Super Powers Unanimity

Belgian rule in the Congo had for fifty years been based on the assumption that a paternalistic concern for the physical well being and economic needs of the indigenous population would prevent the voice of a nationalist movement. When in January 1959, violent nationalist riots erupted in Leopoldville, the Congolese capital, it became clear that these assumptions had been incorrect. The Belgian Government, interpreting these riots as a harbinger of impending disaster, decided to end its colonial rule as rapidly as possible. Independence for the Congo was stated for June 30, 1960. During the last year of Belgian colonial rule, little attempt was made to prepare an indigenous elite for the imminent responsibilities of self-government. Since the Congolese were not trained in self-rule and the overwhelming majority of 14 million people were
illiterate, the central government faced serious difficulties from within and from without\textsuperscript{1}.

Thus, on June 30, 1960, the Colony of the Belgian Congo was suddenly transformed into an independent nation, a newborn infant left on the world's doorstep. The government that took over the Congo was headed by President Joseph Kasavubu and premier Patrice Lumumba. Both had been members of the Congolese National Movement. Kasavubu, the more conservative of the two, was not excessively hostile toward Belgium and the Western powers. The office of the presidency which he came to occupy was largely an honorific post\textsuperscript{2}.

Lumumba, the premier had been a more ardent nationalist than Kasavubu and was resolved to sever all relations with Belgium after independence. Both these men were challenged in

\textsuperscript{1} New York Time, 10 July, 1960.

their views by Moise Tshombe, Premier of the provincial government of Katanga. Tshombe had been backed by the Belgian government during the colonial period. He was a wealthy man, conservation, and pro-Belgian. Thus the new Congolese leadership held political views along the entire spectrum—from Lumumba's uncompromising anticolonialism to Tshombe's pro-Belgian sentiments.

A few hours after its Declaration of Independence, the new government faced a crisis which threatened its very survival. The Congolese Army, which had never had an African officer corps, rose up, demanding the ouster of its Belgian officers and pay increases for the enlisted men. Many disappointed civilians who had expected to inherit all Belgian possessions on independence had joined in the mutiny. During the following days the mutiny spread through the rest of the

Congo. In the major cities lawlessness prevailed, and thousands of Belgians fled. On July 11, Tshombe declared that Katanga was seceding from the rest of the country and forming a new state allied with Belgium. Since Katanga province was the wealthiest port of the Congo, possessing the country's richest mineral deposits, this act of secession threatened the life of the new state. Moreover the provincial government of Katanga requested Belgian military help in order to suppress the violence that was engulfing it along with the rest of the Congo. Belgian troops reentered Katanga for the purpose of restoring order. But on the following day, the Belgian government charged that since the new Congolese government of premier Lumumba had been unable to protect the lives and interests of the remaining Belgian population Belgian troops would march into Leopoldville as well. When the Belgians reentered the capital, shooting broke out between

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4. UN yearbook, 1962 (New York, P.52.)
them and Congolese soldiers. At this point the Lumumba regime began to blame riots not on the Africans but on the Belgians. The premier accused Belgium of aggression and stated that the colonial power had conspired with Tshombe to engineer the secession of Katanga province in order to find a justification for the reimposition of colonial rule what had started as only a local conflict thus quickly took on the dimension of a major struggle between nationalism and colonialism.

On July 13, 1960, members of the Lumumba regime cabled the US government\(^5\) for aid, but both premier Lumumba and President Kasavuba immediately disavowed this appeal and stated that it had been meant as a request for a UN force composed to military personnel from neutral countries. Nevertheless, the earlier request touched off a sequence of events that turned the Congo into a battleground for the superpowers. Soviet premier

\(^5\) Ibid.
Khruschev immediately announced that the Congolese soldiers had been perfectly right in their mutiny against the Belgian Officers. He also claimed that the United States and the Western colonial powers in NATO had conspired to send Belgian troops into the Congo to reimpose colonial status under the pretext of restoring order. UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold called an emergency meeting of the Security Council and urged authorization for the dispatching of a UN military force to the Congo. During the Council session the Soviet Union condemned Belgian earned aggression and accused the United States of collusion with colonialism. The United States denounced the Soviet accusation as "outrageous and untrue". The Security Council, in an 8 to 0 vote, called on Belgium to withdraw its troops from the Congo and authorized the Secretary General to organize a UN operation in the Congo ONUC to be patterned on the model of the

Middle East Force established during the Suez Crisis of 1956. Both the Soviet Union and the United States voted for the resolution, while Britain, France, and Nationalist China abstained.

