the Belgians, retaining their grip on Katanga province was especially important because Katanga accounted for one-half of the revenue generated by the entire colony, and Belgian companies operating there generated significantly more profit than did companies in Belgium.[8]

In the political arena preceding independence, three leading figures emerged: Joseph Kasavubu, the leader of the party called the *Alliance des Bakongo* (Abako); Moise Tshombe, leader of the *Confederation des Associations Tribales du Katanga* (Conakat); and Patrice Lumumba, leader of the *Mouvement Nationale Congolaise* (MNC). Both Kasavubu and Tshombe favored some sort of federal government structure with considerable autonomy for the provinces. Lumumba preferred a stronger central government, and his political party came the closest to reflecting a genuinely national constituency. In the election of May 1960, the MNC won more seats in the assembly than any other political party (35 of 137), and was the only party to win seats in five of the six provinces. The central government that was formed as a result of the election was an uneasy partnership of rivals: Joseph Kasavubu became President and Patrice Lumumba became his Prime Minister. Independence was scheduled for June 30, 1960.

CREATION AND EVOLUTION OF THE OPERATION DES NATIONS UNIES AU CONGO (ONUC)

On July 5, 1960, Congolese troops in the *Force Publique* from Thysville mutinied against their Belgian officers. The mutiny quickly spread throughout the country. Because of violence associated with the uprising, Belgian technicians and administrators fled the country, and essential services collapsed. Brussels' ambassador ordered Belgian troops to prevent the mutineers from entering the capital, Leopoldville. Belgium also announced (contrary to its treaty with the new government) that it would reinforce its troops already in the Congo. The Belgian intervention was substantial, and troops had intervened in 23 different locations between July 10 and July 18.[9] In Katanga, Provincial President Tshombe requested assistance from Belgium in putting down the mutiny. Shortly after the arrival of

800 Belgian paratroopers, Tshombe declared Katangan independence from the Congo.[10] South Kasai quickly followed the Katangan example and declared its independence as well. Because of the spreading disorder, Prime Minister Lumumba submitted two separate requests to the UN for assistance, on July 10 and July 12. The UN Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, invoked (for the first time) his authority to bring issues of peace and security to the attention of the Security Council. The Security Council passed its first resolution on the Congo on July 14, 1960, requesting that Belgium withdraw its troops from the Congo and authorizing the Secretary-General to render assistance to the new government.

Hammarskjöld drew on the experience of the UN Emergency Force (UNEF) in the Sinai as a model for the *Operation des Nations Unies au Congo* (ONUC). Within 48 hours of the passage of the first Security Council Resolution, troops began arriving in the Congo. By July 26, 1960, ONUC had 8,000 troops in the Congo, making the operation one of the fastest deployments in UN history. To be sure, there were delays in deploying troops throughout the entire country. Tshombe threatened to resist if UN troops entered Katanga, which ultimately occurred on August 12, after the personal intervention of the Secretary-General. The first troops deployed to the Congo under UN auspices were transported by the United States, but the force was composed primarily of troops from neutral countries in Asia and Africa. Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Morocco, and Tunisia all made important contributions to the initial deployment. In addition, one Swedish battalion was sent from UNEF and a small assortment of other white troops was sent to reassure Belgian civilians remaining in the Congo. One of Hammarskjöld's greatest concerns was to keep the crisis from drawing in the two superpowers and introducing the Cold War into Africa. At its peak, ONUC had 20,000 troops deployed, and for 30 years it stood as one of the largest UN operations.

Although ONUC was intended to facilitate the reestablishment of order by reigning in the rogue *Force Publique*, which was hastily renamed *Armée Nationale Congolaise* (ANC), the UN was invariably drawn into the domestic political struggles among leaders representing four distinct power centers. Prime Minister Lumumba became impatient with the slow withdrawal of the Belgians, as well as with the fact that the UN troops were not placed at the disposal of the central government for putting down secessionist movements in Katanga and Kasai. Because the central government did not have control of the ANC, it was unable to put an end to Katanga's secession without outside military assistance. In fact, the politicians were so unsure of their own security force that on July 20 Lumumba requested that UN troops replace Congolese guards at the Parliament. Lumumba then did several things that disturbed President Kasavubu. First, he issued an ultimatum to the UN that if the Belgians did not depart by August 19, he would ask for Soviet military assistance. While Lumumba's threat did speed

the departure of the Belgians, it antagonized high-ranking UN officials, who had come to view him as the greatest obstacle to the peace. More disturbing to the West, on August 15 Lumumba wrote a letter to the USSR requesting their military aid to end the Katangan secession. From that moment on, other factions in the Congo could portray UN actions as pro-communist to the extent they protected Lumumba or sought his inclusion in the central government. Then, on August 23, Lumumba ordered an airlift of troops into Kasai as preparation for an attack against Katanga, which culminated in the massacre of Baluba tribesmen.[11]

