

Neutrality Uncertain: Ghanaian Peacekeepers in the Congo Crisis

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This past summer I was honored with the privilege to meet and train with Malawian Defense Forces Officer-Cadets and paratroopers. In my conversations with a few of them, they recounted their time as peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere in Africa. Their stories have played a part in the inspiration for this thesis topic, and to them I am immensely grateful. Just as so many have guided me, my words below are dedicated to those who commit themselves in service to peace.

Introduction: Ghanaians in the Congo

At dusk on December 8th, 2017, 14 Tanzanian UN peacekeepers along with 5 Congolese soldiers were killed in the North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.¹ The peacekeepers, who were part of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) force, were reported to have been killed by rebels of the anti-government Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Despite there being over 20,000 UN personnel in the DRC, this news story appeared only briefly in the headlines before vanishing to the back pages and bottoms of news websites.² Conflict in DR Congo has simmered since the mid-1990s largely out of the purview of anyone not expressly interested in or connected to the region.

But MONUSCO was not the first peacekeeping operation in the Congo. Many decades before, the Southern regions of the country played host to one of the first and most ambitious UN peacekeeping operations. On July 14, 1960, at the direction of the UN Security Council, *Organisation des Nations Unies au Congo* or ONUC was initiated to contain the rapidly devolving political situation of the newly-independent Congo state. Unlike today, the ONUC mission made international headlines on the scale of the Cuban Missile Crisis. This operation demonstrated many of the inherent difficulties that continue to plague peacekeeping. Of particular importance was the friction between neutrality, politics, and Pan-Africanism. In a

¹ *BBC News Service*. "DR Congo: UN peacekeepers killed in attack in North Kivu". December 8, 2017. Accessed January 16, 2018. Accessed from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-42285871>

² United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo. "About: Facts and Figures". September 15, 2017. Accessed March 22, 2018. Accessed from <https://monusco.unmissions.org/en/facts-and-figures>. The Tanzanian deaths raised the on-mission fatalities to over 100.

country as complex as the Congo, with Pan-Africanism at its height, how could soldiers from neighboring countries enter a sovereign nation as part of a neutral force and not become embroiled in the internal political affairs? The challenges encountered on the ONUC mission were a powerful introduction to the complexities faced by future UN peacekeeping missions.

As the operation swung into action, photographs of Irish, Canadian, and Scandinavian peacekeepers wearing blue berets or helmets emblazoned with “UN” became synonymous with the Congo Crisis of 1960. Also often associated with the Crisis is the fatal mission of famed UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and the downing of his plane over then-Northern Rhodesia. Half a century later, these episodes dominate Western popular memory of the conflict.

Yet from an African perspective, Hammarskjöld’s death does not linger like the execution of Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba which occurred months before. Similarly, Western peacekeepers were not the core of ONUC; in fact, the force was over 60% Indian, Ethiopian, Nigerian, Tunisian, and Ghanaian. Ghana’s contribution was the longest lasting. Over Ghana’s several years of participation, 32.7 percent of its military engaged in the Congo Crisis.³ In late July, only weeks after the Security Council authorization of ONUC, “one-half of the armed forces of Ghana” were in the Congo according to the Ghanaian Minister of Defense.⁴ Shortly thereafter, in early August 1960, Ghanaian forces in the Congo numbered 2,438—a number larger than any other contingent at that time—in addition to a large police detachment.⁵

³ Brookings Institution, *UN Peacekeeping in the Congo 1960-1964*. (Washington, D.C.: Foreign Policy Studies Division, 1966. Volume 2), 276-277.

⁴ Telegram American Embassy Accra to State Department. “Foreign Service Dispatch, Embdesp. 72.” August 1, 1960. National Archives and Record Administration (NARA). College Park, MD. Central Decimal Files, Box: 1702. Folder: 745J.5/1-2960. Accessed December 13, 2017.

⁵ UN Telegram. “Daily Figures BN” August 11, 1960. United Nations Archives and Records Management Section (UNARMS). New York, NY. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-02. Accessed November 7, 2017.

But the significance of Ghana's involvement in the Congo Crisis is not simply about numbers. Ghana was the first country asked by then-PM Patrice Lumumba to intervene when the mineral-rich region of Katanga seceded with the help of Belgian mercenaries. This request for aid was the result of both the PM's close relationship with Ghana's leader Kwame Nkrumah and the space Nkrumah occupied in the quest for African self-governance. As the first country South of the Sahara to gain independence, in many ways Nkrumah and Ghana served as beacons of hope and leadership. Many African countries were only just beginning to become independent in 1960, and Ghana was seen as the home of the Pan-Africanist movement. This can be attributed in large part to Nkrumah himself who declared: "African states are capable and better equipped to deal with the great problems of Africa than are the powers outside the African continent."⁶ Within ONUC he even unsuccessfully pushed for an "African High Command" to take over the operation.⁷ He both envisioned himself and was envisioned by others as the central leader of this future transnational, Pan-African government. To Nkrumah, the conflict enveloping the fledgling fellow African nation was the crucible in which Pan-Africanism could be molded. Two years prior, at a 1958 conference in the Ghanaian capital (attended by Lumumba and Nkrumah), the writer Frantz Fanon wrote: "In Accra the Africans pledged fidelity and assistance to one another...the future of colonialism has never been so dark as on the morrow of the Accra Conference."⁸

⁶ Nkrumah, Kwame. *I Speak of Freedom*. (New York: Fredrick A. Praeger Inc., 1961), 252. While claiming to not be so "presumptuous" as to "put forth a Monroe doctrine for Africa" he nevertheless floated the concept.

⁷ Telegram No. 718 from US Embassy Accra to Secretary of State. December 23, 1960. NARA. Central Decimal Files, Box: 1702. Folder: 745J.5/1-2960. Accessed December 13, 2017.

⁸ Fanon, Frantz. *Toward the African Revolution*. "Toward the Liberation of Africa". Translated by Haakon Chevalier. (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1969), 157.

While the Ghana-Congo connection was clear, the political reality during the Crisis was less lucid. As the situation became increasingly convoluted, the role of the deployed peacekeepers became more and more contentious. PM Lumumba strongly believed it was the duty of the UN forces to both expel the Belgians from the country and restore unity.⁹ UN Secretary-General Hammarskjöld did not see the force in the same light and argued the secession issue was internal to Congolese politics. Additionally, within the Congo, anti-Lumumbist elements sponsored by the CIA and later led by President Joseph Kasavubu and Chief of the Army, Colonel Joseph-Désiré Mobutu sought to contest Lumumba's power. Further complicating the mission was the close relationship between Nkrumah and Lumumba. Nkrumah's own conflicting messages about the peacekeepers' purpose in the Congo Crisis also confused their mandate. Amidst swirling conspiracies, political intrigue, and competing motives of Pan-Africanism, the Ghanaian contingent sought to perform its mission as neutral peacekeepers. As it quickly became clear, almost no action they took would be conveyed as 'neutral' and they were soon being attacked (verbally and physically) by almost all sides of the conflict.¹⁰

This thesis seeks to examine the issues of UN neutrality and Pan-Africanism within the Ghanaian peacekeeping contingent of ONUC. It will engage with the following questions: How did the conflicting imperatives given to the Ghanaian peacekeepers affect their ability to carry out their duties? What roles did the various African leaders and factions in the capital, Leopoldville, play in challenging Ghanaian neutrality? The main lens through which this will be

⁹ Nzongola-Ntalaja, Georges. *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*. (New York: Zed Books, 2002), 113.

¹⁰ Baynham, Simon. *The Military and Politics in Nkrumah's Ghana*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press Inc., 1988), 94.

examined is the conflict between the Ghanaian peacekeepers, the *Armée Nationale Congolaise* (ANC), President Joseph Kasavubu, Colonel Joseph Mobutu, and Prime Minister Lumumba and his supporters. As Lumumba battled for control of the Congo against the increasingly militant ANC of Colonel Mobutu, secessionists, and covert US forces, the Ghanaian peacekeepers struggled to both support his government and remain neutral.

This oft-forgotten chapter of the ONUC mission speaks volumes about the challenges of neutrality encountered by peacekeepers across many conflicts. UN Blue Helmets on the ground encountered situations where there existed no previous doctrine or playbook and treaded an uncertain path while simultaneously setting precedents. The mission became all the more onerous with the addition of Nkrumah's regional aspirations and the complex political issues surrounding sovereignty and military intervention—all of which made ONUC a harbinger of future peacekeeping operations.¹¹ At the heart of the issue was the clash between neutral UN peacekeeping and the politics of Pan-Africanism. ONUC provides a uniquely focused environment in which to examine the difficult roles of neutrality and impartiality in a conflict full of political motives and regional African ambition.

A Brief Chronology of the Congo Crisis

The trajectory of events in the Congo Crisis is complex to say the least. It began on June 30th, 1960, when Patrice Lumumba was elected as the official Prime Minister of the Congo after a political revolution gave the former colony independence. This event followed several years of

¹¹ Boulden, Jane. "United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC)." In *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199686049.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199686049-e-21>.

political concessions by the ruling Belgians which quickly transformed into a very hasty independence plan. Historian David Gibbs points out that the decolonization process went from a “five-year period” to a plan for independence in “less than half a year.”¹² When the Congo gained its freedom it was unprepared, leaving a very fragile political structure. A week after independence, on the evening of July 5th, Congolese soldiers of the *Force Publique*, the Belgian colonial army commanded by white officers, mutinied. The Congolese soldiers renamed the *Force* the *Armée Nationale Congolaise*, and in the Thysville garrison, south of the capital, turned against their Belgian officers and attacked Europeans.¹³

The ANC mutiny spread throughout the country and precipitated the entrance of Belgian paratroopers, ostensibly to protect Belgian interests. PM Lumumba and President Joseph Kasavubu attempted to rein in the army and Africanize the officer corps, appointing a Congolese officer, General Victor Lundula, as chief of the army. His assistant was the soon-to-be-infamous dictator Colonel Joseph Mobutu. Chaos spread throughout the interior country; on July 11th, Moise Tshombe, the Prime Minister of the mineral-rich Katanga region declared independence and sought Belgian military assistance.

Lumumba meanwhile appealed to the US for military aid, but was told to go to the UN instead.¹⁴ In New York, Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld convened a meeting with UN representatives from African countries to discuss the growing conflict. On the 14th, the Security Council approved a resolution calling for Belgian troops to withdraw and authorizing UN

¹² Gibbs, David N. *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 75-76.

¹³ O’Ballance, Edgar. *The Congo-Zaire Experience 1960-1998*. (New York: St. Martin’s Press Inc., 2000), 15-16.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 19.

action.¹⁵ Tunisian and Ghanaian troops were airlifted to the Congo the following day and several days later the official Belgian troops evacuated. However, the situation continued to get worse. Another Southern, mineral-rich province, Kasai, seceded like Katanga. Internal strife and rioting among the ANC, rival ethnic groups, and the secessionists continued while the country teetered on the brink of all out civil war.

In a sudden move on September 5th, President Kasavubu dismissed Lumumba as Prime Minister. In retaliation Lumumba dismissed Kasavubu and rallied parliament behind him.¹⁶ Several days later, Colonel Mobutu claimed the army had taken over to settle the political situation and Lumumba ended up under house arrest—surrounded by ONUC peacekeepers who were themselves surrounded by hostile anti-Lumumba ANC. The secessionist provinces began to fight internally with factional conflicts heating up. Within the interior of the Congo, the situation continued to get more tenuous as Lumumbist Antoine Gizenga took power in the North and rival groups of ANC competed against each other. Finally, on December 1st Lumumba was captured by ANC loyal to Mobutu. He was severely beaten and transferred to secessionist Katangan authorities on January 17, 1961, where he was summarily beaten, executed, and his body dissolved in acid.¹⁷ His death was not widely reported until weeks later.

