

Disarming war, arming peace: The Congo crisis, Dag Hammarskjöld's legacy and the future role of MONUC in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

It is when we all play safe that we create a world of utmost insecurity.
Dag Hammarskjöld

*James-Emmanuel Wanki**

Abstract

Only recently, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) celebrated fifty years since the territory gained independence from Belgium. But the truth be told, Congo is not yet free. In more ways than are easily fathomable, the country continues to be buffeted by various reincarnations of greed and chaos – some externally driven, others internally motivated. This paper begins with a historical contextualisation of the conflicts in the DRC, before proceeding to take stock of the organisation's balance sheet thus far as it grapples with imminent peacekeeping, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction challenges in the country. Successes achieved by the United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) (now MONUSCO, the UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the DRC) are then pitted against setbacks in this regard. Finally, a prognosis of the UN's future role in the territory is built

* James-Emmanuel Wanki is Irish Aid Anna Lindh Research Fellow at the Centre for Peace and Development Studies, Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Limerick, Ireland.

on the template of the political, social and economic realities prevalent in the territory.

Within the present dispensation in the Congo, how can the UN play a more effective role in disarming the country's conflicts, while arming its capacity for lasting peace and security? In what ways can the broader international community muster its leverage more robustly in stemming the troubling tide of 'conflict resource hunting' in the Congo? How can we look backward in order to see forward, or, in other words, what lessons can we draw from Hammarskjöld's leadership in the first Congo war, and apply in current attempts towards the pacification of the Congo?

1. Introduction

In his eulogy to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), the pioneering social thinker Walter Lippmann (1961) summed up Dag Hammarskjöld's legacy in this tribute:

Never before, and perhaps never again, has any man used the intense art of diplomacy for such unconventional and such novel experiments. The biggest experiment, for which in the end he gave his life, was to move the international society of the United Nations from having to choose between very difficult police action ... to sole reliance on debate and verbal expression. He moved the UN onto the plane of executive action without large-scale war ... [a] ... movement from words to deeds, from general resolution to intervention ...

Looking back at Dag Hammarskjöld's well documented achievements and eventual sacrifice, Lippmann's assessment is not so much a feat of brazen idolisation after all; and it is difficult to denude Hammarskjöld of his place in the pantheon of distinguished international service in the 20th century without downplaying the very mettle of the man, and his considerable work for humanity. Of course, and rightly so in line with traditions of objectivity, his contributions to world peace and security continue to be scrutinised – pitted against emerging critical voices attempting to sieve through the grains of his legacy. This is by no

means unexpected of a complex historical figure of his stature – a man whose life in the international spotlight, just as his death, remains shrouded in much debate, myth and contortions (Gibbs 1993; O'Brien 1962). Notwithstanding, fifty years have passed since his tragic demise, and it is perhaps prudent timing to undertake a rather 'pious audit' of his vision for world peace especially in the Congo¹ – the still daunting Aegean stable at the heart of Africa for the attempted cleaning of which he eventually gave his life. An endeavour of this dimension is especially germane now when the UN stands taunted at the crossroads, painfully bogged down by serious and intensifying security challenges, alongside a growing credibility deficit resulting from controversies surrounding its work.

2. The Congo's conflicts in historical perspective

The Congo's current profile paints a sorry portrait of one of Africa's most richly endowed countries, painfully reduced to what Chabal and Daloz (1999) have described as a 'political economy of disorder'. Mobutu Sese Seko, for instance, might have been more known for introducing the Stalinist apparatus of repressive secret policing to sub-Saharan Africa, but he did much more to damage his country's standing. Under Mobutu's reign, the Congo effectively descended into a kleptocracy. Throughout his 32 years in charge of then Zaire, Mobutu did his best to put into practice this rather depraved philosophy of economic mismanagement through spirited embezzlement and siphoning of state funds, often in dimensions that took on a rather compulsive character. By the end of his reign, the strongman had lewdly 'amassed a fortune estimated at \$4 billion, [excluding] an array of grand villas in Europe and multiple palaces and yachts' (Hochschild 2011). Today, the Congo's weak and considerably inept central government stands woefully inadequate in the face of a growing need to correct deep-seated political, social and economic governance deficits. In the meantime, the country continues to crumble under the weight of endemic corruption. The virtual collapse of the formal economy and decaying state of infrastructures in the country is so staggering that it has been wryly said

1 The Congo, DRC, DR Congo, Zaire are used interchangeably in this article to refer to the same territory. Zaire is preferentially used in segments where events are recounted that occurred in the course of Mobutu's reign.

that it is considerably easier to start a rebellion than a business in the Congo (Aljazeera 2010).