On September 5, President Kasavubu responded to Lumumba's hasty actions by dismissing him as Prime Minister. In turn, Lumumba fired Kasavubu, and the Congo slid into a yearlong constitutional crisis. In the wake of the mutual dismissals by leaders in the central government, the interim head of the ONUC, Andrew Cordier, ordered the closure of all airports to any but UN aircraft and closed radio stations to use by either Kasavubu or Lumumba. At the time, Cordier's actions were controversial because they were taken without explicit permission of the Secretary-General. Cordier justified his actions by the rapid change of circumstances on the ground. Although the Secretary-General subsequently supported the actions as consistent with the UN policy of political neutrality and nonintervention, the actions, in fact, worked to the detriment of Lumumba. Closure of airports ensured that Lumumba could not bring reinforcements into the capital from his supporters located in Stanleyville; meanwhile President Kasavubu, through his ties to the French Congo was able to broadcast from across the river in Brazzaville. The UN closures lasted only one week, but that was sufficiently long enough to poison the views of many in the Congo against the UN presence.

Even though Parliament decided on September 7, 1960, to annul the dismissals of both Kasavubu and Lumumba, the political chaos continued. To summarize, in the autumn of 1960, Congolese administration and the ANC was split among four factions, two of which claimed leadership of the central government: Kasavubu's faction, centered on Leopoldville, and Lumumba's (with his deputy Antoine Gizenga), centered around Stanleyville. Both factions sent a delegation to the UN to claim the UN General Assembly seat for the Congo. In addition, there were two different secessionist movements—one led by Albert Kalonji in South Kasai, the other by Moise Tshombe in Katanga—which meant the divided central government was only in control of about one-third of the country. Tshombe was able to undermine reconciliation between Lumumba and Kasavubu by stating that he would not negotiate with the central government if Lumumba was a member. Kasavubu preferred to reintegrate Katanga by negotiation rather than by military force, and Tshombe's statement provided Kasavubu with the incentive to ally ultimately with the military and the army chief of staff, Joseph Mobutu, against Lumumba.[12]

When Kasavubu and Lumumba dismissed each other, both asked Mobutu to arrest the other leader. Mobutu declined and remained neutral during the first couple of weeks of the crisis. Impatient with the failure of Lumumba and Kasavubu to reach an accommodation, Mobutu staged a coup on September 14. Mobutu intended army intervention to be a temporary expedient until a single central government of national reconciliation could be formed. Until that time, Mobutu installed a Council of Commissioners to act as a governing council. Mobutu abandoned his neutrality however, when he learned of an assassination plot against him by Lumumba. Mobutu then ordered the arrest of Lumumba on September 18. Lumumba was released under UN protection, where he remained safe, but cut-off from contact with his supporters. Meanwhile in New York, the UN General Assembly (after excessive pressure from the United States) voted to seat Kasavubu's delegation on November 22. The UN's decision convinced Lumumba that he had no chance of returning as part of a new central government, and he left the security of his house under UN protection to meet his supporters in Stanleyville. Antoine Gizenga then proclaimed Stanleyville independent on December 12, 1960. Lumumba was captured by Mobutu a second time and held in Leopoldville. A pro-Lumumbist mutiny convinced Mobutu to offer Lumumba a ministerial post, which he declined. Mobutu then sent Lumumba to Katanga, reasoning that if Lumumba was in Tshombe's custody, Tshombe might abandon secession. Lumumba was murdered in Katanga on January 17, 1961, although his death ("while trying to escape") was not announced until February 13.

Naturally, these internal political divisions complicated the day-to-day work of ONUC, forcing it to deal with ministries whose political authority was disputed. Once Rajeshwar Dayal arrived as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, he worked to restore Parliament as the first step to creating a legal government. Neither Kasavubu nor his Western supporters were too eager to reconvene Parliament, however, because that was where Lumumba was powerful.

