Chapter V

EGYPT, OAU AND INTRA-AFRICAN ISSUES
Egypt's attitude and stand on intra-African issues form the subject matter of this chapter. The term "intra-African issues" is generally applied to disputes between two or more African states, but sometimes it is also related to developments within a state when such developments cause stresses and strains on the relations of the African countries. In this chapter we will discuss both these types. For this purpose four categories of intra-African issues are selected, namely, the Congo crisis, the border disputes, the secessionist movements and the legitimacy of a regime resulting from a military coup d'etat.

THE CONGO CRISIS

The Congo crisis, as Crawford Young described, was "... world crisis of first magnitude which for a time threatened to produce a dangerous great-power confrontation." For Africa the Congo crisis was "an embodiment of an African tragedy". It had an element of colonialism in it because it had partly resulted from Belgium intervening in the Congo militarily soon after granting it independence. It had an element of separatism because of Moise Tshombe's declaration of Katanga's independence. It had an element of a legitimacy crisis for Prime Minister Lumumba and President Joseph Kasavubu dismissed each other to

claim authority in the Congo. In a sense the Congo crisis had also an element of a border dispute, though not in the strict sense of the term as no territorial claim was involved. It concerned the transit of Congolese army troops to Bukavu (Kivu province) via Usumbura, capital of Ruanda-Urundi.

When Congo became free on 30 June 1960 Egypt welcomed its independence and recognized it. But soon after the Congolese troops mutinied against Belgian officers. On the pretext of putting "an end to the acts of violence and to ensure the safety of the inhabitants..." (Europeans and others), Belgium intervened. With its blessings Moise Tshombe declared the independence of the mineral rich province of Katanga. Kasavubu and Lumumba asked for United Nations help to fight the Belgian "aggression". The UN Security Council by its resolution dated 14 July 1960 asked Belgium to withdraw its troops and authorized the Secretary-General "to take the necessary steps, in consultation with the Government of the Republic of the Congo to provide the Government with such military assistance as may

3. The incidents involved the transit of Congolese army troops to Bukavu via Usumbura. Ruanda-Urundi was a UN Trust Territory administered by Belgium. The matter was discussed in the Security Council from 12 to 14 January 1961. Egypt's Omar Loutfi was of the opinion that the Congolese troops should have been disarmed.

4. This is how Belgium justified its stand in the Security Council. See Security Council Official Records (SCOR), yr. 15, mtg. 873, 13/14 July 1960, p. 34.

5. See the Congolese Government cable dated 12 July 1960 signed by Kasavubu and Lumumba and sent to the United Nations, Secretary-General. UN Doc. 3/4382, p. 11.
Accordingly a United Nations Force was formed to assist the Government of Congo.

When the Congo tragedy broke out Egypt was in the forefront of the nations demanding the withdrawal of Belgian troops from the country. Commenting on the developments in the Congo, Cairo Radio said that the imperialists had planned to nullify its independence and retain control of its huge resources of uranium, cobalt, copper and diamond. British imperialists, who also wanted to send troops from Northern Rhodesia into Katanga, told Tshombe to announce secession of the province and make a request for the dispatch of British troops.

When Ghana agreed immediately to contribute troops to the UN Force in the Congo Nasser at Nkrumah's request sent four planes to transport them to the Congo. Nasser also expressed his readiness to give the Congo Republic any aid, including weapons. On 1 August a big demonstration was held in Cairo against Belgian "aggression" on the Congo. In a cable to the UN Secretary-General the rally demanded implementation of the Security Council resolution on the immediate withdrawal of Belgian forces from the Congo.

6. UN Doc. 8/387, p. 16.
In early August 1960 the United Nations decided to send troops to Katanga. But when Tshombe did not allow them to land in the province the United Nations dropped the plan. This strained the relations between Lumumba and the UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold. Lumumba held that in its intervention in the Congo, the United Nations should not act as a neutral organization but all its resources at the disposal of the Central Government at whose request it was there. The Secretary-General, on the contrary, was of the view that the UN Force could take no sides in the dispute between the Central Government and the dissident forces in Katanga for its object was to prevent the crisis from becoming a larger world conflict. The Secretary-General's contention was that he was responsible to the Security Council and the General Assembly and not to the Central Government in the Congo. Egypt did not endorse Lumumba's line. It appreciated the difficulties faced by the United Nations troops for they were sent to the Congo for police duties rather than for military action. As a way out, Egypt demanded the immediate withdrawal of the Belgian troops from the Congo for, according to it, Tshombe could not survive without Belgian support.

But Egypt, while asking for implementation of the UN Security Council resolution and withdrawal of the Belgian troops

12. UN Doc. S/4417/Add.6, pp. 64 and 74.
from the Congo, had not yet agreed to contribute troops to the UN Force. Later, under pressure from Nkrumah and repeated requests from Dag Hammarskjold it agreed to send a 520-man battalion with equipment, arms and jeeps. The battalion, headed by Colonel Saad El Shazly, was flown to the Congo in four batches during 21-23 August 1960. In the next two weeks two high-powered Egyptian delegations visited the Congo and met Lumumba. By this time the opening of the Egyptian embassy in the Congo had been announced. Murad Ghaleb, Under Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was appointed Ambassador, and Abdel Aziz Ishaq, organiser of the African Association and Chief Editor of Nabdatu Afiriquiah, Cultural Attache. These appointments clearly showed the importance Nasser attached to the Congo.

Nasser's active interest in Congolese affairs stemmed from his ideological commitment to the African liberation struggle. He saw the Congo crisis as a struggle between the

16. Arab Observer (Cairo), vol. 1, no. 10, 28 August 1960, p. 9. Ironically, the battalion was transported to the Congo from seven giant C-130 Hercules transport aircrafts of the American air force obtained by United Nations. See also The Scribe, September 1960, pp. 12-15.
17. The first delegation, sent on 23 August, was composed of Abdul Majid Farid, Secretary of the Presidential Office, Mohammed Fayek, Presidential Adviser on African Affairs, and Habish Abdul Hamid, Ambassador to Ghana. The second delegation, sent on 25 August, was headed by Hussain Zulfiqar Sabri, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs. Sabri, who flew to Leopoldville to attend the Independent African States' Foreign Ministers' Conference, carried a special message from Nasser to Lumumba. See Ismael, n. 14, p. 208.
forces of nationalism and those of imperialism and neo-colonialism. He saw it as an entry by the back door of Belgian capitalism aided and abetted by others which made it difficult for the legitimate Government of the Congo to exercise its sovereignty. Reporting to the National Assembly on 23 January 1961 on the Casablanca Summit Conference, Nasser said that Egypt's "... struggle against imperialism in the Congo and in Algeria is part of the struggle against imperialism in the whole African continent." "If imperialism wished to make of the Congo an example to terrorize the African struggle", Nasser declared, "then we should all join to make the battle of the Congo an example of African victory in order to encourage the whole continent.

For Egypt the Congo crisis was also a matter of vital national interest. Situated in the heart of Africa with ton intra-African frontiers, the Congo, if it were to become base of imperialism, would have posed a threat to the nations of the whole continent. The Congo's borders being close to those of the Sudan, and the sources of the Nile being so near, imperialism would be in a position to reach the doorstep of Egypt at any moment. Moreover, this would have meant entry of the Cold War

20. Ibid.
in the continent which Egypt has been trying to forestall.

Meanwhile, Lumumba, convinced of UN reluctance to take decisive action to end Katanga's secession, decided to seek whatever external support he could outside the world body. As a first step, he summoned the African Summit Conference at Leopoldville on 25 August 1960.

Egypt was represented at this conference by Hussain Zulfiqar Sabri, the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs. The conference did not agree with Lumumba on his stand on the role of the United Nations but it condemned the secessionist move in Katanga and offered its support to the unity of the Congo.