Shortly after, Kasavubu created a new central government with politician Joseph Iléo under the auspices of Colonel Mobutu. Prior to this, it became more and more clear that

¹⁵ Security Council Resolution S/4387. No. 143. July 14, 1960. “Resolution of 14 July 1960 [calling upon Belgium to withdraw its troops from the Congo (capital Leopoldville)]”. Section: The Congo Question. Accessed online December 11, 2017.

¹⁶ O’Ballance, 27.

¹⁷ Nzongola-Ntalaja, 111-112.

Kasavubu was working with Mobutu and American covert elements in the capital.¹⁸ This government would consolidate control as the UN took a more aggressive role following the death of Secretary-General Hammarskjöld. Eventually, once the secessionists were brought under control, Mobutu would launch a second coup in 1965, beginning his 32-year rule over the Congo.

Against the Cold War Narrative: An Extended Historiography

To fully understand the Congo Crisis it is vital to closely examine the UN and African forces on the ground along with their place within African history. While the US and international players were deeply invested in the outcome of the conflict in the Congo, their narrative is not the only one worthy of examination. Yet the historical scholarship on the Congo Crisis tends to center not on Africa but rather on how the Congo figured into the actions of the US and the USSR. Much less is written specifically on the Ghanaian role in the Crisis. Finally, while there are several works which examine the Crisis from a UN historical narrative, they surprisingly leave out much about the Ghanaians and rather choose to view the conflict within the larger context of peacekeeping theory.

Chief among the US sources is Richard D. Mahoney's work *Ordeal in Africa*. Mahoney examines each of Nkrumah's actions in an outward looking fashion. At the same time, he argues Nkrumah was neither a communist nor a hardline sympathizer but more interested in his own 'projects'.¹⁹ Mahoney's sources on the Ghana contingent themselves are scant. Similarly, Philip

¹⁸ Mahoney, Richard D. *Ordeal in Africa*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 70-71.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Muehlenbeck's work *Betting on the Africans* relies extensively on US sources, particularly the "Foreign Relations of the United States" series of documents.^{20 21} Pan-African political power struggles and local conflicts between the Ghanaians and other forces within the Congo are rarely mentioned, or if they are, it's simply in support of an argument about US-Ghana relations.

While many US-focused Cold War scholars describe Nkrumah as complex and highlight his pan-Africanist views, this is not fully borne out in how they describe his involvement in the Congo Crisis. Instead, they view Nkrumah from the standpoint of the US, through Eisenhower or Kennedy.²² Muehlenbeck disregards the importance of Nkrumah's African Union arguing that his "Cold War neutrality, [which] like that of Toure...continually crept closer to alignment with the Soviet bloc."²³ By casting Nkrumah in either the Cold War sphere or solely within the context of the US relationship, the key aspect that was his regional UN vision and Pan-Africanism is simply left out.

Other works on the Congo Crisis often focus more exclusively on Lumumba and the Congo within the Cold War perspective. Stephen Weissman in *American Foreign Policy in the Congo 1960-1964* and Peter Schraeder in *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa* offer

²⁰ Muehlenbeck, Philip E. *Betting on the Africans*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 73-74.

²¹ Mahoney focuses on describing the effects of Nkrumah's USSR tour on US relations, examining speeches at the UN in regards to Soviet propositions, and finally studying the US-Ghana relationship from the basis of the Volta River Project. Muehlenbeck likewise has a locus of analysis in the the Cold War US-Ghana relationship and its connection to projects like the Volta River Dam.

²² Mahoney, 159, 167, 171-172.

²³ Muehlenbeck, 73.

competing narratives about Lumumba.^{24 25} While well-researched, both works leave out key relationships between African players which would illuminate the complex environment if examined. For example, Schraeder saliently notes that while Nkrumah was an “avowed neutralist”, the “the anti-communist impulse” that often took over US foreign policy blocked a true interaction or understanding of his ambitions.²⁶ This point is well made and quite important but the neutrality is never examined again *specifically* in the context of the Congo Crisis.

This tendency to see conflicts in Africa at the time solely within the Cold War narrative not only overshadows regional perspectives but can also distort the interpretation entirely. David Gibbs argues in *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention* that the UN acted almost totally as the US’s puppet and that the US almost openly supported the Belgians in their secession.²⁷ As a result, while Gibbs is certainly not incorrect and the collusion is often very clear, he does not consider the many important impacts of the various other countries in the UN mission.

This thesis expands into this new context by departing from the strictly Cold War narrative. It will shed light on the important aspects of UN neutrality and intra-Africa politics that are too often overlooked in favor of larger global arguments about East versus West. With the Pan-Africanist stakes as high as they were this angle is ripe for new scholarship.

²⁴ Weissman, Stephen R. *American Foreign Policy in the Congo 1960-1964*. (London: Cornell University Press, 1974), 261.

²⁵ Schraeder, Peter J. *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 54-56.

Weissman argues that the US State Department had a nuanced view of Lumumba’s complex interaction with communism whereas Schraeder argues that while Lumumba was viewed as an “opportunist”, and not a “communist” initially, he was soon viewed as too radical to deal with.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 32.

²⁷ Gibbs, 91.

An Africa-centered analysis can also contribute to the field of UN and peacekeeping history. The most engaged work of this kind is Rosalyn Higgins's compendium *United Nations Peacekeeping 1946-1967: Documents and Commentary: Africa* in which she makes an argument that Nkrumah wished for ONUC to be more aggressive against the will of Hammarskjöld.²⁸ Higgins argues in detail that "Ghana was critical of the refusal of the UN to supply the central government..." and puts into perspective the clash of ideologies between Hammarskjöld and Nkrumah.²⁹ But while pushing this important argument, Higgins does not explore the difficulties that actually occurred in the Congo as a result. She instead confines her study to the upper echelons of UN decision-making and the General Assembly. Her work is still foundational in outlining the importance of the political neutrality struggle as a deciding factor in the Crisis.

Surprisingly, even many other UN-focused sources gloss over the Ghanaians. The UN's own narrative account in *The Blue Helmets*, only mentions them a handful of times in relation to composition of the force.³⁰ *The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping* edited by William Durch almost seems to forget their presence.³¹ Finally, *United Nations Peacekeeping in Africa since 1960* by Norrie MacQueen offers insight into ONUC's place in the larger history of peacekeeping. She argues that "By co-opting those African armies with the capacity to intervene into the UN's multilateral effort, he [Hammarskjöld] made them unavailable for unilateral involvement..."³²

²⁸ Higgins, Rosalyn. *United Nations Peacekeeping 1946-1967: Documents and Commentary: Africa*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 115.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 104-105, 113-115.

³⁰ United Nations Dept. of Public Information. *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping*. (New York: United Nations Dept. of Public Information, 1990), 229-230.

³¹ Durch, William J. ed. *The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping: Case Studies and Comparative Analysis*. (New York: St. Martins Press Inc., 1993).

³² MacQueen, Norrie. *United Nations Peacekeeping in Africa since 1960*. (London: Pearson Education Ltd., 2002), 41.

While not engaging the Ghanaians specifically and giving agency to Hammarskjöld instead of African leaders, this important insight will still inform part of the conclusion on lessons learned from ONUC.

Most scholarship on Ghanaian foreign policy often examines political science rather than historical analysis. Scott Thompson's book *Ghana's Foreign Policy 1957-1966* is foundational but tends to focus on how Nkrumah's actions affected his internal position and politics within Ghana.³³ While initially following the narrative of US sources, Thompson expands his argument. He asserts Nkrumah had regional ambitions like 'African Unity', but that they were a much more *realpolitik* view of the situation rather than, simplistically, an idealistic Communist plot.³⁴ While a key point, Thompson does not tie this back to the ONUC mission very deeply. Thompson's extensive use of interviews with Ghanaian foreign service officials and members of the Ministry of Defense provide the reader with an incredibly detailed view into State Ministries in Accra but completely leaves out any of the external forces acting on Ghana. Additionally, Thompson's research is dated because it occurred only a few years after the events themselves and virtually no UN sources are used (certainly no classified ones) nor were any State Department cables declassified.

Simon Baynham's work *The Military and Politics in Nkrumah's Ghana* briefly notes some of the military aspects of the peacekeeping operation. The most important argument from

³³ Thompson, W. Scott. *Ghana's Foreign Policy 1957-1966*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), 117-118.

Thompson argues that Nkrumah was not ideologically a communist, but rather wanted a victorious political ally in the Congo. The fact that so many authors see a need to clarify the 'communist or non-communist' dichotomy points to the overwhelming Cold War focus in secondary scholarship.

³⁴ Thompson explains: "Nkrumah's paramount concern was to back the winner in a power struggle which was beginning to take place in the Congo." Thompson goes on to explicate Nkrumah's visions for a union between Ghana, Guinea, and the Congo. 121-123.

Baynham's short subchapter is that Nkrumah saw the Congo as a potential arena to flex his power but that this ended up backfiring.³⁵ Baynham clearly describes Nkrumah's "grand strategy" in the Congo and his desire to create a "union"³⁶ In this he begins to touch on the African political nature of the Crisis. But other than the passing statement as to how this would affect Ghana's military and deployments, he does not further examine the ramifications of such a policy within the UN context.

Finally, there are a few works of note which do in fact provide insights into the question of neutrality and the ONUC force. Examining the various forces being exerted on the UN, Edgar O'Ballance in *The Congo-Zaire Experience 1960-1998* makes a more nuanced version of Gibbs argument.³⁷ He argues that Hammarskjöld sought increased control over the Congolese government through the UN forces but still wanted neutrality—remaining true to his word even in the face of Mobutu.³⁸ But even here the unique role of the Ghanaians is downplayed in favor of a broader examination of how ONUC and Secretary-General Hammarskjöld interacted with Lumumba and Congolese politicians. Nkrumah's role is hardly mentioned.

Congolese political scientist and historian Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja contests some points argued by O'Ballance regarding ONUC neutrality and involvement in radio station access and disruption. Just as Gibbs's perspective was distorted by his UN argument, Nzongola-Ntalaja's work experiences a similar phenomenon. Some of Nzongola-Ntalaja sources are partisan in their appraisal of the situation and this ideology comes through in his arguments.

³⁵ Baynham, 93-94.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 93.

³⁷ O'Ballance, 27.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 20-21, 24, 35, 38.

This is seen particularly in Nzongola-Ntalaja's use of Ludo De Witte's book *The Assassination of Lumumba* which is written with a sensational journalistic style.³⁹ While not wholly incorrect, the firebrand narrative of Nzongola-Ntalaja colors his arguments, particularly with reference to Lumumba and the forces arrayed against him. Although not his main focus, this perspective shift causes his description of ONUC to be more negative and Lumumba-centric in its arguments.

Despite the considerable debate on the issue of neutrality and politics influencing the ONUC mission, none of the current scholarship focuses directly on the role of the Ghanaians. Rather, much scholarship—whether US or Ghanaian focused—examines the role of communism in the Crisis. As a 'Cold War struggle' there is no doubt that communism had a role to play. But while so many scholars agree that Lumumba and especially Nkrumah were hardly communist ideologues, they neglect to actually step outside this paradigm and examine them as actors in the African political struggle with ONUC. Given the inattention paid to the political aspects of the ONUC force in the African context, especially to the Ghanaian experience of neutrality and impartiality, there is a considerable blind spot upon which this thesis seeks to shed new light.