Following Lumumba's death, waves of unrest spread across the Congo and the country was poised on the edge of civil war. In addition, Afro-Asian contingents in the UN force were being withdrawn by their governments, who were unhappy about the UN's inability to stop Lumumba's murder. Internal chaos was compounded by the fact that all sides began attacking the UN presence, even at a time when many leaders relied on UN protection against their own soldiers in the ANC. Mobutu and Kasavubu, who by this time jointly controlled the central government, started threatening the UN with a state of war unless Special Representative Rajeshwar Dayal was recalled. Their hostility to Dayal stemmed from a report Dayal sent to UN headquarters in which he blamed the chaos in the Congo directly on the ANC and Mobutu.[13] Mobutu and Kasavubu also saw Dayal as pro-Lumumba because of his commitment to the reconvening of

Parliament and the re-establishment of a constitutional government. Against the backdrop of deteriorating conditions in the Congo, evident in the murder of Lumumba and the withdrawal of contingents from the ONUC, the UN Security Council passed a stronger resolution on February 21, 1961.[14] This more forceful resolution demanded that all foreign advisors and mercenaries be expelled, and it authorized the UN Secretary-General to take action to implement it.

Rather than alleviating chaos, the new Security Council resolution incited authorities in both Kasavubu's stronghold of Leopoldville and Tshombe's capital of Elisabethville to new attacks on the UN. Congolese hostility towards the UN grew out of a misunderstanding of the new resolution. Both Leopoldville and Elisabethville assumed that ONUC was now authorized to use force to disarm the ANC and to reopen Parliament—a move likely to enhance the power of the Lumumbist faction. This mistaken assumption provided the impetus for leaders in the central government and Katanga to conclude the Tananarive Agreement to pool military resources in order to prevent "communist tyranny." In fact, the agreement was primarily directed at the UN and only secondarily addressed to the Lumumbists who controlled Stanleyville.[15]

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In any case, the UN resolution of February 21 remained a dead letter until late summer of 1961. In July, a new central government was cobbled together that reconciled various factions. Cyrille Adoula, serving as premier, headed the government and had two vice-presidents to assist him. Antoine Ginzenga represented the Lumumbist faction and abandoned his bid for an independent government in Stanleyville because the stronger UN resolution suggested the central government's willingness to reintegrate Katanga. The second vice-presidency was appointed to the leader of the Association of the Luba People of Katanga (Balubakat), Jason Sendwe. (Incidentally, Sendwe was also a known enemy of Tshombe.)

On August 24, the central government passed an ordinance to expel from the Congo all non-Congolese officers and mercenaries, and granted legal authority for ONUC to use force to achieve this purpose. The ordinance was directed at Katanga, where Tshombe had built up his military strength with an active recruiting campaign of foreign mercenaries that included, among others, French officers from Algeria. The expulsion of foreign mercenaries from Katanga was accomplished by two successive operations. The first, "Operation Rumpunch,"

achieved some success in rounding up mercenaries. However, given the fact that European Consuls protected some mercenaries and that others were able to blend in with European communities resident in the Congo, ONUC lacked intelligence to confirm the extent of its success. In fact, one unintended consequence of "Operation Rumpunch" was that it tended to remove the more moderate elements among the mercenaries—those that were willing to abide by requests from their Consuls—while leaving the extremist mercenaries free to continue to fight.[16] Moreover, Katanga's Minister of Information, Godefroid Munongo, increased the oppression and terrorism against those in the province who opposed secession. This caused the UN compound to be flooded with refugees seeking protection, thus increasing the demands on an already over-burdened force. From August 24, when the first refugees appeared in the UN compound, to two weeks following "Operation Rumpunch," 45,000 refugees sought UN protection.[17]

The second and more controversial operation, called "Operation Morthor," broadened the campaign to end the secession by including the arrest of provincial politicians (Tshombe and Munongo), as well as a round-up of foreigners. The second operation led to eight days of shooting between so-called UN peacekeepers and the mercenaries leading Tshombe's troops. "Operation Morthor" failed to arrest Tshombe, who escaped into British-controlled Rhodesia. The Secretary-General, appalled by the casualties caused by the operation, ordered a halt and flew to Ndola, Rhodesia, to negotiate a cease-fire with Tshombe. Dag Hammarskjöld's plane crashed enroute to the meeting. In spite of the accident, a ceasefire was signed by the head of ONUC's Civilian Operation, Mahmoud Khiary.[18] After signing the ceasefire agreement, Tshombe and Munongo returned to Elisabethville and continued to fight for the secession of Katanga.

ONUC then began strengthening the forces it had in Katanga, and the larger UN presence finally convinced Tshombe to sign the Kitona Accord with the central government on December 21, 1961, leading to a yearlong truce between the central government and Katangan politicians. However, by July 1962, Tshombe began to organize violent demonstrations against the UN, whose troops continued to be attacked. By November 1962, it was clear that Tshombe was not serious about reaching a genuine agreement with the central government, and the United States began to supply transport to assist the UN in its military build-up for a final operation. "Operation Grandslam" began in December 1962 and aimed to neutralize the Katangan air force so that UN troops could regain freedom of movement in the whole of Katanga. In January 1963, UN troops took Tshombe's last stronghold in Jadotville. Tshombe announced the end of the secession on January 15, and left the country for exile in Switzerland. The UN presence continued in the Congo until the summer of 1964. Adoula resigned as premier nine days after the UN force was withdrawn.