Thus, the first UN resolution of the Congo reflected at least a temporary consensus between the super powers. It was in the national interests when he announced that Soviet Union was considering direct intervention in the Congo. He stated that this might become necessary, since he had received a telegram from President Kasaurber and Premier Lumumba staking their lives were in danger and that they might be compelled to ask for intervention by the Soviet Union if the Western camp [did] not desist from aggression against the sovereignty of the Congo Republic. The Soviet leader pledged Russian support to Lumumba and told the west "hands off the congo!" on July 24, the Soviet delegation to the United Nations demanded the evacuation of

the Belgian "aggressions" within three days. The US representative._Henry cabot lodge, countered with the declaration that the United State "would do whatever may be necessary to prevent the intrusion of any military forces not requested by the United Nations." The Security Council barred unilateral intervention and urged the speedy withdrawal of Belgian troops. The two super-powers were carefully excluded from the international confident. Almost 20,000 troops from twenty nine nations including Moreover, Tunisia, Ghana, Ethiopia, Mali, Guinea, Ireland, Sweden, and India', all under the UN flag- was deployed through the Congo to prepare the way for the more ardous task of building a responsible and viable conferese government.

Even while UN troops were arriving in the Congo, further complications developed. Tribal antagonisms erupted into local wars; South Kasai, following the example of Katanga secured from the central government ; and Moise Thonmbe not only

8. Ibid.
refused to dismiss his Belgian advisers and troops but announced that he would meet with forces any attempt by the United Nations to enter Katanga.

Since the Republic of Congo was not yet a member of the United Nations, the Security Council met at the instance of the Secretary General under Article 99 of the Charter. The proposal which Secretary General Hammarskjöld outlined for the Congolese assistance was quite positive and was passed on the premise that the only lasting and permanent solution to the crisis was to create conditions in which the Congolese government would be able to pursue its interests and to take care of the situation by itself. The nature of the United Nations action would be neither an enforcement action within the meaning of Articles 41 and 42 of the United Nations Charter nor the Korean type. But it would be like all other operations where the United Nations acted as a soldier and not as a fireman.

The Security Council called upon the Belgians to withdraw from the Congo and authorised the Secretary General to take necessary steps in consultation with the Government of the Republic of Congo to provide the government with such military assistance as may be necessary until through the efforts of the Congolese Governments with the technical assistance of the United Nations, the National Security Forces might, to the opinion of the government be able to fully meet their task.

The Secretary General's mandate was vague and blank and it led to diverse interpretations. The Secretary General reported back to Security Council on July 18 indicating the following implications of his mandate as he understood it.

1) Restoration of order was the main task.

2) The United Nations Forces should be regarded as "Temporary Security Forces" in the Congo with Congolese consent.

3) It might be considered as serving as an arms of the government for the maintenance of
order and protection of life, but would exclusively be under the UN command and could not be permitted to become a party to any international conflict.

4) The Security Council's permanent members would be sought from States of Africa and Asia. Seven African battalions were requested and airlift specialised units and equipments had been made certain to non African states.

5) The UN troops would apply force only in self-defence, any initiative in the use of force on its part was prohibited.10

Evidently, the mission of the UN operation in the Congo (the organization des nations Unies du Congo) was not the name as was the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) and United Nation Observers Group (UNOGIH). In none of the latters operations, the United Nations was not put in charge of the law and order within a nation and this by its very

nature became the main source of trouble for the UN in the Congo. This raised new questions about United Nations' role in democratic conflicts in the country. Although it was denied that the United Nations had any role in the internal conflicts of the Congo; the nature of relation between the central government of the Congo or the Congo operation was unclear further if the UN Operation were to be non-intervening, non-partisan and without initiative the question was how inactively was the operation to succeed in the face of the law and order situation in a vast country like the Congo.