Neutrality Uncertain

By drawing on unused sources in the UN Archives and US National Archives, this thesis crafts an argument regarding the neutrality and violations thereof in the Ghanaian contingent of ONUC. Specifically, how did Nkrumah's regional Pan-African aspirations in the Congo cloud the impartiality of the Ghanaian contingent from the outset? While Nkrumah often preached self-determination and African unity, this did not prevent him from issuing more direct, unilateral

³⁹ Nzongola-Ntalaja, 131.

orders to supposedly neutral Ghanaian peacekeepers. While in theory these concepts may not be in conflict, the praxis of the Ghanaian actions precluded the occurrence of a true 'self-determination' free from outside interference. These actions confused the mission of the peacekeepers and were detrimental to their ability to act as impartial agents. Furthermore, when interacting with the various factions in Leopoldville, the Ghanaian forces became embroiled in increasingly hostile conflicts due to their perceived allegiances with the political parties within the Congo. The ensuing political tempest, the UN reactions, and the lessons learned provide a compelling glimpse into one of the UN's first engagements with peacekeeping.

The thesis will be broken down into three main chapters. The first chapter examines the often contradictory and confusing climate in which the Ghanaians entered the Congo. By examining not just Nkrumah's later memoirs but his private telegrams and UN cables sent at the height of the Crisis, this section will illuminate how his political projects collided with those orders given by UN Headquarters. The second chapter will examine the negative effects this degraded neutrality had on the ability of the contingent to operate as impartial agents. This chapter will also examine the various harassing actions committed by the ANC and the views of the Ghanaians held by the factions within Leopoldville. The final chapter will discuss the reaction of UN Headquarters and the strategies employed to deal with neutrality violations.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ While this chapter will begin to engage with the larger narrative of peacekeeping, it will remain separate from political theory examinations of peacekeeping.

Chapter 1: Whose Mission?

“*The Security Council...Decides*, to authorize the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps, in consultation with the Government of the Republic of Congo to provide the Government, with such military assistance as may be necessary...to meet fully their tasks”⁴¹ In its usual broad-brushstrokes language, the UN Security Council, in Resolution 143 of July 14, 1960, thus proclaims its mission in the Congo Crisis. The directive was straightforward: to restore order in the new republic and prevent the Belgian-backed secessionists from creating a civil war.⁴² But in its simplicity, the declaration bred complexity beyond measure.

This complexity came in many shapes, but one of the most important was how Kwame Nkrumah understood this mission, especially since Ghana would contribute the largest and longest serving contingent. Neutrality or impartiality within the Congo Crisis may have been an impossible and shifting goal, but at the heart was a commitment to stabilize the central “government” whilst steering clear of internal political struggles.⁴³ Neutrality in this context, meant something different than it does today. While neutrality and impartiality in the Congo Crisis are elusive to define, the Resolution itself and UN HQ official interpretation both provide the guidelines for this thesis.

As noted by most scholars, Hammarskjöld’s interpretation of this mandate of neutrality meant ONUC could only operate in self-defense and had no place propping up any side of the

⁴¹ Security Council Resolution S/4387. 143 July 14, 1960. “Resolution of 14 July 1960 [calling upon Belgium to withdraw its troops from the Congo (capital Leopoldville)]”. Section: The Congo Question. Accessed online December 11, 2017.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

political conflict.⁴⁴ Hammarskjöld remarked: “The authority granted to the United Nations Force cannot be exercised within the Congo either in competition with representatives of the host Government or in cooperation with them”⁴⁵ This was reflected by Special Representative to the Secretary General, Ralph Bunche, the UN official “responsible for interpreting to the Command of the Force the resolutions of the Security Council.”⁴⁶ Bunche declared ONUC weapons would be used “only in self-defense” and ONUC was to “harm no one” if at all possible.⁴⁷

This defensively strict neutrality and impartiality in the political conflict clashed with Nkrumah’s vision which took a more active view of the situation. Nkrumah’s envisioned future for the Congo was often contradictory and his desire for Pan-African unity often blurred the lines of neutrality within the country. Sometimes he railed for self-determination and protection from outside influences and other times (often more privately) he called for more direct intervention and interference on the part of his forces to protect Patrice Lumumba. To Nkrumah, these goals might not have been inconsistent. After all, many considered Lumumba to be the rightful leader of the Congo. However, the shifting imperatives Nkrumah pushed endangered the impartiality of the Ghanaian contingent and left them in increasingly convoluted political situations.

⁴⁴ Higgins, 101-104.

⁴⁵ Hammarskjöld, Dag “First Report by the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the Security Council Resolution S/4387 CF 14 July 1960” July 18, 1960. United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library. Security Council Collection, S/4389. Online. Accessed March 1, 2018.

⁴⁶ Telegram No. B-572 from Ralph Bunch to Secretary-General. August 20, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0752-0015-02. Accessed December 12, 2017.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Nkrumah: The Utopian Future

Nkrumah's intended vision relied heavily on UN optimism in combination with Pan-Africanism. In a press-release broadcast from September 8th, 1960, Nkrumah states: "it is the task of the independent African States and other neutral nations to safeguard the Congo from improper interference from outside the African Continent."⁴⁸ This idea of 'safeguarding' Congolese self-determination appears in many other speeches and often became tied with the UN. In a 1963 letter to Secretary-General U Thant, Nkrumah highlights the importance of having African nations in the UN force, even calling for African leadership.⁴⁹ Nkrumah's own emphasis on impartial support for the Congolese democratic processes clearly shows its importance to his UN vision as a solution to the Crisis. In *Challenge of The Congo*, one of Nkrumah's many books written after his exile from Ghana in 1966, he writes that "Ghana wholeheartedly supported UN intervention in the Congo..."⁵⁰

This commitment was just as strong during the time of the Crisis itself; in an August 1960 telegram between Nkrumah and Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, Nkrumah exudes optimism, writing of "African solidarity and unity" and its role in "peace and security in the Congo."⁵¹ Later, in 1961, Nkrumah called Lumumba's request of aid to the UN "wise" and said that "Ghana, *as an African* state, was ready and willing to send troops" as part of ONUC

⁴⁸ Nkrumah, Kwame. "Press Release from the Ghana Embassy, Leopoldville, 8th Sept. 1960". September 8, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0735-0005-17. Accessed November 7, 2017.

⁴⁹ Nkrumah, Kwame. Letter to Secretary-General U Thant. December 18, 1963. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0735-0005-17. Accessed November 7, 2017.

⁵⁰ Nkrumah, Kwame. *Challenge of the Congo*. (New York: International Publishers, 1967), 28.

⁵¹ Nkrumah, Kwame. Unnamed Telegram from Nkrumah to Hammarskjöld. Stamped August 5, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0735-0005-17. Accessed November 7, 2017.

(emphasis original).⁵² At least on his publicly facing persona, Nkrumah saw the UN's duty in the Congo to ensure that outside forces would not affect the democratically elected government. As Ghanaian support for the Security Council resolution demonstrated, this first included the expulsion of Belgian forces and second focused on the support and protection of Lumumba.⁵³ Nkrumah was very vocal about this last aspect, so much so that it became a staple of his interaction with American diplomats.⁵⁴

These visions of UN purpose were deeply tied to his Pan-Africanist goals but also contained powerful frictions. First were inklings of other agendas. Simply the language used by Nkrumah, “African solidarity and unity” and “*as an African state*” underscore the Pan-African nature of his involvement.⁵⁵ While it is obvious neutrality was to be respected as the background environment for any UN engagement, Nkrumah demonstrated that in his own thinking this impartiality only went so far—especially when directed towards Lumumba. His definitions of “improper interference” seemingly carried an implied acceptance that some interference—particularly on his part—might be proper. This was the key friction between the UN neutrality and Nkrumah's political agenda.

This practical view of the UN mission was combined with Nkrumah's personal ideology of African unity against outside threats. Nkrumah did not see the world as Soviet and American, but rather as African and imperialist. This non-aligned position in the face of the escalating Cold

⁵² Nkrumah, Kwame. *I Speak of Freedom*, 247, 265.

⁵³ Telegram No.121 from US Embassy Accra to Secretary of State Christian Herter. July 23, 1960. NARA. Central Decimal Files Box: 1702, Folder: 745J.11/7-2160. Accessed December 13, 2017.

⁵⁴ Telegram No. 360 from Ambassador Flake to Secretary of State Herter. August 8, 1960. NARA. Central Decimal Files, Box: 1702, Folder: 745J.03/4-1360. Accessed December 13, 2017.

⁵⁵ Nkrumah. *I Speak of Freedom*, 265.

War was even recognized by the US State Department, which sought to continually evaluate Nkrumah's standing and potential allegiances.⁵⁶ In a telegram to Secretary of State Dean Rusk, State Department sources claim to be unsure as to whether or not Nkrumah is a "true neutral" and suggest further analysis of the issue.⁵⁷ This world-view was again evidenced by Nkrumah's use of USAF Globemaster aircraft, British Comet jetliners, and Soviet *Ilyushin* 18S aircraft together for the airlifts of Ghanaian troops into the Congo.⁵⁸ But just because Nkrumah chose to try and ignore the Cold War game around him did not mean his actions were free from consequence in that realm. By using Soviet aircraft, Nkrumah created a cold snap in US-Ghana relations at the close of the Eisenhower administration.⁵⁹ Fluctuations in the relationship with the US would continue throughout 1960 and into the Kennedy administration.

From an outside perspective, Nkrumah had noble visions for the ONUC mission and its future. ONUC was to secure the stability of the country by neutralizing the separatist forces and expelling the Belgians. This was to be done without regard to the turbulence of the Cold War and with an ideological focus on African unity in the face of outsider threats. In many ways, the Pan-African future was to fend against the threat of outside escalation. Nkrumah decried any sort of "Cold War arena" in the Congo and declared "impartiality" an imperative, but in the same

⁵⁶ Telegram sent from Kindley AFB to Secretary of State Dean Rusk. October 1, 1961. NARA. Central Decimal Files, Box: 1250 Folder: 611-45H932/2-1260. Accessed November 24, 2017

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Telegram UN487-257 from Nkrumah to Hammarskjöld delivered by Alexander Quaison-Sackey. July 26, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0735-0005-17. Accessed November 7, 2017.

⁵⁹ This use of Soviet Aircraft proved particularly controversial for Nkrumah. His Chief of Defense Staff, General Henry Alexander worried about the political effects of the loaned aircraft and was "anxious" to switch to more clearly neutral Air Congo airliners. Unmarked Notes of Conversation with General Alexander. August 17, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No. S-0791-0042-02. Accessed November 7, 2017.

breath acted unilaterally.⁶⁰ This is not to argue that he acted two-faced and with purpose to deceive, but rather that he played the political game just like any other calculating leader.

Undeniably, a perfectly neutral peacekeeping operation would have been acceptable to Nkrumah, but he also hedged his bets to account for the meddling in the operation he saw as incessantly occurring. Nkrumah's more private missives and actions taken as the Crisis developed paint a picture of a distinct realist with a particular set of goals.

Threading Ghanaian Unilateralism

There is no denying Nkrumah was complex and could be fickle. Mahoney picks up on this attitude through his sources and analysis.⁶¹ But this view of Nkrumah does not fully consider the impact of his regional African aspirations. It is simplistic to argue that Nkrumah was just a 'fickle' leader; this ignores both his agency and his ambitions. A subsection of his self-help ideology allowed for him as an 'outsider' positively invested in the future of his neighbors to assist similar leaders—even if it meant violating their country's sovereignty (or his own neutrality).

This friction is seen most clearly in the direct actions Nkrumah ordered the Ghanaian contingent to take while in country on their UN mission. One such example was a personal command to provide Lumumba a "provision of armed police guard".⁶² While this action was not terribly controversial, there is no such record of it being approved by UN command and appears

⁶⁰ Telegram No. 623 from US Embassy Accra to Secretary of State. November 28, 1960. NARA. Central Decimal Files, Box: 533, Folder: 332.70G/9-160. Accessed 24 November, 2017.

⁶¹ Mahoney, 165-167.