Although the UN operation ended in 1964, its conclusion did not bring

governmental stability. Insurrections occurred in Kwilu in January 1964 and were followed by an uprising in Kivu province in August. Another uprising in Stanleyville in the summer of 1964, launched by rebels claiming to be the heirs of Lumumba, included an attack against the U.S. consulate and the seizure of American hostages. By this time, Tshombe had returned from exile and joined the central government, where he again requested assistance from the Belgian military and mercenary forces. Once the latest Stanleyville insurgency was suppressed and the hostages freed, Tshombe became something of a national hero. His victory in the elections in 1965 appeared to threaten Kasavubu's power, and so Kasavubu dismissed Tshombe in October 1965. The ensuing political turmoil prompted another coup by Mobutu. This coup turned out to be permanent and marked the beginning of his 30-year rule.[19]

ANALYSIS

The UN operation in the Congo provides an interesting case study of peacekeeping (more accurately, peace enforcement) because it foreshadows problems that peacekeeping operations, and indeed stabilization efforts, continue to encounter to the present day. First, the Congo shows how complex such operations can be. Even defining the mission or the objective can be highly problematic. The Congo's initial request to the UN was for technical assistance to restore internal order. Lumumba's second request was for military assistance to halt Belgian aggression. At the heart of UN difficulties was the problem of identifying the source of chaos in the Congo. Was chaos the result of internal disputes among rival political factions or was it the consequence of colonial interference on the part of Belgium? The UN faced a similar dilemma when defining the problem of Katangan secession: was the secession an internal matter to be resolved by the Congolese themselves or was it a product of aggressive foreign intervention?

Answers to both questions are complicated, but an early post-mortem of the operation by Catherine Hoskyns suggests that the Katanga secession was made possible by the initial mutiny of the *Force Publique*. She reasons that two days before independence, Belgian authorities in Brussels and in Elisabethville were unwilling to support Katanga's independence from the Congo. Belgian views changed after the mutiny, which convinced the Belgians that secession of the province was the only way to restore law and order and therefore safeguard Belgian investments. Once convinced that secession of Katanga was in its best interest, the Belgian government issued very different orders to its troops in Katanga than to those in other areas of the Congo. In Katanga, Belgian troops were ordered to occupy "all centers of importance," but in the rest of the Congo, they were to intervene only when Belgian lives were threatened.[20] In addition, Belgian troops in

Katanga systematically rounded up any ANC units that supported the central government and deported them out of the province in order to ensure the loyalty of the ANC units remaining. In this way, Tshombe was able to build a *gendarmerie* loyal to him, and the constitutional struggle between Kasavubu and Lumumba simply afforded him the opportunity to consolidate his power.[21]

The fact that the definition of the problem was a matter for subjective judgment meant that the UN and members of Congo's central government, particularly Patrice Lumumba, made quite different interpretations of the UN mandate. Lumumba believed that UN troops should be under the command of the central government and be used to end the Katanga secession. UN officials, on the other hand, saw the role of UN troops as being to restore order and discipline to the ANC. To be sure, Hammarskjöld did assume that the very presence of the UN would demonstrate a show of force that would lead Tshombe to end his secession voluntarily. Even though politicians of all stripes in the Congo came to oppose the UN presence, they did not avail themselves of the easy out left to them by the wording of the first Security Council Resolution. That resolution had asked the Secretary-General to provide "such military assistance as may be necessary *until*, through the efforts of the Congolese Government with technical assistance of the United Nations, *the national security forces may be able, in the opinion of the Government to meet fully their tasks.*" (Emphasis added.)[22] All the central government had to do was to declare the ANC capable of meeting its tasks, and the UN presence would have ended. Of course, as noted above, none of the politicians wanted the UN to leave, because no leader had confidence in the national army. Even Mobutu, as Army Chief of Staff, moved into the UN compound for safety in the week following his 1960 coup to neutralize the civilian politicians.

UN officials insisted that their presence in the Congo was politically neutral, and that the UN held to a commitment of non-intervention in the domestic political contest. Yet various segments in the Congo did not view the UN presence as benignly impartial. After all, was not the seating of the delegation representing Kasavubu's faction at the UN General Assembly in the fall of 1960 an explicit recognition that the UN had taken sides in the internal political contest? And if the UN recognized Kasavubu, could it genuinely play the role of honest broker among all factions? Furthermore, with Kasavubu's delegation recognized by the UN, why not do as the government asked regarding the Katangan secession? The UN insisted that political neutrality allowed it to protect Europeans in Stanleyville, but that neutrality would be violated if the UN intervened to protect Lumumba after his second arrest.