In the light of all these developments, Hamarskjöld thought it necessary in early August to return to the Council for a clarification of his mandate. The consensus between the super-powers continued to hold. Both the United States and the Soviet Union voted for a resolution sponsored by Tunisias and Ceylon which declared that the entry of the United Nations Force into the province of
of Katanpa (was) necessary" and demanded the immediate withdrawal of Belgian troops from the province. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 9 to 0, with France and Italy abstaining. The United States voted for the resolution with some misgivings because of the strong action against Belgium, the Soviet Union. Which wanted even stronger action had introduced a draft resolution that would have imposed upon the Secretary-General the obligation "to take decisive measures, without hesitating to use every means to that end" to remove the Belgian troops. But in the end, the Soviet Union, too, supported the Ceylon-Tunisia resolution.

Breakdown of Understanding

The consensus between the super powers broke down when, in the autumn of 1960, the new Congolese government disintegrated into factions. A power struggle between Premier Lumumba and President Kasavuba erupted. In September, the two leaders fired each other from their respective positions. In the Melee, a young pro-Western colonel, Joseph Mobutu, took command of the armed forces. As a result the position of the political leader most sympathetic to the USSR was undermined. Under Mobutu's rule, many Belgian administrators returned to the Congo as unofficial advisers.

The super powers now took opposing positions on the two rival factions in the Congo government. The United States passed the United Nations to recognize the Kasavubu-Mobutu Government, while the Soviet Union began to support the deposed Lumumba with aircrafts and trucks. The UN representative who was in charge of this Critical phase of ONUC's operations in the summer and fall of 1960 was
Andrew W. Cordier, executive assistant to Dag Hammarskjöld; Cordier's overriding concern was to uphold the Charter and the resolve law and order in the war-torn Congo. In order to stop both Kasavubu and Lumumba from inflaming popular feelings even further and to prevent the outbreak of civil war, he decided to close all Congolose airports, to immobilize troops, and to shut down the national radio in Leopoldville. Three years later, Mr. N.T. Fedorenko, the Soviet delegate in the Administrative and Budgetary (fifth) Committee of the General Assembly, was to declare that by this action, "Cordier had adopted a decision that broke Lumumba's back" and had thus started the United Nations on its pro Western course in the Congo.

Similarly, many highly placed US officials later pointed to Cordier's decision as having stopped the Russians". Cordier himself defended his action on the grounds that it had not been taken against one of the rival factions or against one of the superpowers but for the law of the United Nations and the Charter.

12. UN Press Release GA/AB/842 (May 2, 1963)
After the closure of airports and radio stations by the United Nations, the Soviet Union accused the United Nations of neocolonialism and proposed a draft resolution directing the United Nations to cease any interference in the internal affairs of the Congo and to hand over the airports and radio-stations to the Central government. Only Poland supported this resolution. Ceylon Tunisia abstained and proposed a substitute resolution which endorsed the policies and notions of the Secretary-General. This resolution was vetoed by the Soviet Union. The consensus between the superpowers had now broken down completely, paralyzing the Security Council. The General Assembly was immediately called into emergency session.

The superpowers now attempted to line up majorities for their opposing positions in the General Assembly. The United States led to the

13. UN Doc, S/4526 (September 17, 1960).
forces seeking "to affirm and strengthen the Mandate already given to the Secretary General by the Security Council". The Soviet Union on the other hand, took position that "the United Nations Command and the Secretary-General personally have unmasked themselves as supporters of the colonialism."14 After intensive and often acrimonious debate, an overwhelming majority of the Assembly supported the Secretary General's policy appealed to members to refrain from unilateral action in the Congo, and created a Conciliation Commission made up of African and Asian representatives in order to pacify the internal dissensions in the Congolese government15.

The General Assembly also considered another important matter at this time: who should represent the Congolese government in that body?


The Republic of the Congo had been administered to membership on September 20, but the question of seating its representatives had been left to the Credentials Committee. Several days later, Guinea proposed that, pending a decision of the Credentials Committee, representatives of the lumumba government should be seated. This proposal was supported by Ceylon, Ghana India, Indonesia, Mali, Morocco and the United Arab Republic, all of which had troops in the Congo. It was also vigorously defended by the Soviet Union.