⁶² Minister of Defense Accra to Commissioner of Police, Ghana. August 11, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-02. Accessed November 7, 2017.

to be a unilateral action by Nkrumah. Another important example is a telegram from the Ministry of Defense in Accra to the Ghana Brigade Headquarters in Leopoldville which states “The President [Nkrumah] wishes in [sic] to be most strongly impressed on all ranks that the Ghana Army, like all UN troops, has a positive duty to protect the prime minister Mr. Lumumba and all other members of the legitimate government...”⁶³ While it is clear Nkrumah wished to remain within the multilateral framework of the ONUC mission (and even referenced “all UN troops”) it is also clear that he had a direct agenda that he wished fulfilled. For Hammarskjöld, ONUC was meant to ensure the country did not devolve into civil war and the protection of Lumumba may have been secondary to this goal. Nkrumah on the other hand chose to specifically prioritize the protection of Lumumba above other goals. Instead of being viewed as evidence of communist collusion, a deeper analysis reveals the more important role played by Nkrumah’s Pan-Africanist vision.

Many of the incidents of blurred impartiality revolved around the use of the Ghanaian police contingent. Most obviously, this is because it was one of the largest in the country at the time and as a police force interacted with civilian/political spheres more than regular UN peacekeepers.⁶⁴ These instances often were the results of Nkrumah’s unilateral wishes filtering into the multilateral, officially apolitical mission from UN command. The Secretary-General wanted to separate the Ghana police force from the Ghanaian Brigade so that the latter could be moved outside of Leopoldville. Nkrumah’s response was emphatically that if the police force was to remain in the Congo at all, they would have to stay with the regular army peacekeeping

⁶³ Telegram No. 40 from ONUC BDE Leo to HQ ONUC. September 17, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-05. Accessed December 13, 2017.

⁶⁴ UN Telegram. “Daily Figures BN” August 11, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder S-0791-0042-02. Accessed November 7, 2017.

troops.⁶⁵ His reasoning for this was that the police needed the army for logistical support. Hammarskjöld disapproved of this response and shot back the implied excuse could be overcome and that the UN would like to “avoid” using peacekeepers purely as a police force.⁶⁶

Nkrumah’s desire for internal political influence did not stop with the police forces however. He even sought to insert his influence into the ANC. In a telegram to New York from the Ministry of Defense, Nkrumah offers to jointly train ANC officer cadets in Canada.⁶⁷ While it is difficult to infer the motives behind this act, it is worth noting that Ghanaian/Canadian-trained ANC officers would provide another level of Ghanaian influence in the Congo—particularly since the ANC was in many cases not friendly with the Lumumbist camp. This is especially important when considering the trouble the ANC would later give the Ghanaian peacekeepers in particular.

It is difficult to fully unwrap the many layers of purpose Nkrumah had for the Ghanaian contingent of ONUC. But a contradiction emerges between the strict neutrality of peacekeeping and the political imperatives issued by Nkrumah. Nkrumah had an optimistic outlook on the role of the UN in creating his much-desired African unity. It is also evident that Nkrumah publicly envisioned Ghana’s (and the UN’s) entrance into the Congo in a traditionally neutral, non-aligned manner. But his personal support for Lumumba and ambitions for African unity led him to take gradually more aggressive unilateral action within the conflict. Where other authors have focused on secret US-UN collaboration, they miss that Nkrumah had his own ideas about using

⁶⁵ Telegram No. 3212 from Indar Rikhye in New York to Ralph Bunche. November 5, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-01. Accessed November 7, 2017.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Unnamed telegram No. 8172 Ext. 237 from De Graft Dickson to Quaison Sackey. September 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder: S-0752-0013-02. Accessed November 16, 2017.

the ONUC force as well.⁶⁸ This tension between the impartiality in the UN mission and the political stakes of Nkrumah's goals caused intense dilemmas and conflicting directives from both the UN command and the Ghanaian government.

Lumumba the Friend in Need

When Lumumba still held sway, Nkrumah was considerably more impartial in both speech and actions. In mid-August, prior to the Kasavubu-Lumumba split, Nkrumah requested that "Ghana police...escort" both Prime Minister Lumumba and then-president Kasavubu.⁶⁹ For an unknown reason, Kasavubu declined the escort, however this could be due to the growing rift between him and Lumumba. Regardless, there is an effort on Nkrumah's part to give all parties equal protection. The line of UN optimism was particularly bright.

Following the mutual dismissals by Lumumba and Kasavubu on September 5th, 1960, the Ghanaian troops demonstrated restraint and acted impartially in accordance with orders sent from UN command. In a situation report from the Leopoldville Ghana unit, it is outlined that "Kasavubu is still protected by troops of the Ghana Brigade and remains firmly inside his house."⁷⁰ Given the turbulence of Leopoldville at that time, it is safe to assume that the Ghanaian troops were most likely truly protecting Kasavubu from political violence. This demonstrates remarkable restraint especially since they were, at that point, protecting both Kasavubu and Lumumba who were seen as two sides of the gradually deteriorating situation.

⁶⁸ Gibbs, 95.

⁶⁹ Telegram No. 68 from ONUC BDE Leo to HQ UNO. August 15, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0752-0013-02. Accessed November 16, 2017.

⁷⁰ Situation Report titled: "Perintrep No. 4; Period Covered 9-15 Sep." September 15, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-05. Accessed December 12, 2017.

This strict neutrality would come under increasing pressure and grow more faint as the conflict dragged on.

Shortly thereafter, Nkrumah sent the telegram mentioned above in which Lumumba is prioritized over “lending any assistance” to any individual attempting to “usurp the functions of government”.⁷¹ Depending on the political side of the conflict this could point to Kasavubu. It would not be much longer until the more aggressive Nkrumah appeared, insisting the Ghanaian contingent remain in Leopoldville along with the police unit. When the bottom line was shown, the UN mission played second to the imperatives of Nkrumah’s Pan-Africanism.

As the situation became more fraught, Nkrumah waded in with less regard to impartiality issuing increasingly aggressive orders. This was partially his desire to make up for what he perceived as the failures of the ONUC force to complete his own mission. Nevertheless, these actions represented movement on his part often without the express consent of the UN leadership. According to US sources, shortly after Lumumba’s dismissal, Nkrumah sent Hammarskjöld a memo demanding Lumumba have access to the Leopoldville radio or else he would pull the troops out of the contingent and use them unilaterally “at the disposal of the legitimate Lumumba government.”⁷² The same State Department source claims it is one of a series of statements in which Nkrumah and the government of Ghana disparage Kasavubu in favor of Lumumba. This is a far cry from the use of Ghanaian ONUC troops to defend Kasavubu only a few weeks before. Most obviously the ultimatum demonstrates Nkrumah’s willingness to use the sizable Ghanaian contingent as a powerful bargaining chip.

⁷¹ See Telegram No. 40 from ONUC BDE Leo to HQ ONUC. September, 17, 1960.

⁷² Telegram No. 341 from Ambassador Flake to Secretary of State. September 13, 1960. NARA. Central Decimal Files, Box: 533 Folder: 332.70G/9-160. Accessed November 24, 2017.

In late September, as the conditions for Lumumba became increasingly volatile, Special Advisor Indar Rikhye noted that situation reports sent to ONUC HQ were being forwarded or “endorsed” directly to the Ministry of Defense in Accra as well.⁷³ He notes that while it is not uncommon for contingents to inform their home countries of the situation on the ground, direct reporting was “irregular” and should be ceased. Nkrumah always seemed slightly reluctant to fully overstep his boundaries and weaken his own argument for the need for neutral UN intervention, but his actions demonstrated the developing trend wherein he gradually supported Lumumba more and more as the Congolese Premier sailed into increasingly threatening seas.

Confusion on the Ground

These different interpretations often left the Ghanaian peacekeepers in difficult situations in which they did not know what path to take when confronted with opposing sides. While many of the higher echelon officers (General Alexander in particular) supported Nkrumah’s goals many of the lower ranking soldiers were less directly invested in the ideological support for Lumumba. They were more immediately concerned with the challenges negatively affecting their interactions with the various other factions in the capital at the time. One such incident of confusion occurred when Lumumba approached Ghanaian peacekeepers guarding a radio station in Leopoldville. According to the commanding officer’s report, Lumumba accompanied by “8 ANC and some civilians” demanded access to the radio.⁷⁴ When the officer told him he had orders from the “United Nations” to not let anyone in, Lumumba became “furious” and asked

⁷³ UN Telegram from Indar Rikhye “Submission of Situation Reports”. September 30, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-05. Accessed December 12, 2017.

⁷⁴ Kotoka, E. K. “Report on Incident at Radio Congo Studios” September, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0752-0013-02. Accessed November 16, 2017.

him “Whether [he] was not a Ghanaian.”⁷⁵ The implication being that Ghanaian peacekeepers would help Lumumba regardless of their UN orders. The officer did not allow anyone in, even after more ANC showed up alongside the pro-Lumumba ANC General Lundula.⁷⁶

This was not the only instance where Ghanaian peacekeepers dealt with conflicting missions. A situation report outlines an incident where Lumumba asked for a police sergeant to accompany him but then was also given “a police jeep (4-5 policemen) and one army landrover (5 soldiers)”.⁷⁷ While the report is sparse in details, it makes clear the officer in charge was in “disobedience of orders” and should not have given Lumumba the extra protection. While the UN orders appear to have only authorized Lumumba the sergeant he asked for, there was a distinct desire by the officer in charge to provide him with more protection. The larger issue at play in both of these incidents was that the differing signals from Accra and ONUC HQ often made it difficult for the Ghanaian troops themselves to understand their orders. This theme will be explored extensively in the next section as it became a much larger problem, especially in relation to the other factions in Leopoldville at the time.

In examining Nkrumah's ambitions as part of a regional vision, one can understand that while he valued self-determination and African unity, this was not mutually exclusive to unilateral action if he saw the UN not doing its part. Obviously, Nkrumah was playing a direct role in many of his actions, but he wasn't acting totally without precedent; the UN clearly also

⁷⁵ See Kotoka, E. K. “Report on Incident at Radio Congo Studios” September, 1960.

⁷⁶ This incident potentially also sheds light on the lack of purchase into Nkrumah's plan by the Ghanaian peacekeepers themselves. While it is dangerous to assume too much from this one instance, the general apathy shown by many Ghanaian soldiers for the lofty tenets of Pan-Africanism (and the subsequent need to protect Lumumba) demonstrate their aims may not have been completely one in the same.

⁷⁷ Khaliq, H. A. “Mr. Lumumba's Visit to Town on 25 SEP 60” September 25, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0752-0013-02. Accessed November 16, 2017.

supported the protection of Lumumba to a degree. When Lumumba was threatened with arrest by the ANC, UN HQ made it clear that under no circumstances would ANC troops be allowed into his house, even if they had a signed warrant.⁷⁸ This demonstrates a level of stepping over sovereignty similar to what Nkrumah was involved in, although it is still far more restrained than he often was. Even in November, after the situation deteriorated significantly for Lumumba, Nkrumah still called for “absolute impartiality in the performance” of ONUC.⁷⁹ At that point it is difficult to say what Nkrumah meant by impartiality and whether or not he simply wanted more control in the situation.

Ghanaian peacekeepers were already put in a difficult spot upon entering the serpentine political environment of Leopoldville. But this was made all the worse by the competing Pan-Africanist political agenda of Nkrumah which often ran contrary to guidance from UN Headquarters. Lumumba and his allies accused the Ghanaians of not doing enough and siding with foreign interests while Kasavubu and Mobutu derided them as communist cronies. Faced with two conflicting missions and a rapidly degrading neutrality, the Ghanaians found themselves in confusing situations with their ability to function suppressed. In the end, they could not save Lumumba from the political firestorm that engulfed him and took his life in early 1961.