Not satisfied with the outcome of the conference, Lumumba decided to go it alone and approached the Soviet Union for help outside the UN framework. Nasser urged Lumumba to rely entirely on the world body. The arrival of ten Soviet aircrafts and sixty trucks in the Congo provoked Kasavubu to dismiss Lumumba as Prime Minister on 5 September 1960. Lumumba in turn dismissed Kasavubu. Under these conditions, in the words of the then UN Secretary-General, there was "nobody, really nobody", with whom the United Nations could consult without prejudicing the constitutional issue. To forestall a radio war between the antagonists, the United Nations decided to close the radio

22. For the Conference's resolutions see The Scriba, September 1960, pp. 6-9 and 73.
24. SCOR, yr 15, mtg. 896, 9/10 September 1960, p. 16.
station and airports (apparently with a view to preventing any help outside the UN framework) for all but the UN operations. The UN Command in Congo asked the Ghanian troops to seal off the broadcasting station, and the Egyptian contingent to seal off Leopoldville airport. While the Ghanian troops obeyed the Command and even prevented Lumumba from entering it, the Egyptian commander refused to do so, saying he could not close the airport against the wishes of the legitimate government.

Egypt, which had advised Lumumba to rely on the United Nations, reacted very sharply to the latter's action. It announced the withdrawal of its troops from the Congo. Abdul Qader Hatem, the Vice-Minister of Presidential Affairs, declared that the decision was taken because "the development of the situation in the Congo showed that the UN was deviating from its trusted mission". Commenting on the neutralization of the broadcasting station and the occupation of the principal airports by the UN Force, Hatem stated:

The UAR government considers the action an outrageous violation of the sovereignty of the Congo ... and since the UAR considers the Congo government as the only authority which has the right to control its territory, broadcasting stations and airports, accordingly the UAR government decided to withdraw its battalion. 28

26. Ibid.
27. Al-Ahram, 13 September 1960, p. 17 as quoted in Kimmel, n. 14, p. 211.
28. Ibid.
On hearing of this, Hammarskjold sent a cable to Nasser requesting postponement of his decision until they had met in New York for the opening of the General Assembly. This request, coupled with the restoration of the radio station to the Congolese authority, made Egypt express its satisfaction over the UN action.

By mid-September a new element had been introduced in the Congo politics. On 14 September 1960 General Joseph Mobutu, the army commander seized power in the Congo and eventually came to terms with Kasavubu. One of the first acts of Mobutu was to order closure of the Soviet and the Czech embassies. This reinforced Soviet criticism of Dag Hammarskjold's handling of the Congo crisis. To express its annoyance the Soviet Union introduced an anti-Secretary-General resolution at the emergency session of the General Assembly conveyed on 17 September 1960 to discuss the Congo crisis. Egypt did not support the resolution. On the contrary, along with sixteen other Afro-Asian nations, it moved a draft resolution supporting the earlier Security Council resolutions and requesting "vigorous action" by the Secretary-General to assist the Central Government in restoring law and order.

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29. Thus while participating in the UN Security Council debate on 16 September as non-member, Egyptian representative Rafik Asha paid his tribute at the UN handling of the Congo situation. SGOR, yr 15, mtg. 908, 16 September 1960, p. 35.

30. The Soviet resolution noted "the failure of the Secretary-General" to implement the Security Council's decisions with reference to non-interference in the Congolese affairs, and with reference to ensuring the territorial integrity and political independence of the State." a UN Doc. A/L 293. The Soviet Union did not press for a vote.
order and in safeguarding the territorial integrity and independence of the Congo. The resolution was later adopted by the General Assembly.

The Congo crisis was one of the main issues at the fifteenth regular session of the General Assembly which opened on 20 September 1960. The session was attended by many Heads of State and Governments including President Nasser. Speaking at the plenary meeting Nasser blamed imperialism for the "appalling paradox" in the Congo -- the legitimate national Government of the Congo not being able to function while the dissident group controlled by imperialism having a free hand in Katanga. He was sorry that all this happened when the flag of the United Nations flew over the Congo. This situation, according to Nasser, was brought about by imperialism which did not hesitate to exploit the United Nations itself to achieve its hidden designs and aims. The remedy, he suggested, was to restore the status quo -- withdrawal of Belgian troops and handing over authority to Lumumba.

One of the main issues arising from the Congo crisis that the General Assembly discussed was the seating of rival delegations -- one sent by Lumumba and the other by Kasavubu. As neither the Security Council nor the special emergency session of the General Assembly had been able to solve this


question earlier, the General Assembly took a decision on it. While the General Assembly approved the Congo's application, it referred the question of representation to the Credentials Committee to which Egypt had been elected earlier. In the Credentials Committee as well as in the General Assembly Egypt took a pro-Lumumba stand without making it explicit. While in the General Assembly it sponsored, along with Ceylon, Ghana, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Mali and Morocco, a resolution which called for seating the representatives of the Central Government of the Congo (Leopoldville) pending the General Assembly's decision on the report of the Credentials Committee, in the Credentials Committee it pleaded, along with Morocco that as the Conciliation Commission was about to depart for the Republic of Congo, no decision should be taken which would affect its work. The Committee, however, approved the proposal of the United States recommending that the credentials of the Congolese delegation headed by President Kasavubu be approved.

33. The other members of the Credential Committee were: Costa Rica, Haiti, Morocco, New Zealand, Philippines, Spain, Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, and the United States.

34. GAOR, session 15, Agenda item 85, Annexes A/L.319/Rev. 2, p. 62.

35. The Conciliation Commission set up by the United Nations on 5 November 1960 consisted of all member states contributing units to the UN Force in Congo (except Canada, Ireland and Sweden). Under its terms of reference the commission was to study the situation in "the entire territory of the Congo" in an attempt to solve its present difficulties which interfere in its internal affairs.

When the matter came before the General Assembly Egypt again tried to forestall the seating of the Kasavubu delegate. Its representative, Rafik Asha, did not contest the status of Kasavubu as Head of State and President of the Republic. However, he said a decision on the matter should be postponed until the Conciliation Commission had had the opportunity to reconcile the various political factions in the Congo. According to him, the Commission's mandate was most delicate and difficult and hence the General Assembly should not take any decision which might aggravate the already serious situation there. The General Assembly, nevertheless, approved the recommendations of the Credentials Committee. Egypt voted against them.

The UN vote strengthened Kasavubu's position. He now demanded the withdrawal of the Egyptian diplomatic mission from the Congo accusing it of meddling in the internal politics of the country. Accordingly, Egypt closed its diplomatic mission and also announced on 7 December 1960 that the battalion it had sent to the Congo would also be withdrawn. Egypt claimed that Kasavubu's demand had been inspired by Belgium and that it would be fully justified in retaliating against that country. Egypt later seized Belgian property in Egypt worth some £18 million.

Meanwhile the situation in the Congo had been deteriorating ever since Joseph Mobutu took over the government in mid-September.

39. Ibid.
1960. There was further disintegration of the country as a result of Mobutu's coup. While Tshombe consolidated his position in Katanga, Lumumba's supporters established themselves in Stanleyville under the leadership of Antoine Gizenga. On 21 September Lumumba requested UN intervention to counter the activities of Mobutu. This was refused on the ground that it would violate the UN Mandate. On 10 October Mobutu's men tried to arrest Lumumba, who was being guarded by the UN Force, by producing a warrant against him. The UN authorities in Congo challenged the constitutional validity of the warrant against Lumumba and prevented his arrest. Thereupon Congolese forces encircled Lumumba's residence leaving UN troops in the garden. The latter, however, left Lumumba free to leave his residence at his own risk. In this grave situation, the Egyptian embassy in Congo at the request of Lumumba smuggled three of his children out of the country via London to safety in Cairo.