The Guinean proposal brought a sharp protest from Kasavubu who immediately set out to plead his case at UN Headquarters in New York. On November 8, he appeared on the rostrum of the General Assembly and demanded the seating of his representatives. He was supported in this demand by the United States, which claimed that Lumumba government did not have effective and stable control of the country or the ability to fulfills its international obligations. The Assembly debate
was adjourned briefly, pending the return from the Congo of the Conciliation Commission. But on the Credential Committee, which had been given a separate mandate after the vote of the Congo's membership, the west had a clear majority. The United States proposed the accreditation of the Kasavubu delegation, and after two days of heated debate, the motion was adopted in Committee by a vote of 6 to 1. Lumumba's supports now had to bring their fight into the General Assembly.

Both super powers lobbied intensively for their positions, especially among the African members of the Assembly. The United States was backed solidly by all the NATO power, most of the Latin American states, and a majority of the French Speaking African members, although a considerable number of African and Asian states which had endorsed the Congo policy of the Secretary-General not backed and either abstained or voted against it. The final vote on the critical condition issue was 53 in favour of sealing the Kasavubu
delegation, 24 opposed, and 19 abstentions. The US position emerged victorious.

The Congo operation continued, but now it was clear that one of the Superpowers no longer felt that it served its national interest. Though it could still be said that ONUC was impartially assisting the legitimate government of the Congo to restore order; it was obvious that the Soviet Union believed the Kasavubu government to be pro-Western. For the reason the USSR vetoed the continuation of ONUC in the Security Council and, when the Secretary General carried on the operation under Assembly authority, mounted the attack against him and his office. The United States, of course, insisted that it was supporting a disinterested UN Operation that thought to restore peace and order in the Congo. On wonders, however, what American policy might have been had the credentials Committee and the General Assembly seated Lumumba instead of Kasavubu.
The United Nations' Force in Action

On February 13, 1961, it was announced that Patrice Lumumba had been killed by hostile tribesmen in Katanga. This event which convulsed the Congo and threatened to plunge its into civil war, led to a partial restoration of super power consensus in the Security Council. On February 21, the Council, in a 9 to 0 vote with the Soviet Union and France abstaining passed its strongest resolution to date, urging that "the United Nations take immediately all the appropriate measures to prevent the occurrences of civil war in Congo, including the use of force, if necessary in the last resort." The resolution also called for" an immediate and impartial investigation" of lumumba's death. The United States had some misgivings about the implications of the use of force, even "in the last resort" but the fact that most of the Africa and Asian states delegation to vote for it. The Soviet Union also fearful of alienating the African States

16. UN DOC, S/4741 (February 21, 1961).
vetoed the "force in the last resort" resolution, abstained. Thus with the reluctant approval of one of the superpowers and the full consent of the other, the Security Council - no longer veto-bound - resumed political direction of the Congo operation. The African resumed political direction of the Congo operation. The African States had thus been instrumental in restoring a partial consensus between the superpowers.

During the spring and summer of 1961, the Congo presented a picture of extreme confusion. Kasavubu had appointed Cyrille Aboula as Prime Minister of the Congolese Government, but Adoula Government was unable to control the entire country. Lumumba's vice Premier, Antonic Gizenga, established the "legitimate Government" of the Congo in Stanleyville. And ONUC Forces in their efforts to integrate Katanga into the control government, ran into mounting resistance not only from the Katangese forces of Moise Tshombe but from French, Belgian, and South African mercenaries.
There were numerous casualties on all sides. Finally, on September 17, in an effort to persuade Tshombe to desist, the Secretary-General decided to go himself to Katanga but was killed during a night flight when his airplane crashed near Ndola, in Northern Rhodesia. The tragic event imperiled the entire operation. Nevertheless, top officials in UN Secretariat continued Hammarskegold’s work.

On September 21, a provisional cease fire was agreed upon, but ratification did not follow until five weeks later. The Security Council met on November 13, year days after the election of Uthant as Acting Secretary General. The continuing need to revolve the problem of Katanga resulted in an even stronger resolution than the one on February 21, with no negative vote and only France and the United Kingdom abstaining, ONUC was who authorized "to take vigorous action, including the use of the requisite measure of force for the immediate apprehension of all foreign military personal and
political advisors not under the United Nations Command, and mercenaries. Both the superpowers strongly supported this antisecessionist resolution. The United Nations was now clearly committed to support Adoula's central government against the secessionist efforts of both Tshombe and Gizenga.