Nkrumah was both furious and dismayed at the death of Lumumba. Throughout the latter half of 1960 he had grown increasingly disillusioned with both the UN and the ongoing situation in the Congo. Despite the increasing pressure he put on the Ghanaians to protect

⁷⁸ Telegram from ONUC BDE to ONUC HQ “Daily Sitrep No. 52”. October 11, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-05. Accessed December 12, 2017.

⁷⁹ Nkrumah, Kwame. Quoted in Telegram No. 623 from US Embassy Accra to Secretary of State. November 28, 1960. NARA. Central Decimal Files, Box: 533 Folder: 332.70G/9-160. Accessed November 24, 2017.

Lumumba, Nkrumah found himself constantly mired by Lumumba's enemies and the slow pace of the ONUC mission. By early 1961, much of the Ghanaian contingent had been flown out of Leopoldville and was now part of the growing ONUC force building for operations against the secessionists. Dismayed, in September 1961, Nkrumah would begin the "complete withdrawal of the Ghana contingent."⁸⁰ However, this was not the end of the Ghanaians in ONUC. They would return soon after and be one of the last contingents when the mission ended in 1964. But it was not simply the competing missions and Pan-Africanism of Nkrumah that complicated the mission and led to this rocky track record. In fact, these problems were only the beginning: the second-order effects of the degraded neutrality would further muddle the mission for the Ghanaians and lead to their declining effectiveness.

⁸⁰ Ministry of Defense Accra Report. "Reliefs Ghana Contingent in the Congo". September 12, 1961. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-01. Accessed November 7, 2017.

Chapter 2: Lost Credibility

“The Ghana Brigade is completely fed up with both the Congolese, with Leo[poldville] and with its own politicians”⁸¹ With bluntness, Supreme Commander of ONUC forces, General Carl van Horn summed up the frustration of peacekeepers in the Congo only a few short months into their mission. In an exasperated tone he continued, “It is not fair to sacrifice good troops for purely political reasons of prestige.” Here van Horn was referring to the onslaught of political intrigue and harassment by the ANC against ONUC peacekeepers—against the Ghanaians in particular. Peacekeeping is inherently difficult and the lack of progress can often be frustrating. But the case of the Ghanaian Brigade poses an acute and fascinating example.

The mixed signals of both impartiality and intervention coming from ONUC Headquarters and Accra not only muddied the waters for the Ghanaians but painted them as political targets. Nkrumah’s increasingly forceful vision to assist the embattled Lumumba through UN action made it clear to political rivals that the Ghanaians could not be trusted. This, in spite of any orders from the UN that demonstrated impartiality, degraded the credibility of the Ghanaians. Ghanaians were often selected as targets for ANC harassment, whether it was physical violence, threats, roadblocks, or simply denying their ability to land in the Congo.

The ANC and ONUC

From the outset of the Crisis, it was clear that hostile ANC forces did not want intervention from any outside group, whether it was Belgian paratroopers, Rhodesian

⁸¹ van Horn, Carl “van Horn’s Comments re number 2362” October 4, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0752-0013-02. Accessed November 17, 2017.

mercenaries, or UN blue helmets. The ANC itself constantly faced pay and food shortages leading to wide-scale indiscipline.⁸² Although promised raises by Lumumba, the ANC received very little training and strong leadership outside Mobutu, leading to incidents such as when “60 ANC seize[d] carload of beer at Luputa and [became] inebriated.”⁸³ When the Belgian officers left, the chain of command within the army weakened and ANC soldiers either became loyal to local commanders or to leaders like Mobutu or Lumumba. An ONUC report on the ANC outlines how the majority of the untrained army was “constantly menacing and frequently violating law and order”.⁸⁴ It paints a picture of “Arbitrary acts of lawlessness, such as unauthorized arrests, detentions, deportations and assaults...” While affirming a number of ailments as the sources of the problem, the report states that despite the claims of ANC authorities, the force has been “drawn into the vortex of political strife” that often surrounded Leopoldville.⁸⁵ The ANC was not a force of security and stability.

Amidst this general disarray there existed a pervading distaste among ANC soldiers for outsiders, particularly ONUC forces. This phenomenon was not exclusive to the Ghanaians as shown by the indiscriminate violence of the aforementioned report. The ANC would often set up roadblocks around Leopoldville to limit the mobility of ONUC forces. After the ANC blocked the road to the airport, Tunisian peacekeepers had to remove the blocking vehicles “without co-

⁸² UN Report. “Briefing notes concerning ANC” October 2, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0752-0001-05. Accessed December 12, 2017.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ UN Report. “Illegalities and Misdemeanors of ANC”. Undated, likely late 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0752-0001-05. Accessed December 12, 2017.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

operation” of the Congolese Army.⁸⁶ After rebuilding the roadblock, they only dispersed after the Tunisian commander “ignored ANC threats and walked past [the] block”. Although in the above case the issue was resolved by the actions of the Tunisian ground commander, the ongoing attacks presented a serious issue to all ONUC forces.⁸⁷

Supreme Commander General van Horn wrote directly to Colonel Mobutu (who following his political coup in September was the de facto leader of the ANC) demanding the cessation of hostile activities towards all ONUC forces. He did not mention the Ghanaians in particular. General van Horn called for “disciplinary action” and that all “property belonging to the United Nations” which had been seized by the ANC, be returned to their rightful owners.⁸⁸ Eventually, Colonel Mobutu appeared to return many of the ONUC vehicles but the threats and roadblocks remained a consistent challenge to the operation. Mobutu claimed that it “was not possible for him to bring under control some elements of his army due to their state of excitement”.⁸⁹ Mobutu either did not have full control of the mutinous ANC, or he was using it as a ploy to continue his current operations against pro-Lumumbists. In this case it was most likely a combination of the two. At the same time, Mobutu is described by US agents as understanding that his “moral advantage” would “dissipate” if the harassment became too widespread and concrete.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Report from Tunisian Battalion. “Daily Sit Rep No. 74”. November 2, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-04. Accessed December 12, 2017.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ “General van Horn’s redraft of letter proposed by Ambassador Dayal from Supreme Commander to Col Mobutu”. November 26, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder Number: S-0752-0013-02. Accessed November 17, 2017.

⁸⁹ Telegram No. 1272 from US Ambassador Timberlake to Secretary of State. November 22, 1960. NARA. Central Decimal Files. Box: Box 533. Folder 332.70G/9-160. Accessed November 24, 2017.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

But this in no sense meant the violence and incidents involving the ANC ceased. Nearly every situation report coming from either the Ghanaian, Tunisian, or Guinean troops in Leopoldville is full of mentions of roadblocks and ANC interference.⁹¹ There were other sources that further pointed to Mobutu's dislike for the operation. One ONUC report repeats an "unconfirmed report that Col Mobutu has given 1200 francs per man to fight UNO and that he has issued ANC uniform to Civilians."⁹² This source obviously needs to be treated with caution as rumors were flying very quickly in Leopoldville at the time. That being said, it was well known among the Congolese that Mobutu was anti-ONUC and even if Mobutu's enemies were seeking to discredit him, this would do little to harm him. The rumor thus reflected the generally anti-ONUC sentiments held by Mobutu and the ANC.

But the ANC was not simply a monolith. While over the course of the Crisis it gradually solidified behind the leadership and aims of Colonel Mobutu, in the early parts of the Crisis there were many factions within the disorganized army. This factionalism was also often regional, pro-Mobutu ANC occupied the capital whereas the ANC in the hinterlands could be more split. Following Lumumba's capture there were rumors that members of the ANC would retaliate against Europeans and "arrest" them if he was not released.⁹³ Key to this assertion is that the troops threatening these actions were located within the "*Orientale*" province in North-East

⁹¹ Report from Tunisian Battalion. "Perintrep No. 11". November 4, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-04. Accessed December 12, 2017.

This particular situation report goes into more detail on the roadblock activity but it is emblematic of many other situation reports. Each one would have a section devoted to ANC actions and often included roadblocks, threats, and physical violence to both ONUC and civilians.

⁹² UN Report. "Daily Sitrep No. 64". October 23, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-05. Accessed December 12, 2017.

⁹³ UN Report. "ONUC HQ Sitrep No. 141". January 11, 1961. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-04. Accessed November 30, 2017.

Congo.⁹⁴ This was the same area in which pro-Lumumbist forces created a second base under Antoine Gizenga.⁹⁵ This regional disposition of ANC factions is corroborated by another ONUC report. In Kivu, (formerly *Orientale*) where ethnic tensions were strained, police and Congolese civilians clashed along with ANC units who “joined in the fray” and seemed to take various sides within the local conflict.⁹⁶ Another document references “Lumumba ANC” who were traveling to Port Francqui to “bottle up troop and war material reinforcements to Kasai.” even after the death of Lumumba.⁹⁷ The ANC was a destabilizing, untrained force which, despite regional factionalism, often targeted any ONUC troops. However, their attention soon turned to the Ghanaians in particular.

Targets on their Backs: Ghanaians and the ANC

With the caveats of disorderliness, factionalism, and general aggression towards all outsiders and civilians, the ANC’s predilection for specifically harassing Ghanaians shines through as a developing trend. The very arrival of Ghanaian troops was resisted. Congolese authorities in the air traffic control tower at Ndjili Airport denied Ghanaian ONUC troops and material “on grounds load sponsored by Ghana Govt”.⁹⁸ This occurred constantly during both November and December of 1960 as Congolese authorities often came up with technical reasons

⁹⁴ See UN Report. “ONUC HQ Sitrep No. 141”. January 11, 1961.

⁹⁵ Gizenga was a Lumumbist who swept to power in the Northeast following to downfall of Lumumba. He would play a role in the latter years of the ONUC mission. See Chronology section in the Introduction.

⁹⁶ UN Report. “ONUC HQ Sitrep No. 112”. December 13, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-04. Accessed November 30, 2017.

⁹⁷ “Telegram OPS 164”. January 27, 1961. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-04. Accessed November 30, 2017

⁹⁸ Telegram from General Alexander to Ambassador Dayal. “Ghana BDE LULU to ONUC Leo”. December 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0752-0013-02. Accessed November 17, 2017.

for denying landing.⁹⁹ Agreements were eventually reached, but this was one of the clearest examples in which the ANC and aligned Congolese authorities selected Ghanaians as the most important ONUC forces to be opposed.

There were many additional incidents that occurred with the Ghanaian troops on the ground in Leopoldville. The connection to the lost impartiality comes through in the obvious prejudices. The Ghanaians were identified by anti-Lumumba groups as being his most powerful supporters and thus experienced the most interference in their peacekeeping duties. One of the most revealing incidents of this phenomenon involved two Ghanaian peacekeepers on a night patrol in Leopoldville. According to the soldiers' report, they were stopped by two "Congolese soldiers" who "pointed their weapons at" them, "threatened to shoot" them, and asked one for his UN identification card.¹⁰⁰ The incident became more serious when they attempted to return to the roadblock later that night. Upon reaching the site, they were stopped by a large group of soldiers and some armed civilians, many of whom had "blood on their face[s] and their hands."¹⁰¹ The peacekeepers were asked if they were "Ghanaians" and "what [they] were doing in that area". They were told they could not pass and could only "patrol Lumumba and your Camp" and that Ghanaians could be killed without consequence because they were "silly Communist people."¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Personal Telegram from Rikhye to General Alexander. December 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0752-0013-02. Accessed November 17, 2017.