Late in November 1960, after his support in Leopoldville had been eroded by Mobutu and particularly after the UN vote in favour of Kasavubu's delegation, Lumumba, together with his supporters decided to leave Leopoldville for Stanleyville where his deputy, Antoine Gizenga, had a stronghold. But before Lumumba could reach his supporters, he was arrested by the Congolese army and brought back to Leopoldville in chains and handed over to Tshombe. With the arrest of Lumumba, Gizenga

The UN Secretary-General had always maintained that the United Nations had no right to interfere in the domestic affairs of the Congo. See his statement to UN Security Council. SGOR, yr 15, mtg. 913, 7 December 1960, p. 3.
set up another breakaway government which claimed to represent the whole of the country.

Lumumba's arrest and UN inaction made Egypt very critical of the world body. Hammarskjold's telegram to Mobutu that he expected Lumumba to be treated in accordance with international law annoyed Nasser very much. In a telegram to Hammarskjold he complained that the United Nations who had been sent to the Congo when Lumumba was Prime Minister were now doing nothing to protect him except asking for mercy for him.

Kasavubu's demand for the withdrawal of the Egyptian mission from the Congo coupled with Lumumba's arrest led Egypt to establish close contacts with Gizenga's Stanleyville administration, mount an attack on the colonialists and express its dissatisfaction with the United Nations. Egypt now offered the Stanleyville Government every possible help. But its efforts to do so were largely frustrated by the Sudan which refused to let any supplies not sanctioned by the United Nations pass through the country. As a result, Egypt's direct help to the Stanleyville Government was mostly confined to the setting up of a radio station, the loaning of a number of technicians and the establishment of an office in Cairo which provided the Stanleyville Government's main link with the outside world.

In the Security Council Egyptian representative Mahmoud Fawzi attacked the Congolese Government as a "motely group of

stooges whose source of income was said to be unknown or, as was the general rule, known to be coming from some imperialist powers. As for Belgium's withdrawal from the Congo Fawzi asked the United Nations not to assume the role of a helpless spectator. He declared that Egypt would not like to be a party to this and hence "with the deepest regret" it had finally decided to withdraw its troops from the UN Force.

Then came the Casablanca Conference of January 1961. It reaffirmed its recognition of the elected Parliament and legally constituted Government of the Congo which came into being on 30 June 1960. The conference urged the United Nations to (i) disarm the Mobutu troops, (ii) to reconvene parliament, (iii) to release all political prisoners, and (iv) to withdraw Belgian and other foreign military and para-military personnel, failing which it declared, the participating countries would withdraw their troops from the Congo.

As the United Nations did not take any action, Nasser decided to withdraw the Egyptian battalion from the Congo before the end of January 1961. A note to this effect was sent to Hammarskjold. The first planeload of 147 officers and men landed in Cairo on 1 February 1961. Colonel Saad El Shazly, Commander of the battalion, said on his arrival in Cairo that it was no longer a secret that the United States was helping

43. ACOR, yr 16, mtg. 916, 9/10 December 1960, p. 19.
44. United Arab Republic, Information Department, Casablanca Conference January 1961 (presumably Cairo, n.d.), p. 11.
Arms made in the United States were pouring into that
country openly. He added that the Congo was in a state of
chaos and that civil war was expected there at any moment.
Simultaneously, Egypt withdrew from the Conciliation Commission.

Following the withdrawal of its troops from the Congo,
Egypt stepped up its activities against the "imperialist plot" in
the Congo -- mostly by way of helping the supporters of Lumumba.
In early 1961 Kasavubu requested a meeting of the Security Council
to consider Egypt's "flagrant interference in the Congo's domestic
affairs". Six Afro-Asian states and Yugoslavia also sought
Council meeting to discuss the Congo situation. Egypt, which
was now a member of the Security Council, reiterated its position.
Egyptian representative Omar Loufli, recalling the resolutions
adopted by the Casablanca Conference, said Lumumba and his
colleagues must be released and Parliament convoked.

Lumumba's murder, which was announced on 12 February 1961,
had a strong reaction in Egypt. President Nasser described it as
a crime that would "weigh upon the conscience of the entire human
race". In an official statement issued on behalf of the govern-
ment, Abdol Kader Hatem, Minister for State, said: "The UAR
sincerely believes that the responsibility for the murder of

43. Ibid., p. 89.
47. UN Doc. S/4339, pp. 59-60.
49. Egypt was elected to the Security Council for a term of
two years beginning January 1961.
See also The Scribe, March-April 1961, pp. 56-57.
Patrice Lumumba falls on the authorities of imperialism, whose agents in the Congo, such as Moïse Tshombe, were mere tools in their hands. Work in government offices was stopped and all means of transportation came to a halt for ten minutes as a mark of respect to the departed leader. A silent procession marched through the streets of Cairo and a mass rally was held under the joint auspices of the National Union (the only political party in Egypt) and the African Association. On the dais were Lumumba’s wife and children. On 14 February 1961 Egypt announced recognition of the Government of Gisenga.

The same day thousands of demonstrators stormed the Belgian embassy in the garden city area of Cairo, smashed the furniture and set it on fire. They also demonstrated in front of the American and British embassies and in front of the office of the United Nations. When Belgium protested, Egypt refused to accept the responsibility for the sacking of the embassy. This led Belgium to break off diplomatic relations with Egypt. Egypt retaliated by putting all the remaining Belgian property in Egypt -- mostly private bank balances amounting to about 7 million -- under sequestration and by expelling the Belgian nationals from the country.

Egypt’s relations with the United States were strained as a result of the Congo crisis. To the United States it appeared that Nasser was co-operating with the Russians. Nasser thought

51. Ibid.
that the Americans were interested in setting up a puppet
government in the Congo which would serve their interests.
US-Egyptian relations started deteriorating as soon as it became
clear that the United States was supporting the Kasavubu-Mobutu axis against the legitimate Government of the Congo. On
16 February, President Kennedy warned that the United States
would oppose any attempt by a nation at unilateral intervention
and "recognition of Congolese factions". The New York Times
claimed that this statement was aimed at Cairo. Nasser replied
by affirming his support for the rebels and declared: "The UAR
will aid the Congolese rebels and will continue to (do so) until
they win their freedom." He declared that US support to Kasavubu
indicated its involvement in Lumumba's assassination. "The
United States' support to Kasavubu after the murder of Lumumba
is evidence of its complicity with Kasavubu in the treacherous
crime. This is our conception of the situation; otherwise why
has the United States supported Kasavubu if she is really
interested in peace...?" Earlier, on 18 February 1961, the
Press attache of the US embassy in Cairo was arrested on a
charge of distributing a pamphlet explaining "the viewpoint of
the imperialists on the Congo".

53. US President, Public Papers of President John F. Kennedy
56. Ibid.
57. Three Monthly Economic Review, Egypt (UAR), Libya,
But in spite of its agitation over the death of Lumumba, in spite of its anti-imperialism, and in spite of its criticism that the imperialists were using the United Nations to serve their purposes, Egypt did not support the Soviet resolution in the Security Council in February 1961 demanding the dismissal of Dag Hammarskjöld. It felt that the Soviet alternative of "troika" would impair the effectiveness of the United Nations and paralyse it. Therefore, along with Ceylon and Liberia, it proposed a draft resolution urging the United Nations to take immediately all appropriate measures (i) to prevent the occurrence of civil war in the Congo, if necessary by the use of force, (ii) to withdraw and to evacuate from the Congo all Belgian and other foreign military personnel and political advisers not under the UN Command, and (iii) to convene the parliament and to conduct an immediate and impartial investigation to ascertain the circumstances of the death of Lumumba and his colleagues. The Security Council passed this resolution on 21 February 1961.