In early December, Acting Secretary-General Ufchant directed UN Forces to reestablish law and order in Elisabethvila, the capital of Katanga. This initiative resulted in heavy fighting. The United Nation moved in heavy reinforcements for an all out offensive to gain control in Katanga. But some Western powers notably Belgium and Great Britain, still hesitated to see Tshombe suppressed. Apart from the considerable financial interest both countries had in Katanga, Tshombe was considered the only pro-Western anti-communist, whereas Gizenga was seen as a serious communist threat to the Congo, and the control

17. UN DOC, S/PV 982 (November 24, 1961) 8 p.71-75.
government as being at best merely neutral. There were supporters of the Tshombe regime even in the United States. Britain refused to supply bombs to the United Nations to be used against Katanga. Some Western opinion viewed the danger of communist influence as the greatest threat, while the anti-colonial African and Asian nations saw Tshombe as the tool of "imperialism" and therefore the major danger. The Soviet Union backed the anti-Tshombe forces.

The United Nations was now determined not to stop until the secession was ended. UN Forces supported by the jet fighters, pressed on; and on December 20, Tshombe signed the Kitona Agreement, acknowledging the authority of the control government and promising to comply with the UN resolutions requesting the removal of foreign mercenaries. But talks to implement this agreement

were not began until March 1962, and in June, after a second breakdown of discussion, it appeared that Tshombe still had no intentions of ending his secession. Sec. General UThant submitted a plan for the reunification of the Congo, consisting of a 50-50 sharing of revenues from Katangese mines, integration of the Katangese Army with that of central government, and discontinuance of separate representation abroad, in return for which Katanga would receive considerable local autonomy. UThant intimated that if this plan was not accepted economic pressures would be used, possibly extending to a complete trade and financial boycott. But neither Belgium, Britain, norths United States wanted pressures to go beyond the economic sphere, and Tshombe conditional acceptance of the plan suffered to overt any economic sanctions. In October, the West became pre-occupied with the Cuban crisis and secured content to let congolese matters drag on. But the Chinese attack on India gave rise to Indian pressures to obtain the release
of her troops in the Congo, numbering over 5,000 men, to fight in the Himalayas. Moreover, the weakening of Premier Adoula's position, occasioned by the central government's mobility to enforce its authority in Katanga, created a need for the early settlement of the Katangese secession. Finally, ONUC, which cost $120 million a year, was leading the United Nations into serious financial difficulties.

By December 1962, UThant's plan to incorporate Katanga into the central government had not yet been carried out. Thus the pressure for economic measures against Tshombe increased. Adoula had been requesting such measures since August, but at that time both Britain and Belgium had been opposed. Nor had the United States actively supported such a move. Now Belgium shifted its stand, in return for a promise from the central government to grant Katanga a large share of the mining source. The United States too, threw its support behind Adoula. But Britain and the union
Minere still refused to go along. Fighting again broke out in late December but Elisabethville was captured by UN Forces on December 28, and the important mining centre of Jadotville fell a week later. At first it appeared that Tshombe was going to fight to the end and pursue a scorched earth policy which would ruin Katanga, but he surrendered his last stronghold at Kolwezi in return for a general amnesty for Katanga's officials. By the end of January 1963, the resistance was ended, but the situation continued to be tense throughout the rest of the year. In mid-1964, the last ONUC contingents were withdrawn from the Congo, and the problems of reconstruction and reconciliation among the many warring factions reverted to the Congolese Govt. Ironically, Moise Tshombe emerged as the new premier of the Congo after the withdrawal of UNUC.

The only UN presence remaining in the Congo after June 1964, was the UN civilian operation. This

undertaking had begun in July 1960 side by side with the UN's peace-keeping function. It aimed to keep in fact transport and communications, sustain a decent level of public health, further education and public administration, and develop industry and agriculture. During the later part of ONUC's work, the civilian operation become almost indistinguishable from a large and very ambitious technical assistance program. Most of the operation was financed from the UN Congo Fund. This Fund was supported by voluntary contributions from twenty governments. The United States at first contributed almost three-fourth and later about one-half of the expense. The remainder was paid by other Western countries. The Soviet Union made no contribution.

The problem of putting the Congo back on its feet politically and economically had been a staggering one. Indeed, maintaining ONUC in the Congo for four years had nearly bankrupted the United Nations. Like the kings men the United
Nations could not put Congo back together again. But the presence of the organization had at least brought a solution within reach. And it had prevented a major clash between the superpowers in the heart of Africa.