¹⁰⁰ Tennyson, L. D. L/CPL. "Incident Report". October 19, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-05. Accessed December 12, 2017.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

In the above incident the linchpin of the interaction is that Ghanaians were seen as Lumumba sympathizers and thus were specifically selected by the ANC as targets. While it is difficult to say whether or not the Congolese soldiers would have let a Tunisian or Indian peacekeeper through the block (given their previously mentioned tendencies) they were very explicit in the fact that being a Ghanaian peacekeeper had certain consequences. More concretely, their nationality restricted their ability to carry out patrols and by extension their peacekeeping duties. It is also worthy to note that Ghanaian peacekeepers also became synonymous with “Communists” in the eyes of anti-Lumumba Congolese. Just as Lumumba was branded this way, so to were the Ghanaian peacekeepers who were seen as intensely political agents rather than impartial ones.

Ghanaian peacekeepers and civilians were also specifically targeted with thefts and arrests. ANC soldiers even stole two of the Ghanaian ambassador’s cars, only relinquishing them under intense UN pressure.¹⁰³ They were also documented stealing a large number of ONUC vehicles and weapons.¹⁰⁴ Propaganda leaflets were distributed demanding specifically the “withdrawal of Ghana” from the Congo and “appeal[ed] to local inhabitants to shun Ghana civilians in business in the city.”¹⁰⁵

Ghanaian civilians in Leopoldville were routinely beaten and threatened. This became so great an issue that it was redirected from Ghanaian diplomatic channels to UN command.

¹⁰³ Telegram from Embassy of Ghana to Special Representative Rikhye, Leopoldville. November 28, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0735-0005-17. Accessed November 17, 2017. The cars are listed as a “Chevrolet Impala” and a black Cadillac”

¹⁰⁴ UN Report. “ONUC HQ Sitrep No. 101”. December 3, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-04. Accessed November 30, 2017.

¹⁰⁵ UN Report. “Daily Sitrep No. 78” 6 November, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-04. UNARMS. Accessed December 12, 2017.

However, sensing the conflation of Ghanaian national imperatives and ONUC mandates on neutrality, Special Representative Indar Rikhye returned the issue to Ghana.¹⁰⁶ Echoing Rikhye, Secretary-General Hammarskjöld ordered that “every possible step” be taken to free illegally detained Ghanaians but this action could not “exceed or compromise UN authority in the Congo”.¹⁰⁷ He elaborated on this statement by declaring that matters such as the arrests “can only be decided by the individual countries and the responsible Congolese authority”. This ambiguous message actually demonstrates the unique space occupied by the Ghanaians due to their less than impartial stature within the Congo. UN Headquarters would help with issues that specifically pertained to Ghanaian peacekeepers (such as stolen equipment) but whilst promising help for non-ONUC matters, UN HQ appeared reluctant to offer substantial assistance.

For the UN, this distinction between Ghanaians and Ghanaian peacekeepers was important in that the Ghanaian citizens were of their country but the peacekeepers were ‘on loan’ to the mission. But the conflation of attacks on both shows that to both the ANC and to the Congolese they quickly became synonymous. While this was certainly a factor of perception, it also stemmed from the mixing of signals from Accra and UN Command. Because Ghanaians were torn between acting as Ghanaian agents and as UN agents they were gradually seen as either a mix of the two or simply soldiers doing the bidding of Nkrumah and Lumumba. The deliberate targeting of Ghanaian peacekeepers due to the breakdown of this distinction was only half of the issue.

¹⁰⁶ Correspondence between Rikhye and Ghanaian Ambassador Welbeck. November 6, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder: S-0735-0005-17. Accessed November 6, 2017.

¹⁰⁷ Telegram No. 3505 from Rikhye to Hammarskjöld. November 17, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0735-0005-17. Accessed November 17, 2017.

The Political Peacekeepers

The other degrading factor on the Ghanaian mission was the loss of credibility due to the increasingly obvious conflicting motives of Nkrumah. The previously described incident involving the Ghanaian peacekeepers stopped at the roadblock offers a glimpse into this changed opinion held by the Congolese towards the Ghanaians. By calling the Ghanaians “Communists” the ANC soldiers no longer identified them as UN but rather as a potentially separate *political* force.¹⁰⁸

Even more damning was a rumor that Ghanaian peacekeepers “were spreading syphilis and...VD to subvert the youth of the Congo”.¹⁰⁹ The rumor gained “credence” among “civil population” around Leopoldville due to propaganda broadcasts and word of mouth.¹¹⁰ Most importantly, this imposition of disease and subversion was being called “A new present from Nkrumah”. Viewing and targeting the Ghanaians as outside forces is one matter, but this rumor represents the second piece of the lost credibility; a lack of trust from the civilian Congolese.¹¹¹ Rather than being seen as a neutral party, or even a politically motivated government force, they were now referred to simply as the arm of Nkrumah exerting his will in the Congo. Nkrumah’s Pan-African projects played no small part in the creation of this image.

But the venereal disease rumor was not the only instance of this phenomenon. A message sent to the Ghanaian embassy outlines that many Ghanaian citizens in Leopoldville were worried about a plot to “kidnap...certain prominent local Ghanaian citizens” with the intent to send them

¹⁰⁸ See Tennyson, L. D. L/CPL. “Incident Report”. October 19, 1960.

¹⁰⁹ UN Report. “Perintrep No. 7”. October 6, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-05. Accessed December 12, 2017.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

to a prisoner concentration camp (most likely staffed by ANC).¹¹² The reason for these suspected attacks is described as “the mistaken belief that Ghanaians are general supporters of Mr. Lumumba, and consequently have a hand in the current political unrest”. The key point being that whether or not Ghanaians actually supported Lumumba, the reputation gained by the actions and words of Nkrumah created a strong sense among the Congolese populace.

Another example occurred when a Company of Ghanaians were sent to the town of Bakwanga in Kasai and there was “Great apprehension there at arrival of Ghanaian [troops] who are alleged Lumumbists”¹¹³ While the townspeople were eventually “reassured” it is unmistakable that the reputation of the Ghanaians had been tarnished and they were now seen as acting out the will of Nkrumah in alignment with Lumumba. Being a source of fear and viewed as a political faction was certainly detrimental to the Ghanaians’ ability to carry on as a neutral party and endeared them to no one.

This intense political connection also weakened the overall capacity and credibility of ONUC itself. Anti-Lumumbist politician Joseph Iléo publicly disparaged the UN effort as a farce aided by “communists” and that Guineans and Ghanaians had the blood of “tens of thousands of Congolese” on their hands.¹¹⁴ Iléo also called out Nkrumah specifically for his role in the Crisis. It should be noted that Iléo had a strong political agenda and clearly was willing to deceive with false propaganda. This being said, Iléo’s comments demonstrate that the non-

¹¹² Telegram from Gold Coast People’s Union to Ambassador Welbeck. October 31, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0735-0005-17. Accessed November 7, 2017.

¹¹³ “Priority Intelligence Message” November 9, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-04. Accessed November 30, 2017.

¹¹⁴ Telegram No. G 107 from US Ambassador Timberlake to Secretary of State. November 12, 1960. NARA. Central Decimal Files. Box: 518, Folder: 325.70G/10-360. Accessed November 24, 2017.

neutral, political nature of the Ghanaian involvement was not only a lightening rod but also lowered the overall credibility of ONUC.

The lost political impartiality also played a role in how both UN and US officials interacted with the Ghanaians. While the UN response will be explored in the final chapter, US sources took a dim view of the role occupied by the Ghanaians. During one of the initial airlifts of Ghanaian troops and supplies, US advisors said they were “concerned about the introduction of four Ferret Scout Cars (tank-like vehicles mounted on rubber tires) in Congo as part of Ghana contingent.”¹¹⁵ The State Department had “political reservations”, and worried about the potential for the Ghanaians to use the heavier vehicles in support of Lumumba rather than expressly on their UN mission.¹¹⁶ In a meeting with US-UN advisor Ralph Bunche and Special Representative Andrew Cordier, State Department officials discussed the “danger of their [Ghanaian troops and armored vehicles] use in internal political maneuvering.”¹¹⁷ Cordier and Bunche contemplated moving the Ghanaians to Luluabourg and even delaying their deployment altogether. Cordier agreed that Nkrumah’s requests to “protect Lumumba, members of Lumumba ministry, and members of parliament...” was a specific use of “national contingents” and “completely unacceptable to UN.”¹¹⁸ Any actions or calls for assistance by the Ghanaian ONUC forces were soon viewed warily by the US which was thus often slow to respond

¹¹⁵ Outgoing Telegram from Dept. State to USUN NY. September 29, 1960. NARA. Central Decimal Files. Box: 533, Folder 332.70G/9-160. Accessed November 24, 2017.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Telegram No. 864 from New York to Secretary of State. “Airlift Ghana Troops and Vehicles Deptel 540”. October 1, 1960. NARA. Central Decimal Files Box: 533, Folder: 332.70G/9-160. Accessed November 24, 2017.

¹¹⁸ Telegram No. 1228 from New York to Secretary of State. November 1, 1960. NARA. Central Decimal Files. Box: 533, Folder: 332.70G/9-160. Accessed November 24, 2017.

positively. Whether it was delaying aircraft availability or creating inertia against the Ghanaians, the negative view held by the US of Ghanaian impartiality hindered their ability to fully function.

Yet it is more than slightly ironic to criticize the loss of Ghanaian impartiality and credibility on behalf of Nkrumah's unilateral support of Lumumba when the US was actively scheming with UN and anti-Lumumba forces. While the janus-faced US policy is well documented in the Congo Crisis, there are striking similarities to Nkrumah's interactions with ONUC. The CIA and US Ambassador, in a secret classified telegram, asked for "immediate instructions" from "SYG" Hammarskjöld to be sent to all ONUC forces to protect Congolese Foreign Minister Justin Bomboko and other members of the "legitimate" government.¹¹⁹ The legitimate government in question was the Kasavubu government which had just split with Lumumba two days prior. The word choice is particularly interesting as it is almost word for word what Nkrumah sent to the Ghanaian contingent in regards to Lumumba's administration.¹²⁰ Furthermore, US Ambassador Timberlake strikes a very concerned tone arguing that the "UN must prevent Lumumba from locking up those opposed to him or he will regain power".¹²¹

It would be a false double standard to criticize Nkrumah's calls for protection of the legitimate government without acknowledging the shifting nature of who was considered 'legitimate'. From Nkrumah's view this was Lumumba, and the fact that not only had the UN failed to protect him but that the US continued to increase pressure on him justified Nkrumah's growing partisan, political actions. Even the State Department was incredibly worried and aware

¹¹⁹ Unnumbered Telegram. "Following for Ambassador from Dulles and Herter". September 7, 1960. NARA. Central Decimal Files. Box: 533, Folder: 332.70G/9-160. Accessed November 24, 2017.

¹²⁰ See Telegram No. 40 from ONUC BDE Leo to HQ ONUC. September, 17, 1960.

¹²¹ See Unnumbered Telegram. "Following for Ambassador from Dulles and Herter". September 7, 1960.

of the negative effect its meddling would have on the world's view of the US and UN. In 1961, following the change of administration, Undersecretary of State Chester Bowles remarked in a secret memo that "the United Nations' position has seriously deteriorated" and that there was a "rapid undermining of world confidence in the UN" as a result of its actions in the Congo.¹²² The US was not impervious to the same phenomena which afflicting Ghanaians. Unilateral action disguised as a UN operation degraded the credibility of the whomever engaged in its pursuit.