Congolese leaders were at times as inconsistent as the UN itself, denouncing the UN presence as an infringement on their sovereignty but secretly pleased when UN policies favored their own faction. For example, the Lumumbist fac-

tion assumed that the UN supported Mobutu's coup, because Cordier had used UN funds to provide back-pay to the troops garrisoned at Leopoldville in order to stave off troop dissatisfaction that might lead to violence. Even though such funding benefited Mobutu by solidifying support for him in the ANC, he too attacked the UN presence and saw Dayal, in particular, as supporting Lumumba.

Complicating the UN actions further were the broader diplomatic issues at stake. The Cold War setting meant that the Secretary-General had to walk a political tightrope between the permanent members of the Security Council, satisfying the expectations of a number of constituents with largely incompatible interests and preferences. The Soviets were pro-Lumumba and angry at the UN's failure to protect him.[23] France and Britain, as colonial powers, were anti-Lumumba and willing to accept—and even facilitate—the independence of Katanga. The United States did want to support the interests of its NATO partners (France, Britain, and Belgium) but recognized that the secession of Katanga had the potential to legitimate other secessionist movements and feared that the Stanleyville faction might also secede. Given Soviet influence with Stanleyville politicians, the fear in Washington was that an independent country based around the Stanleyville area would create a Soviet foothold. Finally, the Secretary-General had to placate the Afro-Asian bloc that provided the bulk of the troops for ONUC without alienating the West, who financed the operation. Given such contradictory interests, it is no surprise that UN policy would appear inconsistent and confused.

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Although many aspects of the operation were negatively affected by the broader diplomatic setting and the ambiguity in defining the problem, three stand out as most important. The three problems include a muddled chain of command; confusion over the mandate and the rules of engagement required to implement it; and the difficulties of evaluating the final outcome of the operation. All three problems can be found in more contemporary examples of intervention aimed at stabilization or nation-building. Two examples provide good illustrations of the problems with the chain of command in the Congo. The ultimate authority for all Congo actions lay with the Office of the Secretary-General, and Hammarskjöld preferred Security Council guidance to be ambiguous because such guidance allowed him greater latitude in implementation. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General was the individual in theater who was to execute actions consistent with the Secretary-General's instructions. Andrew Cordier, as interim head of ONUC, was acting in this capacity when he

ordered the closure of airports and radio stations without explicit authorization from Hammarskjöld. Dayal, who replaced Cordier, notes in his memoirs that although Hammarskjöld did not approve of the actions, he did support them after the fact. Cordier's actions were taken in a crisis situation so fluid that one could hardly expect him to wait for cabled instructions from New York. Yet Cordier's actions, because they favored Kasavubu over Lumumba, aroused suspicions of the UN among his foreign and domestic supporters. Likewise, Dayal's repeated calls for reconvening Parliament, where Lumumba had a strong base of support, was construed by Kasavubu and Mobutu as indicative of the UN's pro-Lumumba bias, and by extension its pro-communist sympathy.

An even more important instance of problems in the chain of command revolved around actions taken by the UN's representative to Katanga, Conor Cruise O'Brien. Cruise O'Brien was sent to Katanga in the summer of 1961 to implement the stronger Security Council Resolution passed in February of that year, demanding the expulsion of foreign advisors and mercenaries that were thought to be the major prop for Tshombe's secessionist program. Indeed, in his memoirs, Cruise O'Brien suggests that he was specifically selected for this task because Hammarskjöld was aware of his views as a neutralist (not pro-NATO) and a staunch anti-colonialist. He was the official responsible for orchestrating "Operation Rumpunch," the first operation to round up mercenaries, which was considered a success. However, the follow-up "Operation Morthor" shows where the chain of command broke down. "Operation Morthor" broadened the targets for UN action and included the arrest of key politicians in Katanga.