This section attempts to provide a descriptive historical context of the multiple conflicts that have embroiled the Congo since the country gained independence. By virtue of the sheer pervasiveness of its involvement with the territory, Belgium stands out as a prime mover in any critical examination of the historical continuum of the Congo's political and economic history. In fact, as Auma-Osolo (1975) has tartly argued, 'for 85 years, the Belgian colonial rule in the Congo perpetuated slavery and abuse of the Congolese people in repudiation of articles VI and IX of the Berlin General Act of 1885...[and as a consequence violated] international law'. Consequently, judging from the profound social, economic and political legacy of Belgian colonialism on the Congo, it seems fair to state that what DR Congo is or is not today, is to a considerable extent, a function of what Belgium did or did not do to the country. Belgian economic exploitation in the Congo, perhaps only matched by scant investment in social, educational and institutional structures, as well as the politics of repression and divide and rule, meant that Belgium was effectively designing the Congo to fail (Wanki, forthcoming). To this extent, any lucid attempt to develop a historical contextualisation of the Congo's conflicts should logically begin with the genesis of Belgian imperialism over the territory. Belgian patronage over the Congo began as a King's personal affair. Henry Stanley, on the behest of King Leopold II, enticed about 400 illiterate African chiefs along the Congo River to append their marks on a document ceding their lands to his trust (Anstey 2006:40). This began the establishment of a 'personal colony' for Leopold II, who duplicitously invoked humanitarian considerations to justify his hold on the territory, effectively warding off other European imperialist ambitions, and legitimising his ownership in the course of the Berlin conference of 1884–1885. In the following two decades, Leopold would exact an unholy order in the Congo enforced through systematic terror, forced labour and summary executions. His ruthlessness paid bounteous economic dividends and the Belgian monarch was able to amass for himself quite a sizeable fortune in rubber and ivory – unfortunately, at the cost of an estimated 10 million lives lost (Hochschild 2006:234; Anstey 2006:40). By 1908, the ensuing revelations about

institutionalised brutality in the Congo Free State forced the Belgian king to hand over his territory to the administration of the Belgian state, a year before his death. The territory was simply renamed the 'Belgian Congo'.

Unfortunately, the Belgian state opted to sustain Leopold's pedigree of coercion, and escalated its ruthlessness over the Congo. Meredith (2005:96) reports that Congo was managed *de facto* by 'a small management group in Brussels representing an alliance between the government, the Catholic Church and the giant mining and business corporations, whose activities were virtually exempt from outside scrutiny'. Huge investment in industrial development flourished, and the industrial productivity index rose from 118 to 350 between 1948 and 1958, and productivity effectively trebled over this period (Anstey 2006:41). To be fair, the buoyant industrial performance translated into some commendable social investments in the territory, and together with missionary bodies, a network of clinics and schools were established across the country (Meredith 2005). However, a *prima facie* reading of these developments could be very deceptive, especially since there was very little opportunity for indigenous people to progress academically beyond the echelon of primary education (Bokamba 1986; Anstey 2006). Effectively, dismal Belgian underinvestment in the intellectual, social and political preparedness of the Congolese people shone out dramatically. At the Congo's independence, there were practically no Congolese doctors, officers or school teachers in the military (Meredith 2005:19; Anstey 2006; Bokamba 1986), and just between six and thirty African college graduates in the territory (Van de Walle 2001:129). For a colony that had almost single-handedly fed Belgian economic growth for many years, the utter neglect of the Congo could only be conveniently described as sinister. By 1960, Belgium messily stepped out of Congo, granted 'nominal' independence to the colony and remained in the background where it continued to play an active role in the spectacle of chaos that prevailed after its departure.