By early 1961 it had become clear that while ONUC was by and large stabilizing the country, there were intense political pressures on all of its sides. The envisioned neutrality and impartiality that was supposed to accompany the Ghanaian Brigade existed, for the most part, only on paper. The chaotic anti-Lumumba ANC elements consistently targeted and harassed Ghanaians while Congolese civilians often believed rumors and propaganda describing the Ghanaians as Nkrumah's lackeys sent to subjugate the Congo. US and UN officials did not trust the motives of Ghanaian officials and for a host of reasons sought to delay Ghanaian deployments and send them far from the 'political vortex' surrounding Leopoldville. It would be simplistic and unfair to blame this solely on Nkrumah's words and actions, yet his unique vision for a Congo-Ghana alliance and his Pan-African support for Lumumba played important role in effectuating the lost credibility and neutrality of his troops. On the ground, after months of harassment, roadblocks, and muddy skirmishes, the soldiers of the Ghanaian contingent were exhausted, "infuriated", and unlikely to "stand for it much longer".¹²³

¹²² Bowles, Chester. "Memorandum for the Secretary, Subject: The Congo" April 18, 1961. NARA. Central Decimal Files. Box: 519, Folder: 325.70G/1-461. Accessed November 24, 2017.

¹²³ Canadian Cipher Telegram from Ghana BDE to ONUC LEO. December, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0752-0013-02. Accessed November 17, 2017.

Chapter 3: Escaping the Vortex

Relief would eventually come for the frustrated Ghanaian ONUC soldiers who, in 1961, would get their release from the political maelstrom enveloping Leopoldville. With the attacks coming at the Ghanaians from all sides, both Secretary-General Hammarskjöld and his advisors searched for a solution to the problem of the political peacekeepers. As by far the most complex peacekeeping mission to date, there was very little doctrine to dictate how to defuse the convoluted situation.

This final piece to the puzzle of sovereignty and neutrality lies in the response of UN officials to the Ghanaian problems. The settled-upon solution rested mainly on a geographic shift in deployment. This change would see the Ghanaians moved from Leopoldville to Luluabourg; from the capital of the Congo to the capital of the secessionist province of Kasai. While the move may seem now to have been the obvious solution, it was the result of several complex factors. First and perhaps most important was the need to remove Ghanaians from the political center. This was necessary to place the Ghanaians in an area where they could be more easily impartial. At the same time, the decision was also the result of a practical, operational need for more troops in Kasai. And finally, there was the goal to provide the Ghanaians with missions that would be more agreeable to Nkrumah's political ambition and also to the UN cause. This last reason, while not the most important at the time, has wide implications for a broader examination of peacekeeping in the conclusion.

Masking Politics and Operational Necessity

As early as the end of September 1960, UN headquarters was trying to move the Ghanaians into Kasai from Leopoldville. They framed the move as a factor of “purely... operational relief” so as “to avoid any difficulties with Mr. Nkrumah.”¹²⁴ From the outset, there was the issue of ensuring that Nkrumah did not perceive the move to Kasai to be a political one but rather an ‘operational necessity’. It is difficult to untangle the two motives since at its heart the move was the product of several intentions. Although the UN wanted to spin the move as an operational one, the political overtones would have been obvious to all—including Nkrumah. Most compelling to this narrative is a State Department document in which Cordier and Bunche privately discuss the possibility that “vehicles and men be transported [to] Luluabourg airport instead of Leopoldville”¹²⁵ This clandestine planning by two of the Secretary-General’s closest American advisors, and their agreement to bring the issue up with him signifies the intensely political nature of the move.

Nkrumah understood the political importance of having peacekeepers in Leopoldville as evidenced by the earlier documents wherein he demanded the Ghanaian police forces remain in the capital.¹²⁶ Additionally, in late November of 1960 when the efforts to move the Ghanaians were beginning to get underway, Nkrumah appears to have requested “that a contingent of the Ghana troops now serving under UN command in the Congo be sent back to Leopoldville as a

¹²⁴ Notes of Supreme Commander Dayal. “Ghana Brigade”. September 27, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. File No: S-0791-0042-01. Accessed November 7, 2017.

¹²⁵ See Outgoing Telegram from Dept. State to USUN NY. September 29, 1960.

¹²⁶ See Telegram No. 3212 from Indar Rikhye in New York to Ralph Bunche. November 5, 1960.

matter of urgency”¹²⁷ While the contents of the message are unclear and the reasons for the request cloudy, Secretary-General Hammarskjöld told Nkrumah, “I am sure that this request does not imply any criticism of the services which the troops of other African States have rendered in Leopoldville...”¹²⁸ The implication of Hammarskjöld’s word choice was that he hoped Nkrumah was not trying to reassign Ghanaian troops back to the capital because he did not trust the other troops taking over the post. The mention by Hammarskjöld specifically of “African States” could be an attempt to pre-empt a response from Nkrumah in which he would claim outsiders were meddling.¹²⁹ This shows an astuteness on the part of the Secretary-General for understanding Nkrumah’s Pan-African vision. He knew it would put Nkrumah in a difficult spot to criticize other African nations, particularly other allies.

Even when the move was still being debated and planned, Ghanaian UN Delegate Alex Quaison-Sackey expressed his and Nkrumah’s disdain for the shift. After outlining a series of illegal activities such as “supporters of President Kasa-Vubu disguised in military attire... terrorizing and arbitrarily arresting supporters of Premier Lumumba” and “severe beating”, Quaison-Sackey questions the soundness of the decision.¹³⁰ He goes on “In light of these incidents, the President of Ghana finds it difficult to share your confidence that recent disorders in Leopoldville are in no way related to the projected move of Ghana troops...” The controversy

¹²⁷ Incoming Clear Telegram from Secretary-General Hammarskjöld to Dayal. November 26, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. File No: S-0735-0005-17. Accessed November 7, 2017.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ See “Telegram No. 623 from US Embassy Accra to Secretary of State. November 28, 1960. As the cited document shows, Nkrumah was famously very against outsider “colonialist powers” from getting involved in the conflict. This is discussed in detail in the first chapter of this paper. Thus Hammarskjöld’s mention of “African States” could certainly be an attempt to counter any argument from Nkrumah wherein he would justify moving Ghanaians back due to outside interference.

¹³⁰ Quaison-Sackey, Alex. Telegram No. 3078 from Dayal to Secretary-General. November 1, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0735-0005-17. Accessed November 7, 2017.

that surrounded the relocation leaves no question about the political forces that played a role in its planning and execution.

The Congolese were also aware of the political nature of Ghanaian deployment. When attempting to bring an additional Ghanaian “infantry company” into the country, Supreme Commander van Horn notes that any additional Ghanaian troops brought into Congo must be denoted specifically as “required to enforce the ceasefire” against secessionists.¹³¹ Every faction involved in the conflict knew that the movement to Kasai was a result of the political incidents which continuously surrounded the Ghanaians. While this political aspect was clearly a large driver it was not the only reason for the movement.

Despite the clearly political facets, there was also an actual need for troops in the secessionist provinces, particularly Kasai. This other reason worked in tandem with the political impetus; it allowed Hammarskjöld to kill two birds with one stone. In many ways the two causes were inseparable. He could justifiably call the move strategic and provide much-needed relief to Kasai, at the same time as removing the Ghanaians from the political storm of Leopoldville. Prior to the redeployment, a Major in the Ghanaian contingent claimed that the current troop levels in Kasai “will become impossible to maintain” for “purely military reasons” and require additional support.¹³² He went on to say that it was “necessary” that “reinforcement from outside” be sent to Kasai to maintain the current level of security. This section of the Ghanaian Brigade which had deployed to Kasai earlier were in need of additional troops, the bulk of which were in Ghanaians in Leopoldville. Additionally, the Tunisian detachment which had also been

¹³¹ Telegram from Supreme Commander van Horn to Ambassador Dayal. “Ghana Reinforcement”. December 10, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0752-0013-02. Accessed November 17, 2017.

¹³² Telegram from Defense Accra to Ghana Delegate New York. Unnamed Document. January 28, 1961. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0791-0042-01. Accessed November 7, 2017.

stationed in Luluabourg had been there “for a considerable time and required a change of station.”¹³³ The fighting in the Kasai region had been the most intense. Whereas in most parts of the country (including Leopoldville) the ONUC forces rarely had to open fire in self-defense, a UN report notes: “The Tunisian contingent in Kasai for example, has been involved in severe inter tribal conflict and has had to resort to rifle fire in self defense...it has suffered some casualties in the execution of such duties.”¹³⁴ The need for new troops in Luluabourg was well established on a military level. The region played host to some of the more active fighting between ethnic groups and secessionist factions. The ONUC units stationed there were under considerable strain.

There was no single cause for the general airlift of Ghanaian troops into Kasai from Leopoldville. By the end of 1960 and into 1961 it was certainly clear that the Ghanaian contingent was a magnet for political incidents endemic to the partisan environment of Leopoldville. At the same time there was a distinct necessity for increased troops in the interior of the country and ONUC resources were strained. The confluence of these two factors created the solution of the Leopoldville-Luluabourg airlift. The move sought to align the political motives of Nkrumah with the operational designs of ONUC.

¹³³ See Telegram from Defense Accra to Ghana Delegate New York. Unnamed Document. January 28, 1961. While it is important to note that this document discusses posing the move as “operational relief” so as to not incur the suspicion of Nkrumah, it also describes several valid purely operational reasons for reinforcement. The emphasis on operational effectiveness is therefore not simply a hollow argument made up for political purposes.

¹³⁴ Telegram No. B-572 from Ralph Bunch to Secretary-General. August 20, 1960. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0752-0015-02. Accessed December 12, 2017.

Bridging Politics and Peacekeeping

Nkrumah had made it very explicit from the outset of Ghana's involvement that he saw ONUC's mandate as allowing for aggressive action against both the Belgians and the secessionist provinces. In an "unexpected" speech shortly after the commencement of ONUC, Nkrumah called for the "complete withdrawal of all Belgian troops" and for the UN to "ignore any application for recognition of [secessionist] Katanga" as it was "an integral part of Congo"¹³⁵ The Ghanaians and Nkrumah were also arrayed against the Kalonjists, secessionist supporters of Albert Kalonji, the self-proclaimed leader of South Kasai. Whether implicitly in calls for the unification of the central Congolese government, or more explicitly when Ghana threatened to "withdraw the whole Contingent" after being targeted by an overwhelming Kalonjist force, the secessionists were certainly an enemy of Ghana.¹³⁶ As discussed previously in chapter 1 of this thesis, Nkrumah was assertive in his many goals in the Congo. While he called strongly for impartiality and neutrality, he backed Lumumba against both the secessionists and Kasavubu/Mobutu. To Nkrumah, the Kalonji secessionists represented a defined threat against the national unity that was a fundamental building block of the larger Pan-African goals.

When the Ghanaians moved into Kasai, the objectives they had in front of them conflicted less with Nkrumah's. General Alexander, while serving as Nkrumah's Chief of Defense Staff, wanted the UN force to be much more aggressive in assisting Lumumba and the central government against the secessionists. This opinion was rejected by Ralph Bunche, who

¹³⁵ Telegram No. 121 from US Embassy Accra to Secretary of State. July 21, 1960. NARA. Central Decimal Files, Box: 1702. Folder: 745J.5/1-2960. Accessed December 13, 2017.

¹³⁶ Telegram No. 1330 from Dayal to the Secretary General. February 25, 1961. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0735-0005-17. Accessed November 7, 2017.

argued ONUC was a “peace force not a fighting force” (emphasis original).¹³⁷ In Leopoldville, the Ghanaians had to choose in a sense between the official total impartiality of ONUC and the orders from Nkrumah to support Lumumba. While it would be false to say the goals magically aligned in South Kasai, the contradiction between Nkrumah’s politics and UN neutrality lessened. In South Kasai the Ghanaians would be amassed more against the Kalonjists than politically against Kasavubu supporters or ANC (although these problems still existed). This would allow them to satisfy a requirement of sorts held by Nkrumah, fighting the secessionists, yet still remain within the UN bounds. As intimated earlier, this did not work out completely and Nkrumah was still very disappointed with the move to Luluabourg, but this final impetus for the relocation is particularly insightful as a method of dealing with the political nature of peacekeeping.