The controversy surrounding "Operation Morthor" involved the question of whether the operation had been properly authorized. In retrospect, various participants expressed different views over whether the Secretary-General authorized the expanded operation. Dayal says in his memoirs that Cruise O'Brien clearly overstepped the explicit instructions of the Secretary-General, and that ONUC did not have the right to arrest Congolese politicians—a task it had repeatedly declined to perform earlier when Kasavubu wanted Lumumba turned over.[24] Cruise O'Brien asserts that he was given permission to launch "Operation Morthor" by Khiary, the head of the ONUC Civilian Operation, and Cruise O'Brien presumed Khiary's permission came explicitly from Hammarskjöld, via the officer in charge in Leopoldville, Sture Linnar.[25] However, Cruise O'Brien's memoirs do detail the immense frustration of dealing with Katangan politicians who were inciting the local population against the UN, plotting the assassination of UN officials, and conducting terrorist campaigns against political opponents in order to send refugees fleeing to UN areas for protection, thereby negating the UN's ability to conduct other operations. Under these circumstances, one can see how a local commander might be tempted to push an extreme interpretation of the mandate. UN officials on the ground dealing with Tshombe on a day-to-day

basis could easily conclude that, given Tshombe's delaying tactics, diplomacy without force was futile, and that it was a logical next step to escalate from "Operation Rumpunch" to "Operation Morthor." Trevor Findlay extrapolates a lesson from "Operation Morthor" applicable to other UN operations as well as unilateral U.S. stabilization operations:

> It is probably more accurately described as a case of mutually reinforcing misperceptions combined with hubris and bravado, which produced, seen in the best light, over-enthusiasm and poor judgment, and, at worst, a conspiracy to force the UN's hand in overturning the Katangan regime. The lesson is that the UN should not use force without proper command and control arrangements, military capability, legal authority and political support.[26]

The Katanga secession and the circumstances surrounding "Operation Morthor" also illustrate how the chain of command problems inherent in a multinational operation detract from the ability to forge a unified purpose. The need for the UN to retain various national contingents meant that unity of purpose was necessarily diluted, with some contingents taking direction from their national governments rather than UN commanders. In addition, Cruise O'Brien notes that Belgian business interests in Katanga were united in hatred and hostility towards the UN presence. This contrasts with his observation that, "the complex coalition which [he] represented had no motivation of equivalent clarity and power."[27] The conditions identified by Cruise O'Brien seem likely to apply wherever outside interventions require support from diverse constituencies and locals need only maintain their own unity of purpose to expel foreigners.

The second operational issue highlighted by the Congo case is related to the chain of command difficulties but centers primarily on the interpretation of the UN mandate, which in turn had an impact on the rules of engagement. The Security Council Resolution of February 1961 authorized the UN to "take immediately all appropriate measures to prevent the occurrence of civil war in the Congo," and permitted "the use of force, if necessary, in the last resort."[28] This mandate was subject to two quite different interpretations. The British delegate to the UN, Sir Patrick Dean, emphasized that his government understood that force would be used only to prevent armed clashes between Congolese troops, and not to impose a political settlement, by ending the secession of Katanga. Yet in 1961, the threat of civil war in the Congo grew out of the secession of Katanga, and it was not unreasonable for UN officials in Katanga to pursue the goal of bringing peace by using force in a way that would eliminate the secession. The latter interpretation of the mandate was undoubtedly held by Mahmoud Khiary and Conor Cruise O'Brien.

Even before the use of force for operations "Rumpunch" and "Morthor" there were problems with the ROE. In the Congo, UN troops were generally expected to adhere strictly to the use of force for self-defense only. Dag

Hammarskjöld held to the most stringent interpretation of the self-defense rule and was not prepared to engage a peace force in offensive tactics, even if necessary to extricate itself from danger. UN officials in the Congo, such as Dayal, thought the ROE were too weak and prevented the UN from arresting criminals as part of the mandate to ensure law and order. Opponents of the UN presence naturally turned the strict ROE to their own advantage. Tshombe incited crowds of women and children against the UN troops with the aim of getting UN troops to overreact in a fashion that would undermine international support for the UN effort.[29] Along similar lines, in Katanga, the ANC used fake Red Cross vehicles to carry troops, munitions, and mercenaries. When the Red Cross representative complained to Katangan authorities, he was kidnapped and murdered.[30]

The Congo operation illustrates that between UN mandates (or any other form of mission statement) and ROE, there may be an inherent ambiguity or tension, and reasonable people can be expected to disagree concerning their interpretation. That disagreement is likely to be most acute between headquarters elements in New York and officials on the ground—that is, between the authorities responsible for broader foreign policy and those executing that policy in detail.[31] Although the UN troops were to adhere to a strict interpretation of the use of force for self-defense only, they did have the mandate to ensure freedom of movement in the country. Once the ANC initiated a policy of placing road blocks in the way of UN troops and limiting their freedom of movement, offensive operations were implicitly called for, while self-defense remained the explicit ROE. Even under the stronger Security Council Resolution of February 1961 that allowed for measures to prevent civil war, those measures were still assumed to be more defensive than offensive in character, requiring UN troops to intervene between warring Congolese troops.