The Congo situation took a turn for the better when on 5 July 1961 the President of the Republic issued an ordinance convening parliament under security and safe conduct arrangements devised by the United Nations in close co-operation with the


60. UN Doc. S/4741, pp. 147-8.
authorities from Leopoldville and Stanleyville. The parliament met in the last week of July. On 1 August the President nominated Cyrille Adoula as Primo Minister. On 2 August Adoula presented his government to both Houses of Parliament for approval. To win the confidence of Gizenga, Adoula offered him the first vice-premiership which the former accepted. Both Adoula and Gizenga were invited to attend the Belgrade Conference of Non-aligned Nations in September 1961. As Egypt was one of its organizers, the invitation clearly reflected its approval of the new arrangement in the Congo.

This arrangement was put to strain when Gizenga formed a new party at Stanleyville and attacked the Central Government in his speeches. He was removed from the vice-premiership and arrested after the House of Representatives adopted a motion to this effect on 15 January 1962. Egypt was not happy with this development. But with the end of Katanga's secession in January 1963, Adoula's cordial relations with many of the African states, and his presence at the Addis Ababa Conference in May 1963, the Congo problem was settled for the time being.

The Second Congo Crisis

Three years' political turmoil had caused acute social and economic deprivation in many areas of the Congo. The pro-Lumumbist leaders who were excluded from the ruling Adoula Government started organizing the discontent prevailing in the country. Political events like dissolution of parliament by

President Kasavubu on 29 September 1963 to break the deadlock between parliament and the government gave a boost to this process. The nationalist Lumumbist parties formed a co-ordinating body -- Conseil National de Liberation (CNL) -- *inter alia* "to restore the sovereignty of the people and regain national independence". The CNL formed the Peoples Liberation Army. The struggle that ensued gave birth to the second Congo crisis. President Kasavubu's decision in July 1964 to appoint Tshombe as Prime Minister added fuel to the fire.

Tshombe's rise to power led to a violent reaction among African radicals both in and outside the Congo. In Stanleyville there was a revolt by radical Lumumbists and Gizenga's supporters. Outside the Congo, Egypt along with other radical regimes in Africa -- mainly the old Casablanca Powers -- could not tolerate Tshombe whom they had dubbed as "the imperialist stooge", who seceded Katanga with the help of Belgium and as the person most guilty of Lumumba's murder.

The radical regime's attitude towards Tshombe and their determination not to recognize him became clear at the second Conference of the OAU which took place in Cairo in July 1964. The Government of the Congo (Leopoldville) was represented at the meeting of the Council of Ministers. At this meeting the majority of old Casablanca Powers, including Egypt, strongly objected to the presence of Tshombe at the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments. Though the Congolese delegation

denounced this as an interference in the internal affairs of their country. Tshombe, sensing that admission would be difficult, announced that his Government would not take part in the Assembly because of "the extension of the rebellion in the eastern Congo".

The bitterness against Tshombe assumed a violent form when it became known that his regime was recruiting white mercenaries from South Africa, Rhodesia and Europe and receiving military assistance from the United States to crush the nationalist forces led by the Lumumbists. Fearing that the situation might have the repercussions at African level and realizing the "urgency of stopping massacre of the Congolese people", the Government of Mali requested a meeting of the OAU. An extraordinary session of the Council of Ministers of the OAU was held in Addis Ababa from 5 to 10 September 1964. The African countries, including Egypt, which had opposed Tshombe's presence in Cairo, now found themselves in an uneasy position for without his presence it was difficult to have a discussion on the Congo problem. Hence they agreed to listen to him. Tshombe asked for three things: African troops should replace the mercenaries, a commission should be set up to review the relations between the Congo and its neighbours, and an appeal


64. Etudes Congolaises (Leopoldville), January-February 1965, pp. 69-70, as quoted in Hoskyns, n. 62, p. 9.

should be made to the rebels to lay down their weapons. Though
the conference avoided direct condemnation of Tshombe, it
refused to grant his request for military assistance. It asked
Tshombe to expell all mercenaries from the Congo and called upon
the foreign Powers to stop interfering in the Congo. The
Conference set up an ad hoc commission consisting of ten members.
Including Egypt under the chairmanship of Jomo Kenyatta to help
and encourage in the restoration of national reconciliation in
the Congo and to bring about normal relations between the
Democratic Republic of Congo and its neighbours.

The ad hoc commission met in Nairobi from 18 to 24 September
1964. It tried its best to persuade Tshombe to meet the
rebellious leaders to discuss national reconciliation. But he
refused to do so. Thereupon, the commission on the one hand
heard evidence from the representatives of the rebels and on
the other decided to send a delegation of the representatives
of Algeria, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea and Kenya to call upon
President Johnson of the United States to ask him to stop
shipment of war materials to the Congo. This infuriated

66. Ibid., pp. 15-16.
67. For OAU Council of Ministers' resolution, see
Berhanykun Andomicael, Peaceful Settlement Among African
States: Role of the United Nations and the Organization
68. Other members were Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea,
Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia, Tunisia and Upper Volta.
69. See Andemicael, n. 67, p. 22. See also "Resolution of
the OAU Foreign Ministers on the Congo", Africa Report
(Washington, D.C.), vol. 9, no. 9, October 1964, p. 39.
Tshombe who refused to co-operate with the commission. Incidentally, the rebel leaders also declared that they would not accept anything short of the defeat of the National Congolese Army and the total disappearance of Kasavubu, Mobutu and Tshombe.

Since the African countries including Egypt had heard Tshombe at both Addis Ababa and Nairobi, did it mean that they recognized his government? When the question was put to the ad hoc commission, the Secretary-General of the OAU, Telli, replied: "Africans were not particular about the legal aspect of the problem but were looking for a solution, and that solution would be political rather than legal."

The African attitude towards Tshombe became clearer at the second Non-aligned Conference held in Cairo in October 1964. As the Congo had participated in the first Non-aligned Conference in Belgrade in 1961 and as it had been invited to attend the Cairo Conference, Tshombe as the head of the government decided to attend it. But the Committee of Non-aligned Foreign Ministers at a meeting on the eve of the Conference expressed the "undesirability" of Tshombe's presence at the Cairo Conference. Consequently, President Nasser, President Tito and Premier Bhandarkaike sent a joint message to President Kasavubu requesting him to come personally and not to send Tshombe to the Conference.


But Tshombe had left for Cairo. The airport authority, however, did not allow him to land at Cairo wherupon he diverted his plane to Athens and arrived at Cairo airport by a commercial Ethiopian airliner. The Egyptian authorities put Tshombe under house arrest but did not publicize the incident. Nasser summoned a meeting of African states. Though a majority of them were violently opposed to Tshombe, there were countries such as Ethiopia, Liberia, Nigeria and Senegal which were against any discrimination being shown to him. Nasser called the Heads of States into a special session to take a decision on Tshombe's "gate crashing". They approved the decision of the Foreign Ministers that Tshombe should not be allowed to attend the 73 Conference.

The Congolese Government retaliated by sealing off the Egyptian embassy in Leopoldville. On hearing this the Egyptian authorities told Tshombe that he would not be permitted to leave Cairo until the Congolese Government withdrew its police cordon around the Egyptian embassy. It was only after the Congolese had allowed the Egyptian embassy staff to leave Leopoldville for Brazzaville that Nasser permitted Tshombe to leave Cairo.

After this incident Heads of radical African countries met in secret to discuss the Congo problem. They took the view that the Tshombe regime was a threat to the progressive process in Africa for once it had got rid of the rebels it would become a counter revolutionary base. They feared that the trouble might spread to the whole of Africa. To oppose this "conspiracy which

73. Mazrui, n. 2, p. 291. See also Le Monde, 8 October 1964.
threatened the Congo, they decided to give more aid to the rebels. Nasser announced at the meeting that he would immediately make available to the Congolese revolutionary forces a "body of military experts and advisers completely and fully equipped".