While many countries joined the ONUC force, each one had their own political reasons. Simply by creating the multilateral force the UN prevented a multitude of unilateral interventions. This thesis has examined in depth the reasons that surrounded Ghana’s involvement and the subsequent degradation of their efficacy. In the act of moving the Ghanaians and seeking to align interests, UN command began to engage with the first challenges of peacekeeping. One of the trickiest aspects of controlling a multinational force is securing a unity of purpose. This seemingly small move to Luluabourg was just that—it sought to find the common ground between the various competing ideologies of ONUC’s purpose. The decision to make the relocation to Luluabourg was chiefly inspired by the dual realities of political interference and military necessity. But in addition to these main thrusts, there was the

¹³⁷ See Telegram No. B-572 from Ralph Bunch to Secretary-General. August 20, 1960.

theoretical need to align the Pan-African ideology of Nkrumah with the purported neutrality of the UN. By examining this decision and the precipitating events that occurred during the early years of the mission, there emerge many important lessons.

Conclusion: Peacekeeping and Peacemaking

“I look upon the United Nations as the only organisation that holds out any hope for the future of mankind.”¹³⁸ It was Nkrumah, known for grandiose statements and dramatic oration, who delivered this line to the UN General Assembly. One could easily write this statement off as standard gesturing. It is after all found in a book he wrote about himself composed mostly of his own speeches. But delving deeper reveals that Nkrumah’s opinion of the UN was truly encapsulated by this declaration. As an early father of Pan-Africanism, his intensely political ideology complicated and frustrated the UN mission, but at his core Nkrumah truly believed in the worthwhile of the ONUC mission.

Through all the frustration and deadlock, the conflict and accusations of meddling, Nkrumah and Ghana still stood ready to serve within the ONUC force to the very end. In 1963, in writing to Secretary-General U Thant, Nkrumah, while disappointed at the outcome, still argued the UN had a positive role to play.¹³⁹ Nkrumah held fast to his belief that the UN could be a counter to the Cold War quickly subsuming the world into primary powers and their ‘third world’ battlegrounds. For Nkrumah, the interaction between African states in the UN held the key to establishing an African unity against the Cold War dichotomy.

The irony of the Congo Crisis is that the legacy focuses most intensely on the Cold War angle. The most obvious reason is that despite the efforts of Nkrumah and other non-aligned leaders, the tentacles of the global superpowers spread across the globe. The Congo was not

¹³⁸ Nkrumah, Kwame. Quoting himself in: *I Speak of Freedom*, 263.

¹³⁹ Nkrumah, Kwame. Letter to Secretary-General U Thant. December 18, 1963. UNARMS. ONUC Fonds. Folder No: S-0735-0005-17. Accessed November 7, 2017.

immune. In this way, the legacy is not incorrect; communism, covert CIA operations, Russian advisors, and nefarious dealings for strategic minerals all played a part in the Congo Crisis. These narratives often grab the most immediate attention and have done so to the point of dominating the history of the Congo Crisis. The Congo is thus relegated to yet another forgotten corner of the world where the Cold War was waged and African leaders become third-world pawns in the American-Soviet chess game. Not only is this simply false, it causes a blindness in the history which obfuscates the many lessons that should have been analyzed and learned long ago. By seeing African politics as auxiliary to the Cold War, scholars have blotted out the issues of regional politics and neutrality—issues that still play immense roles in the area today.

This thesis has sought to explore this neutrality and politics in peacekeeping both thematically and in terms of causes and effects. The first objective was to demonstrate how Nkrumah presented a unique challenge to the ONUC mission. Deeply invested in a political Pan-Africanism, Nkrumah had a purpose and mission in the Congo—one he was willing to prioritize above UN mandates. This challenge was particularly complex because Nkrumah envisioned the UN as playing a part in stabilizing the future Africa union. This created a crisis of direction: whose mission was ONUC? Nkrumah threaded the line between unilateral and multilateral action, becoming increasingly aggressive in his support of Lumumba as he saw his counterpart in trouble.¹⁴⁰ In the end, Nkrumah was unable to save Lumumba from his enemies.

In his effort however, Nkrumah harmed the neutral status of the Ghanaian peacekeepers, painting them as political insiders rather than stabilizing outsiders. This opened them up to

¹⁴⁰ This thesis has not argued whether or not Nkrumah was justified in these actions. Instead it has sought to examine the ramifications of his actions on the efficacy of the Ghanaian ONUC forces, and the important connection to Pan-Africanism as the catalyst for this friction.

increasingly targeted and hostile attacks by the chaotic and violent ANC. The second objective of the thesis was to connect the loss of Ghanaian efficacy to the degraded credibility which they suffered as a result of their politicized posture. While the ANC often harassed all outsiders and ONUC peacekeepers, they quickly picked out the Ghanaians. Rumor and fear spread among the Congolese who began to see Ghanaian peacekeepers as agents of Nkrumah rather than of ONUC. Finally, this affected the US and UN who noted that Ghanaian troops had to be dealt with very delicately and tried to slow down their access to advanced weaponry in the Congo. All of these factors together stemmed from the contingent's use for political purposes and all decreased their capabilities as peacekeepers.

Eventually, the Ghanaians were sent to the secessionist provinces, away from the political vortex at Leopoldville. This thesis argued that this was not only due to an operational need for more troops in the area but also due to the necessity to separate the Ghanaians from their issues geographically. Furthermore, in this action, Hammarskjöld sought to realign the Pan-African motives of Nkrumah with the agendas of ONUC. By placing the contingent in an area where its main foe was the secessionist Kalonjists, he ensured that they were both working towards Nkrumah's goal of Congolese unification, but at the same time were also serving UN interests. This experience and the struggles of the peacekeepers yield lessons to the present but seem to have been lost in favor of other narratives.

For the past decade, peacekeeping scholarship has shifted its scope and begun to examine what is being called 'African solutions to African problems'. The ideology has been guided by the concept that "African states prefer to solve their own problems and reduce the influence of

external actors in continental affairs.”¹⁴¹ Authors claim that “sub-Saharan African states are increasingly addressing regional conflicts by participating in UN operations deployed in the region.”¹⁴² These arguments are not without credence; the global trend in peacekeeping has pivoted not only towards operations in Africa, but operations by Africans. According to one article, “By early 2017, African countries contribute approximately 48,000 peacekeepers to the UN, which amounts to about 50% of all UN peacekeepers.”¹⁴³ With the advent of the African Union (AU) as the replacement for the Organization for African Unity (OAU), a new continental peacekeeping organization has arisen.

At the same time, there is a continuing debate on the current status of UN peacekeeping operations in Africa. This debate charts a similar path alongside the AU discourse. There are those who argue that peacekeeping has been a success in conflict mediation and violence reduction.¹⁴⁴ Just as there are those who point to increasing costs, scandals, and a continuance of the same protracted conflicts.¹⁴⁵ The arguments often revolve around the political motivations of African leaders to accept peacekeeping forces and participate in missions. While many works simply focus on buzzwords like ‘capability building’, many of the more critically nuanced pieces

¹⁴¹ Mays, Terry. “African Solutions for African Problems: The Changing Face of African-Mandated Peace Operations.” *Journal of Conflict Studies* [Online], 23.1 (2003): Web. 26 Feb. 2018

¹⁴² Coleman, Katharina P. “Innovations in ‘African Solutions to African Problems’: the Evolving Practice of Regional Peacekeeping in Sub-Saharan Africa.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 49, no. 4 (2011): 517–45. DOI: 10.1017/S0022278X11000462.

¹⁴³ de Coning, Cedric “Peace enforcement in Africa: Doctrinal distinctions between the African Union and United Nations”. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 38:1 (2017): 145-160. DOI: [10.1080/13523260.2017.1283108](https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2017.1283108)

¹⁴⁴ Hultman, Lisa, Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon. “Beyond Keeping Peace: United Nations Effectiveness in the Midst of Fighting.” *American Political Science Review* 108, no. 4 (2014): 737–53. DOI: 10.1017/S0003055414000446

¹⁴⁵ Victor, Jonah. “African Peacekeeping in Africa: Warlord Politics, Defense Economics, and State Legitimacy.” *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 2 (2010): 217-29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25654557>.

examine the inherent complexities that accompany regional involvement in politically complex conflicts.¹⁴⁶

These contemporary works on peacekeeping either tend to ignore the extended history of peacekeeping in Africa, or at most simply reference “the need for some type of African regional security arrangement [that existed] as early as the 1960s”.¹⁴⁷ The studies seem to look at the issues with peacekeeping as solely arising in the 1990s—without a past. But the experience of the Ghanaian peacekeepers in the Congo Crisis has much to offer the current discourse on African peacekeeping. When Ghanaian troops landed in Leopoldville for the first time in 1960, they represented an entirely new endeavor. Bound to both their ONUC mission’s principles of neutrality and to the political ambitions of Nkrumah, they experienced pulls from many different directives. Within their failure to stay out of the political mire lay successes. The realignment found in the move to Kasai was based on a unification of multilateralism. Peacekeeping is not an apolitical exercise, it is attended by regional ambition and political maneuvering. National armies never fully give up their objectives and personas. Rather than seeking to impose unrealistic standards of total neutrality and impartiality, UN agents must understand the lessons of the Congo Crisis. In moving to Kasai, the Ghanaians were not shedding their political nature, rather they were playing *towards* it. The different impetuses and goals for the various peacekeeping contingents cannot be ignored; the experience of the Ghanaians demand this analysis. By finally accepting the inherently political purpose of peacekeepers from the outset,

¹⁴⁶ Beswick, Danielle “Peacekeeping, Regime Security and ‘African Solutions to African Problems’: exploring motivations for Rwanda's involvement in Darfur”, *Third World Quarterly*. 31:5 (2010): 739–754. DOI: [10.1080/01436597.2010.503566](https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2010.503566)

¹⁴⁷ Mays, Terry. “African Solutions for African Problems: The Changing Face of African-Mandated Peace Operations.”

the Ghanaians were eventually given sections of the mission and operation that were tailored to their specific goals and the goals of their Pan-African leadership.

African peacekeeping no longer exists under the specter of the Cold War. But even at its height, the Cold War shared the stage with the wishes of African leaders who struggled against each other just as mightily as Kennedy and Khrushchev. By looking at the political aspirations of Nkrumah, Lumumba, Kasavubu, and the Congolese political establishment, one is able to more readily glean the lessons of peacekeeping for today. The future of African peacekeeping does not lie in The Hague and it does not lie in New York. Rather it lies in Nairobi and Addis Ababa. The 1960s Pan-Africanist optimism of Nkrumah may no longer exist in the present, but political ambition certainly does. Effective analysis must derive from an inward examination of African actors and their political motives. These same types of motives drive peacekeeping today, just as they did in 1960s Congo.

Several months following the deaths of the 14 MONUSCO peacekeepers, the mission continues its silent progress. Its success is uncertain, plagued by an exceedingly complex conflict already at its height when the UN force entered; MONUSCO faces the prospect of trying to keep a peace that does not exist. In the present there exists no Cold War paradigm, instead, new external, geopolitical world orders have arisen. The presence of the so-called Global War on Terror, for example, threatens to distort and limit our understanding of peacekeeping and conflict. While global frameworks certainly bring new meaning, they cannot overshadow the importance of regional political ambition. Currently, factional violence is continuing throughout

the DRC, and protests are stepping up against the embattled President Joseph Kabila.¹⁴⁸ Once again, an African peacekeeping force faces a volatile environment fraught with complexity. The only certainty now remaining for those peacekeepers is the knowledge that regional political interests all have a part to play.

¹⁴⁸ *Al Jazeera News*. “DR Congo: At least one dead in latest anti-Kabila protests”. February 25, 2018. Accessed February 27, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/02/dr-congo-dead-latest-anti-kabila-protests-180225144103773.html>

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