The last operational problem that the Congo illustrates is the near-impossibility of developing concrete criteria for measuring and defining success. The fact that we can look back 40 years later with knowledge of the consequences of the intervention makes this case study more useful than some of the more contemporary operations where the long-term outcome is not yet clear. Some participants in the Congo who wrote about the operation afterwards saw it as a success because it enabled the Congo to survive as a unified state, and one that in the 1970s appeared reasonably stable and prosperous. Given the atmosphere at the time of anti-colonialism, the creation of several states out of the Belgian Congo that left Europeans in control of the bulk of the mineral wealth in Katanga would have been undesirable. However, the long-term consequences of shoring up a centralized state have proved to be less positive. Mobutu's second coup in 1965 consolidated his rule of 30 years, and his regime pioneered what came to be known as a "kleptocracy" because of the extent to which it was awash with corruption. In addition to enriching himself at his country's expense,

Mobutu also maintained unity against the centrifugal tendencies within the Congo by buying off opposition leaders, further looting the wealth of the Congo in a manner that did not contribute to the country's economic development. The ANC continued under Mobutu's regime to develop in the rogue tradition begun during the early years of independence. Officers were so corrupt that they routinely stole the pay from their own troops, who in turn resorted to stealing and terrorizing the population at large. Citizens in the Congo became, as one journalist noted, accustomed to the notion of the state as "a ravaging predator."[32]

Evidence of the pervasive corruption and incompetence of the ANC can be found in the ease with which Laurent Kabila was able to oust Mobutu in 1997—for the army was not skilled at fighting wars or defending the country from guerrillas, but only in extorting resources from the terrorized population. In the wake of the chaos that engulfed the Congo after Mobutu, some 3.3 million Congolese may have died of fighting, famine, and disease.[33] Six neighboring countries were drawn into the conflict, and some observers described the scale of the catastrophe as equivalent to Africa's version of the First World War. The long-term result was hardly what Dag Hammarskjöld had in mind in the summer of 1960. Ultimately, the story of ONUC and Mobutu shows how problematic creating decent political rule can be for outsiders and the devastating consequences of being wrong. ■

"[An additional] operational problem that the Congo illustrates is the near-impossibility of developing concrete criteria for measuring and defining success"

NOTES

1 Some press accounts suggest that the U.S. reliance on the occupation of Germany was so strong that Paul L. Bremmer's briefing book that outlined the milestones for occupation of Iraq contained passages lifted wholesale from Marshall Plan era documents. At one point in the book, when discussing the issue of currency, the document had not been corrected to change the word "Reichsmark" to dinar. See Michael Hirsh, "How Will We Know When We Can Finally Leave?" the *Washington Post*, September 26, 2004, 1B.

2 In fact, participants in the Congo operation who evaluated the UN mission as a success did so on the basis that the operation prevented the Congo from splintering into three separate countries. See Rajeshwar Dayal, *Mission for Hammarskjöld: The Congo Crisis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); and Brian Urquhart, *A Life in Peace and War* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987).,

3 Interestingly, in the aftermath of the first Gulf War, the Bush Administration opposed dividing Iraq into separate states. The reason for preferring a unified Iraq was, ostensibly, opposition to such division by Saudi Arabia and Turkey. In fact, both countries favored division at that time. See Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The General's War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 455-456.

4 Catherine Hoskyns, *The Congo Since Independence (January 1960-December 1961)* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 245-246.

5 The speed of decolonization in Africa is reflected in the change in UN membership: in 1958, only 10 African states were represented in the General Assembly; by September 1961 there were 27.

6 The *Force Publique* combined the functions of army with that of police force.

7 Hoskyns, 87.

8 In his memoirs, Conor Cruise O'Brien cites specific data on this point. See Conor Cruise O'Brien, *To Katanga and Back: A UN Case History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), 173. For an analysis that suggests a psychological rather than material motive at work in Belgium see Hoskyns, 468-469.

9 Hoskyns, 124.

10 The importance of Katanga to the central government cannot be overstated: Katanga produced half the revenue for the country, and also contained the largest portion of Europeans in all of the Congo's provinces.

11 The death total was 1,000 Baluba massacred leaving a permanent resentment of Lumumba among the tribe. Madeleine G. Kalb, *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa from Eisenhower to Kennedy* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1982), 70. The broader significance of the massacre was to strengthen Tshombe's determination to pursue secession. See also Cruise O'Brien, 93.