The Congo situation reached boiling point in November 1964 when some 600 Belgian paratroopers transported in American aircraft from British-held Ascension Island dramatically landed at Stanleyville airport in a bid to free some 14,000 people held as hostages by the rebels. This operation evoked protests from the African nationalists. In Cairo there was an outburst of anger. The US embassy and library were burnt down (reportedly by Congolese students) in riots. Within a short time a fully equipped battalion of Egyptian military experts and advisers was reported to have left Cairo for an unknown destination in Africa. The fall of the Abboud regime in the Sudan and the new regime's sympathy with the Congo rebels facilitated the transport of the battalion. Egypt also opened a camp at Heliopolis near Cairo to impart three weeks' training to recruits of the National Liberation Army of Congo.


75. In mid-November 1964 in an attempt to turn the tide of the war which was going against them, the National Liberation Government in Stanleyville captured some 14,000 resident of the area mostly Europeans and held them as hostages.


Nasser’s role in the Congo angered the United States which warned him that it would stop food exports to Egypt if it did not desist from helping the anti-Tshombe forces. Rejecting the warning Nasser asserted that the Egyptians would rather go without their rations than accept any US aid which had political strings attached to it. "Our policy is clear and we say it openly. We say that we sent arms to the Congolese people and we shall keep on sending arms to the Congo."

In early December 1964, Egypt joined twenty-two other countries including eighteen African states in requesting for a meeting of the Security Council to consider the Belgo-American intervention in the Congo which they regarded as "an intervention in African affairs, a flagrant violation of the UN Charter and a threat to peace and security". About the same time the Council of Ministers of the OAU met at the UN headquarters in New York. The Council was "convinced that the Congo problem would find its best solution within the framework of the OAU" and called upon the Security Council "to condemn the recent foreign military intervention in the Congo". The Security Council, which debated the Congo question, almost handed over the Congo problem to the

79. UN Doc. 8/6076 and Add. 1-5, pp. 198-200.
80. Resolution quoted in Hoskins, n. 62, p. 49.
The member countries of the OAU, however, were not unanimous in their attitude towards Tshombe. Their differences became more acute when on 12 February 1965, a majority (fourteen) of the former French African states formed the Organization Commune Africaine et Malgache (OCAM) in Nouakchott (Mauritania). This was almost a revival of old UAM (Union Africaine et Malgache) which was dissolved in March 1964 after the formation of the OAU. The OCAM states reinforced their diplomatic support to Tshombe when they saw him consolidating his position and cornering his 'enemies'. The attitude of these states became more aggressive at the Nairobi meeting of the Council of Ministers. When they failed to obtain dissolution of the ad hoc Commission, they blocked the resolution backed by Algeria, Egypt and Ghana, calling upon the Council to formally hear the representatives of the former Stanleyville regime. The only resolution on which the Council agreed was to refer the Congo issue to the next meeting of the heads of state in Accra.

The pro-Tshombe stand of the OCAM states culminated, at their meeting at Abidjan in May 1965, in admitting the Congo as

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81. The Resolution inter alia said "Convinced that the solution of the Congolese problem depends on national reconciliation and the restoration of public order .... Encourages the Organization of African Unity to pursue its efforts to help the ... Congo to achieve national reconciliation. Requests all states to assist the Organization of African Unity in the attainment of these objectives." United Nations, Security Council Resolution 199(1964), 30 December 1964, Doc. S/6129.

82. Daily Nation (Nairobi), 10 March 1965, quoted in Hoskyns, n. 62, p. 68.
a member of their organization. They even challenged the viability of the OAU if some member states continued their subversive activity. They threatened to boycott the Accra meeting of the OAU. On the other hand, some of the militant governments felt that the break-up of the OAU would not only harm the Pan-African front but would deprive them of "a mechanism of pressure on some African governments to take more militant positions in world affairs than they would otherwise have done". Both sides did not pursue the matter to a bitter end.

By April 1965 Egypt had discontinued its arms supply to the Congolese rebels partly because of its heavy commitments in the Yemen and partly because the rebels had ceased to be a viable alternative to Tshombe.

The Congo issue was resolved when President Kasavubu deposed Tshombe just before the Accra meeting and offered to expel the mercenaries and seek reconciliation with the neighbouring countries. Thereupon he was invited to attend the meeting. He agreed to accept the invitation after assurances were given to him that the Congo issue would be dropped from the agenda of the meeting.

The two crises in the Congo brought out the basic aspects of Egypt's attitude to and involvement with sub-Saharan Africa. During the first crisis (1960-63) Egypt's attitude was mainly

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governed by its fear that Belgium was attempting to balkanize the new state and making Katanga a foothold of Western imperialism. A Congo under imperialist influence would have posed a threat to Egypt's security. Thus Egypt went to the support of Lumumba. However, it did not support his criticism of the United Nations and opposed his dependence on the Russians.

It is possible that Egypt wanted to resolve the Congolese crisis in favour of Lumumba through the combined initiative of the United Nations and independent African states. The difficulty was that for quite some time it appeared that Egypt's thinking was not in line with official UN policy, the stand of Ghana and other radical states and, above all, that of Lumumba himself. The UN Secretary-General's wavering stand and the weakening of Lumumba's position inside the Congo further lessened the chances of success of such an initiative.

Following the UN action to close the radio station and airport to the legitimate Government of the Congo Egypt announced its decision to withdraw its contingent from the UN Force in Congo. Lumumba's arrest and the UN failure to protect him led to the withdrawal in January 1961. After these Egypt supported the Lumumbaist forces led by Gizenga. Then came the announcement of the murder of Lumumba. With Lumumba's death Egypt announced its recognition of the Government of Gizenga.

Meanwhile US support to Kasavubu against the anti-Lumumbaist forces made Egypt turn against the United States. This anti-American attitude hardened during the second Congo crisis (1963-1965). Egypt's support to rebel forces in the north angered the United States and resulted in rapid deteriora-
tion of their relations. The success of the joint US-Belgium operation of 1964 against the rebels indicated the failure of Egypt's stand. But this made it even more uncompromisingly anti-United States. Egypt stepped up its help to the rebels. But it was then too late, the rebels having ceased to be a force to reckon with. Kasavubu's Central Government had received wide acceptance in Africa and Egypt had to fall in line. However, the Congo issue was settled in favour of the radicals when Mobutu staged a coup d'état and joined the African radical ranks. With this disappeared Egypt's fear that the Congo might become subservient to imperialism.

IRREDENTISM AND BORDER DISPUTES

In the past, the colonial Powers had divided and re-divided Africa a number of times to suit their own interests. This resulted in the drawing of African borders without regard to historical, political, cultural or ethnic divisions.

These artificial borders created by the colonial Powers were the subject matter of severe criticism by the African nationalist leadership at the time of their struggle for independence. They regarded them as obsolete and wanted them to be redrawn at the first available opportunity. The 1945 Pan-African Congress held in Manchester passed a resolution about the borders in West Africa stating inter alia that "the artificial divisions and territorial boundaries created by imperialist powers are deliberate steps to obstruct the political entity of the West African peoples." This mood was

reflected at the first All African People's Conference held in December 1958. The Conference

denounces artificial frontiers drawn by imperialist powers to divide the people of Africa, particularly those which cut across ethnic groups and divide people of the same stock, calls for the abolition or adjustment of such frontiers at an early date, calls upon the independent states of Africa to support a permanent solution to this problem founded upon the true wishes of the people. 86

The existence of these artificial boundaries gave birth to many border disputes among the African states after their independence. These disputes involved minor territorial claims (such as the Ethiopia-Sudan dispute) as well as a claim to the whole of a sovereign state (Morocco's on Mauritania). The methods used to press the claims included incursions into the territories of sovereign states escalating into armed conflicts. Egypt also was involved in a border clash with the Sudan in February 1958 when the Egyptian Government sent a note to the Sudanese Government demanding the return of certain areas north of the twenty-second parallel which had been placed under the Sudanese administration in 1902.


88. The Sudanese Government rejected this claim. On 17 February 1958 it announced that Egyptian forces crossed into the disputed territories. Egypt withdrew its forces when threatened with a debate in the United Nations. The claim was subsequently suspended. For the brief discussion of this issue see Touval, n. 87, pp. 194-7.
There were two alternatives before the African countries. One was to accept the ethnic and tribal dimensions as a base for the creation of political units which would have to be small and insignificant. The second was to accept the borders as inherited from the colonial Powers and renounce all territorial claims. Faced with this problem, the OAU decided to set up a commission of mediation, conciliation and arbitration to solve border disputes among the African states. The OAU Council of Ministers appointed a committee of experts to make recommendations on the Basic Draft Protocol of the commission. Egypt was one of its members. The draft prepared by the committee was approved and given the shape of a resolution by the Second Summit Conference of the OAU at Cairo in July 1966. It then became an integral part of the OAU Charter. By this resolution the conference members declared that the border problems in Africa constituted "a grave and permanent factor of dissension", and pledged themselves "to respect the frontiers existing on their achievement of national independence".

Gradually this position was adopted by all African states.

We shall now proceed to examine some of the border disputes and Egypt's attitude towards them. For this purpose only two problems are chosen. These are: (1) the Morocco-Mauritania dispute and (2) the Somalia-Ethiopia dispute, and these

89. Its other members were Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and Tunisia.

are selected on the ground that both of them have a bearing on
irredentist claims which resulted in four inter-state conflicts,
namely Morocco-Mauritania, Morocco-Algeria, Somalia-Ethiopia,
and Somalia-Kenya. Of these four the Morocco-Algeria conflict
falls outside the scope of this study. And since Egypt's
attitude towards the Somalia-Ethiopia and Somalia-Kenya disputes
was identical the two are discussed together. The remaining one,
namely, Morocco-Mauritania, is discussed separately.

Somalia-Ethiopia and Somalia-Kenya Disputes

The disputes between Somalia and its two neighbours --
Ethiopia and Kenya, arose from a claim by Somalia to a large
area -- Ogaden and Haud regions of Ethiopia and the Northern
Frontiers District of Kenya -- within the boundaries of these
two states on the ground of historical, ethnic and religious
affinity. Somalia claimed that Somali inhabitants in Ethiopia
and Kenya had a right to secede and unite with the Somali state
in accordance with the principle of self-determination.

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91. Irredentism may be defined as a self-imposed obligation to
redeem those parts of the national patrimony which had fallen
under alien rule. Even though the Ghana-Togo dispute could
have been included in the list, it was not done for two
reasons: one, it had other connotations besides being a
dispute having irredentist claim; and two, not much
information is available on the reaction of Egypt to this
dispute.

92. For a brief historical background of the issues see
I.M. Lewis, "Pan-Africanism and Pan-Somalism", Journal of
"After the Referendum: Evolution of the Dispute", Africa
Report, vol. 12, no. 4, April 1967, pp. 42-45. See also
Mesfin Wolde Mariam, "The Background to the Ethiopia-Somalia
Boundary Dispute", Journal of Modern African Studies, vol. 2,

93. Somali Government, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Somali
Peoples' Quest for Unity (Mogadishu, 1965), pp. 10-11.
When Somalia became independent in July 1960, it accepted de facto recognition to its existing boundaries with Ethiopia, keeping border problems open for negotiations. In February 1963 a few Somalis demonstrated in front of the Ethiopian embassy in Mogadishu and shouted slogans calling for annexation of the areas in Ethiopia, Kenya and French Somaliland.

At the Addis Ababa Summit Conference in May 1963 Somali President Abdullah Osman demanded self-determination for Somali living in the border areas of Ethiopia and Kenya. Reacting sharply Ethiopia and Kenya declared that they would never give up even an inch of their territory. In August 1963, to assert its sovereignty over the region, Ethiopia started collecting taxes on livestock from the inhabitants of the region. Somalia accused Ethiopia of carrying out massive reprisals and soon fighting broke out between Somalia and Ethiopia in which at least 500 people were killed. There was another flare-up in February 1964 when Somalia accused Ethiopia of attacking Somali territory with planes and heavy artillery.

95. Ibid., p. 85.
98. Ghali, n. 94, p. 87.
As most of the African countries were committed to the old borders, Somalia approached the United Nations on 9 February 1964. The same day Ethiopia requested for an emergency meeting of the Council of Ministers of the OAU. The Council of Ministers at first appointed a Committee of twelve, including Egypt. Afterwards a sub-committee of thirteen, Sudan being the additional member, was appointed to find a solution of the dispute. Its efforts did not go beyond appealing for a cease-fire and negotiations. Meanwhile, Somalia, began thinking of bilateral negotiations.

Long before Somalia's independence Egypt had been a supporter of the idea of a "Greater Somalia". Cairo Radio in its Swahili language programme had time and again appealed for unity of the Muslim peoples in the Horn of Africa. This was an act of direct encouragement to the Somali separatists in Ethiopia and Kenya. In November 1955, the Egyptian Military, Naval and Air Attache in Addis Ababa, Lt.-Colonel Hilmy, was ordered by the Ethiopian Government to leave the country on the alleged ground that he had sought to recruit Ethiopian Muslims for the Egyptian army. In a statement issued on 16 February 1957, in Addis Ababa, Emperor Haile Selassie accused Egypt of fomenting unrest among his Muslim subjects with the aim of incorporating the Muslim areas of south-

100. The Committee consisted of representatives from the Cameroon, Dahomey, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Mauritania, Morocco, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia and Upper Volta.

eastern Ethiopia into a "Greater Somalia".

Egypt's support to Somalia could be explained in terms of its Islamic bond with that country. However, this support was discontinued when its relations with Ethiopia improved in the late fifties. Thus when the war broke out between Ethiopia and Somalia in February 1964, President Nasser sent a cable to Emperor Haile Selassie and President Osman urging them to stop bloodshed and settle the dispute within the framework of African unity. The cable reads "Any African bloodshed under the present circumstances constitutes not only a loss of human life but also a loss the price of which is paid at the expense of African solidarity, African unity and African dignity."

Though officially Egypt took a neutral stance it continued to support Somali unification. Thus at the second Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference it backed the resolution on Somaliland which commanded "the glorious struggle of the Somali people for their freedom, independence and unification".

In Somalia's border dispute with Kenya, Egypt was accused by the latter of "acting like imperialists" and

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102. Ibid.
103. United Arab Republic, Information Department, President Gamal Abdel Nasser on Africa (Cairo, n.d.), p. 86.
106. Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 21 May 1963.
supporting the former’s claims to the Northern Frontiers District of Kenya. It was also charged with supplying arms to Somalia which had a “devastating effect along the main highway through the North-Eastern Province”. The Kenya Press highlighted the country’s grievances against Egypt on the eve of the visit of Daniel Aropa Moi (Kenya’s Vice-President) to Egypt in May 1967. The Egyptian embassy in Nairobi in a statement on 6 May 1967, however, described them as “unfounded allegations”. It admitted that Egypt had supplied some light armaments to Somalia, but it explained that these were available to all African states to help them secure their independence and maintain their internal security. Even Kenya could have them. After his visit Moi declared that Egypt was no longer supplying arms to Somalia. He added that President Nasser had given this assurance to the Government of Kenya.