12 Hoskyns, 221.

13 Even though the UN seated Kasavubu's delegation, he remained suspicious of the UN's Special Representative Rajeshwar Dayal. Mobutu gave a press conference where he denounced "These Indians who run the United Nations..." Indar Jit Rikhye, *Military Advisor to the Secretary-General: UN Peacekeeping and the Congo Crisis*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 134.

14 UN problems were further compounded by a financial crisis. ONUC cost 10 million dollars a month in 1961, and countries that opposed various UN actions or policies refused to pay their share of the costs. The financial crisis was sufficiently severe that the UN would not fund another peacekeeping mission for a decade.

15 Hoskyns, 338, 342-343. Hoskyns goes on to note that the Tananarive Agreement was short-lived because it included a major concession to Tshombe about creating a federated Congo while not requiring any promises on the part of Katanga to share its earnings from its mineral wealth. Consequently, after some reflection the central government chose to ignore the agreement and sought to improve its relations with the UN instead.

16 Hoskyns, 408.

17 Rikhye, 258.

18 The circumstances surrounding the crash of Hammarskjold's plane are a continuing topic of controversy. In his memoirs, Conor Cruise O'Brien speculates that the plane was shot down—not by Congolese themselves, but by the mercenaries, many of whom had other axes to grind with the Secretary-General besides the Congo, namely that Hammarskjöld was viewed as a sympathetic and driving force behind the UN efforts to facilitate decolonization. Some recent scholarship suggests that O'Brien's speculation may indeed be accurate. See David N. Gibbs, "Dag Hammarskjöld, the United Nations, and the Congo Crisis of 1960-1961, a Re-interpretation," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 31 (1993): 163-174.

19 Despite the seriousness of the threat to American lives in Stanleyville, the Johnson administration dealt with the crisis in a low-key manner. At the time, Johnson was facing more pressing problems with the Tonkin Gulf crisis in the summer of 1964 and racial disturbances in U.S. cities. In such a domestic and international setting, any crisis in Africa would necessarily be subordinated to other concerns. For details concerning the operations that freed the hostages see: Fred. E. Wagoner, *Dragon Rouge: The Rescue of Hostages in the Congo*, (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 1980).

20 Hoskyns, 142.

21 Hoskyns, 140, 142.

22 Cruise O'Brien, 331.

23 In fact, Soviet disapproval of the Secretary-General led them to launch a personal campaign against Dag Hammarskjöld and an initiative to replace his office with a triumvirate that would represent both sides in the Cold War. This campaign actually cost the Soviets in terms of their standing in the developing world because leaders in the former colonies, although unhappy about some UN actions in the Congo, saw Dag Hammarskjöld as a genuine force for de-colonization and a champion of the rights of weaker states.

24 Dayal, 268. Dayal's account does neglect one difference between the UN refusal to arrest Lumumba and "Operation Morthor's" attempt to arrest Tshombe: Lumumba was at the time part of the central government, whereas the leaders in Katanga were not. Moreover, in the latter case, the legitimate head of the central government, Adoula, had issued arrest warrants for Tshombe and Munongo. Trevor Findlay says that the Secretary-General's authorization for the arrest of Katangan political leaders required consent of the provincial government as well. See Trevor Findlay, *The Blue Helmets' First War? Use of Force by the UN in the Congo, 1960-1964* (Toronto: The Canadian Peacekeeping Press, 1999), 99.

25 See Hoskyns' discussion of the different understanding that each of the four key UN officials had for "Operation Morthor," 416-417.

26 Findlay, 109.

27 Cruise O'Brien, 172.

28 Cruise O'Brien, 336-337.

29 Tshombe received advice to adopt this tactic from Western supporters. For example, Madeleine G. Kalb in her comprehensive book on U.S. diplomacy in the Congo, *The Congo Cables* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. 1982), 346 cites a statement that Dean Rusk made to a *New York Times* columnist that elements in the United States advised Tshombe that if he could get UN troops to shoot some women, "it was a sure thing the UN bond issue would be blocked in Congress."

30 Rikhye, 296.

31 Ambiguity and disputes over mandates and ROE are not unique to UN operations and are characteristic of strictly national operations. In the operations surrounding the rescue of American hostages seized in Stanleyville in 1964, the U.S. government proved as strict in regulating the use of force as the UN. In addition, U.S. Ambassador G. McMurtie Godley was frustrated with Washington's inaction in the hostage crisis and both he and General Paul Dewitt sought more aggressive action. General Dewitt was especially emphatic that "sound military principles" take precedence over political concerns. See Wagoner, 38-39 and 72-73.

32 Michela Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in Mobutu's Congo*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 130.

33 Somini Sengupta, "Hopes and Tears of Congo Flow in its Mythic River," *The New York Times*, April 21, 2004, 1A, 8A.