Morocco-Mauritania Dispute

The Morocco-Mauritania dispute went far beyond the dimensions of a border dispute for Morocco not only put up a claim on Spanish Sahara---Mauritanian territory occupied by Spain — but also on the entire territory of Mauritania.

107. Ibid.
Morocco complained to the United Nations against France granting independence to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania on 22 November 1960. Basing its arguments on cultural and historical grounds Morocco claimed that Mauritania had been an integral part of Morocco. An overwhelming majority of the people of Mauritania wanted to be reunited with Morocco. France in granting independence to Mauritania was only creating an artificial state like Katanga. France, on the other hand, felt that there was no clear evidence to show that Mauritania had been a part of Morocco. Mauritania had been granted independence in the same way as all other colonies of French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa, had been freed and that the freely expressed will of the overwhelming majority of the people of Mauritania was in favour of independence.

Egypt's support to Morocco was implicit in the August 1960 resolution of the Arab League committing its members to Moroccan efforts to recover Mauritania. When the matter came up before the United Nations, Egypt along with other Arab countries reiterated their stand. Speaking in the First Committee, Egyptian representative El Hakim said that the Mauritanian problem was one of the consequences of the partitioning of Africa by the colonial Powers. Mauritania had never been a national entity and the Moroccan position was well founded.

111. GAOR, session 15, pt. 1, Cttee 1, mtg. 1109, 16 November 1960, pp. 131-3.
112. Ibid., pp. 133-5.
113. Touval, n. 87, p. 127.
At the Casablanca Conference of African countries in 1961 Egypt again sided with Morocco. The Conference approved "... any action taken by Morocco on Mauritania for the restitution of her legitimate rights." This position was reiterated at the next meeting in June 1962.

When the UN General Assembly resumed its fifteenth session in April 1961, the twelve Brazzaville group nations submitted a draft resolution demanding that Mauritania be admitted to the United Nations. This resolution, incorporating a Soviet amendment which linked the admission of Mauritania with that of Outer Mongolia, was passed by the General Assembly. Egypt voted against it. When it came before the UN Security Council, Egypt was the only member which voted against. At the General Assembly in October 1961 Egypt again voted against it though the Assembly passed the resolution by 68 votes to 13 with 20 abstentions.

Egypt supported Morocco firstly because it was a sister Arab country, and secondly because it was its partner in the fight against colonialism, particularly in the Congo.

Mauritania's close association with France and its membership of the French community was one of the reasons why Egypt opposed Mauritania. This link with France was a source of embarrassment to Mauritania itself in its relations with other


116. Mauritania could not be admitted on a previous occasion because of opposition from the Soviet Union, a permanent member. The Soviet Union apparently opposed the admission because the Western nations were opposing the admission of Outer Mongolia to the United Nations.
African and Arab countries. To make amends to some extent, Mauritania expressed solidarity with the Arab struggle against Israel and declared its support for Algeria’s independence.  

This, coupled with its growing disagreement with Morocco, led Egypt to modify its attitude towards Mauritania. The latter’s attempt to forgo closer ties with Egypt was also reflected in its decision to send a ministerial delegation to Cairo even before it was formally recognised. The Mauritanian delegation’s visit in April 1963 was meant to "strengthen cultural and religious ties between the two countries, and to co-ordinate their policies". All this narrowed the gap between them and in October 1964 Egypt formally recognized Mauritania.

Egypt’s position on border disputes underwent a change with the formation of the OAU when Egypt decided to cultivate bilateral relations with as many African countries as possible. It now preferred to remain neutral, at least officially. This was in accordance with the OAU resolutions on African border disputes. Thus, when in May 1967 the Kenyan Press accused Egypt of involvement in the Somalia-Kenya border dispute in favour of Somalia, the Egyptian embassy in Nairobi denied the allegation.

117. Egypt-Morocco relations were at the lowest ebb soon after Addis Ababa Conference of May 1963 when the Morocco-Algeria border dispute erupted into fighting in October 1963. Though President Nasser offered to mediate in the dispute he deplored the "aggression" committed against Algeria (Le Monde (Paris), 24 October 1963). This expression of sympathy was later given concrete shape through Egyptian military assistance to Algeria.

In a statement it said that Egypt’s policy was to take no side in African disputes, adding that it believed that disputes should be solved through peaceful means and in accordance with the Charter of the OAU. The statement declared that Egypt’s policy was to play its "traditional role within the OAU for the settlement of all border disputes between sister African countries on the path of ultimate African unity".

SECESSIONIST MOVEMENT

The artificial boundaries of most African countries not only led to border disputes but also gave birth to secessionist movements. These movements mainly resulted from situations in which a substantial ethnic minority found itself under an alien majority. The substantial minority, asking for self-determination, attempted to secede from the majority. Quite a few of these movements came into being after the independence of African countries.

By and large, all African countries opposed the secessionist movements because as Immanuel Wallerstein put it: "Every African nation ... has its Katanga. Once the Logic of Secession is admitted, there is no end except in anarchy." Hence though the OAU Charter subscribes to the "inalienable right to independent existence" (Article III, para 3) the


subsequent practice of African countries showed that this right was applicable only to a colonial territory as a whole and not to its ethnic components, that is, to a state as state and not to its parts. We shall examine Egypt's attitude towards Eritrea, Katanga, and Biafra in this context.

Eritrea

Eritrea was formerly an Italian colony. During World War II (1941) British forces captured it. After the war, Egypt staked its claim to Eritrea but it was rejected. In 1952, it was incorporated into Ethiopia by the United Nations as a part of the federation allowing the Eritreans a large degree of autonomy. But in 1956 Ethiopia brought it under its own control and in 1962 fully integrated it into the country.

When the United Nations handed over Eritrea to Ethiopia in 1952, an organisation called the Eritrean Liberation Front demanded complete independence for Eritrea. It started a guerrilla war against the regime of Haile Selassie with military and economic support from the militant regimes.

Egypt openly supported the Eritrean Liberation Front, both morally and materially, till the mid-fifties. However,

121. See Chapter I.
122. Formal justification for this step was the resolution adopted by the Assembly of Eritrea for its complete incorporation in Ethiopia.
when Egypt and Ethiopia started negotiations to improve their relations in 1956, the latter took up the Eritrean issue with the former. Egypt agreed to discontinue its support to the Eritrean freedom movement. As a result of this agreement Egypt ordered the Eritrean leaders to leave the country whereupon they moved to Syria and since then, as Ethiopian Prime Minister Hubte Wold put it, "we have had no reason to complain about the UAR".

However, Egypt continues to support the Eritrean freedom movement unofficially. Even today the latter has an office in Cairo. An official of the Eritrean Liberation Front has claimed support of many revolutionary Arab Governments including Egypt. Egypt's continued support is explained by the fact that Eritrea is a Muslim province. Egypt has officially refused to give shelter to the freedom movement because it wants to keep good relations with Ethiopia. Besides, support to the secessionist movement would not be compatible with the principles of Pan-Africanism.

Katanga

When Tshombe declared Katanga's independence on 11 July 1960 and asked for Egypt's recognition the latter refused to give it mainly because he had the tacit support and blessings of Belgian colonialism. The Egyptian Foreign Ministry informed

124. La Monda, 12 May 1971.
126. On 15 July 1960 Tshombe called on all UN members for diplomatic recognition and admittance to the United Nations as well.
him that it could not respond to his request for recognition because the protection of the Congo's independence calls for unity and the request made weakens this unity and destroys the independence of the Congo.  

Cairo Radio labelled Tshombe as a "mixed up young man" who was trying to perpetuate imperialism in Katanga which was an integral part of the Congo Republic. According to Egypt, it was Tshombe's "madness" that had aggravated the problem of the Congo and his action had made all the peoples of Africa hide their face in shame. In declaring Katanga's independence, Cairo Radio said, Tshombe was serving his white masters. When Tshombe refused to allow the UN troops to enter Katanga, Cairo Radio described Tshombe as a "stooge of Belgium capitalism". Thus Egypt's opposition to Katanga's secession was expressed mainly in terms of its opposition to colonialism.

This became clearer in 1964 when Tshombe became Prime Minister of Congo, and Gizenga, Lumumba's deputy, raised the flag of separatism. Tshombe as head of the central authority took the help of the white to crush the separatists. But Egypt, which in 1960 had refused to recognize Tshombe's separatism, now accorded recognition to Gizenga's separatism. It started giving him military aid to Gizenga in his fight...
against the central authority. Egypt did this because the central authority was in the hands of a "stooge of imperialism". Hence the Congo's independence (from colonialism) was given preference to its unity.

Biafra

The origins of the Biafran war can be traced to the internal, regional and inter-tribal, frictions which emerged in Nigeria during the general elections of December 1964. The two coups -- of January 1966 by the Ibo tribe of Eastern Region and of July 1966 by northern (Muslim) soldiers -- had further strained the situation. On 30 May 1967, after consulting a committee of representatives of the Eastern Region, the Governor, Colonel Ojukwu, declared the region independent under the name of Biafra. The Federal Government (headed by northern Muslim soldiers) declared this as an act of rebellion and started mobilizing troops. It asked all countries not to interfere in its internal affairs. On 6 July 1967 fighting broke out leading to full-scale war between Biafra and Nigeria in which there was mass killing of Biafrans.

When Biafra attacked Lagos, the Federal Government contacted the Soviet Union for military help. The Soviet Union gave it thirteen MIGs, but refused to provide pilots, whereupon


the Federal Government approached Egypt for crew to man the MIGs. This was in August 1967, less than two months after Egypt's defeat in the Sinai War. Nasser decided to respond to the Federal Government request because he got information that Israel and the United States were supporting Biafra. He immediately sent five pilots and two technicians to Nigeria. Gradually the number was increased to twenty to thirty pilots and fifty technicians.

It is clear that in the case of Biafra Egypt was influenced by its anxiety over the US and Israeli overtures to the Biafrans. It may, however, be added that unlike in the Congo where the Central Government headed by Lumumba was progressive and radical compared to Katanga's Tshombe, in Nigeria the Federal Government was conservative and moderate. Possibly this factor did not weigh much with Nasser when he decided to support the Federal Government. For him, apart from reports of Israeli involvement on behalf of Biafra, the more important factor was the regional politics in Nigeria. As mentioned earlier, northern Nigeria was a Muslim dominated region having close cultural relations with Egypt. Earlier this region had refused technical assistance from Israel whereas the Federal Government had accepted it. Thus when in a second coup this Muslim majority region emerged dominant in Nigeria, it tended to be more pro-Egypt for the simple reason that it had close

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132. An Egyptian journalist, who was present in Mohammed Fayek's Chamber when Nasser informed Fayek about his decision to help Nigeria, gave this information to the author. The author is grateful to him for permitting him to use it.
cultural contacts with Cairo. Hence when the Eastern Region revolted against the Muslim dominated Northern Region, Egypt supported the Northern Region against the Eastern Region.

COUP D'ETAT AND THE PROBLEM OF LEGITIMACY

Frequent coup d'etat in Africa have given rise to what is called the problem of legitimacy. The problem mainly arises when a legally established government is overthrown, usually by military coup, which, according to Egypt, are "imperialist advances in Africa". When this happens in a country, other states are faced with the problem of recognizing the new government. Unlike in border dispute, the challenge here is not to the territorial integrity of the state, but to the legitimacy of the incumbent regime. The principle of non-interference in others' internal affairs demands that what happens in one country should be of no legitimate concern to others. At the same time recognition is a sovereign privilege of each state which it may exercise solely on grounds of political expediency. In exercising this sovereign privilege, some African states,

133. The term 'legitimacy' is defined as "the foundation of such governmental power as is exercised both with consciousness on the government part that it has the right to govern and with some recognition by the governed of that right." David L. Sills, ed., International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (London, 1968), p. 244. Though foreign diplomatic recognition helps to establish legitimacy, it itself mainly depends on internal legitimacy.

sometimes refused to recognize incumbent leaders because of their personal liking of and loyalty to the dethroned leaders or because of their ideological differences with the incumbent leaders. Egypt's stance on the question of legitimacy is illustrated by the case of Nkrumah's deposition.

On 24 February 1966 Nkrumah was deposed by a joint army and police coup led by Gen. Ankrah. As Nkrumah was ideologically close to Egypt the latter reacted sharply to his deposition. Immediately on hearing the news of Nkrumah's deposition the Secretary-General of Arab Socialist Union issued a statement expressing "deep regret at the recent events experienced by the people of Ghana". The statement described the incident as a conspiracy of imperialism and neo-colonialism. It praised Nkrumah as a devoted son of Africa who worked for establishing Africa's personality and unity. In Accra the Egyptian embassy granted the request for an asylum by Nkrumah's wife.

However, Egypt did not live up to this heroic stand for long. On the eve of the sixth session of the OAU's Council of Ministers, the Secretariat received two sets of credentials -- one from the new Ghanaian regime and the other from Nkrumah. Some African countries, notably Guinea, Mali and Tanzania, challenged the credentials of the new Ghanaian regime. One would have expected Egypt to expose the "conspiracy of imperialism and neo-colonialism" by siding with these countries but it tried to find out a "via media" by asking that no Ghanaian delegation be

admitted to the session. Mahmoud Riad, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, proposed an indefinite adjournment of the meeting until a more favourable atmosphere prevailed. However, when the Council decided to seat the new regime Egypt joined Guinea, Mali and Tanzania in withdrawing from the Conference.

Even this mild pro-Nkrumah stand of Egypt did not last long. In November 1966 Nasser helped resolve the differences between the new Ghanaian regime and Guinea. As for official recognition, it was stated that this was not necessary because the relations between the two countries were still maintained at embassy level and the two governments had exchanged official notes. According to Al-Ahram, Cairo adopted this position in accordance with international law, in keeping with the attitude of other countries towards the new situation in Ghana and in the interest of maintenance of friendly relations between the peoples of Egypt and Ghana.


137. On 29 October 1966 the Ghanaian authorities removed from Pan-American Airways' airliner, calling at Accra on a scheduled flight, Guinean Foreign Minister and his party who were on their way to the OAU meeting. Egypt condemned the incident. In Cairo Mahmoud Riad handed the Ghanaian Ambassador a note demanding the release of the Guinean delegation, at the same time offering to mediate. Egypt finally helped to solve the differences. See "News in Brief", African Research, vol. 12, no. 1, January 1967, p. 25 and Times of India, 7 November 1966.

Egypt's attitude towards intra-African issues was mainly shaped by three considerations: anti-colonialism, cultural affinity and ideological identity. Its stand on the Congo problem was a manifestation of its anti-colonialism. Its support to the Eritrean freedom movement and to Somalia's irredentism was mainly determined by its cultural affinity with Eritrea and Somalia. However, after the formation of the OAU, when the African states decided not to re-open their border disputes and not to interfere in each other's internal affairs, Egypt fell in line with them. This was necessary for its new post-OAU role in Africa. There were, however, two exceptions: the coup in Ghana and Tshombe's elevation as Prime Minister of the Congo. But in Ghana, not before very long, Egypt adapted itself to the general African stand. In the case of Tshombe it could not have succeeded without the backing of an important section of the African community and public opinion.