But the Congo's predicaments were also significantly catalysed by the rudely complex realities of Cold War politics. By the time of the Congo's first democratic elections in 1960, charismatic Patrice Lumumba's scathing denunciation of Belgian colonialist ideology in the Congo propelled him into the limelight both as the uncontested voice of the Congo's troubled masses, and as prime enemy

of Belgian and capitalist interests in the territory. The victory of his National Congolese Movement, and his ascendancy to the office of Prime Minister (along with Joseph Kasavubu as President), meant that the Belgians had reasons to worry aloud. Inspired by his tirades against colonialism, and by deep-seated grievances resulting from continuous Belgian domination of the military high command and civil service, a group of black soldiers in Leopoldville (present-day Kinshasa) mutinied, toppling their white commanders and engaging in violent attacks against Europeans and other Africans of different tribal or ideological persuasions. Belgium violated Congolese sovereignty five days later, dispatching Belgian troops into the Congo on the grounds that it was attempting to restore order. UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld joined a growing chorus of international critics in condemning Belgian intervention as aggressive behaviour, and as ‘a threat to peace and order in the region’ (quoted from Anstey 2006) – effectively responding to the Congolese Central Government’s appeal for assistance.² Lumumba, initially resisting pressure from the mutineers to purge the military top brass of Belgians, eventually gave in as the situation became more acrimonious. On 8 July 1960, the Congolese Prime Minister sacked all Belgians from the military, appointing former Sergeant Victor Lundula to General of the Army staff, and Joseph Mobutu, Chief of Army Staff, by 10 July 1960. Moïse Tshombe, a mercurial renegade and Premier of the mineral-rich Katanga region, took advantage of the civil chaos, and with unconditional Belgian support, declared the unilateral secession and independence of the Katanga region on 11 July 1960 (Nugent 2004; Anstey 2006). Barely a few months into its independence, fledgling Congo had found itself lurching into full-scale chaos.

The events that followed represent one of the darkest chapters of Congolese history. Backed by the United States, Joseph Mobutu organised a military coup on 14 July 1960, placing himself at the helm of the Congolese state (Adebajo and Landsberg 2000). Hunting down Patrice Lumumba became his chief priority, and by 17 January 1961, he handed the former Premier over to Moïse Tshombe. With direct Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Belgian involvement, Patrice Lumumba was assassinated. Empowered by American support and the loyalty of

2 UN Doc. S/4382(1960).

the military, Mobutu set out to consolidate his rule under the *régime d'exception* (equivalence of a state of emergency); riding roughshod over freedoms and civil liberties, and eventually establishing a brutal dictatorship which unleashed upon the backs of the Congo's people for three decades, what Basil Davidson (1992) has termed 'the curse of the nation state'.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, the United States cancelled its 'blank cheque policy' to its African axis of capitalism, presaging what Bryden, N'diaye and Olonisaken (2008) have aptly described as 'a corresponding shift in internal order of many African states'. This deprived at least some among the repressive African regimes of the financial and military wherewithal to crack down on dissent, and subsequently created space for budding clamour towards democratisation. Long overdue revolts against the status quo across Africa were fast-tracked, emboldening movements for freedom from Cairo to Cape Town.

In the case of the DRC, the force that initiated cracks on Mobutu's 32 years-long reign of terror came from a rather inauspicious angle. As the simmering ethnic hatred between Hutus and Tutsis boiled over in the form of genocidal violence in Rwanda, the spillover reached Kivu province in the eastern parts of the Congo, such that 'in a matter of days in October 1996, a large swathe of eastern Zaire erupted into an orgy of violence' (Lemarchand 1997:173). As the Rwandan horror unfolded, the Hutu militia, *Interahamwe*, used Hutu refugee camps in Congolese territory as launch pads for a Tutsi massacre. In response, the Tutsi-led *Armée Patriotique Rwandais* invaded Zaire by October 1996 to put an end to the Hutu onslaught, and in the process, provided support to a coalition of internal Congolese armed dissidents (*Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Liberation du Congo-Zaire*, AFDL) led by Laurent Désiré Kabila (Anstey 2006).

Nelson Mandela attempted to broker a peace agreement, which foundered, and by 17 May 1997 Kabila's forces had toppled Mobutu's regime and forced him out (Anstey 2006). Declaring himself president, Kabila abrogated the Transitional Act altogether, effectively outlawing political opposition to his rule. He was soon to make a fatal mistake by expelling the Rwandan and Ugandan contingents which had propelled him to victory, and this plunged his fragile administration once again into civil war (Apuuli 2004). Partly benefiting from Angolan,

Chadian, Sudanese, Zimbabwean and Namibian support, Laurent Kabila managed to hold on to power, maintaining control over Kinshasa and indeed a sizeable patch of western Congo. The splintering of numerous armed factions, ex-Mobutu loyalists, and foreign troops rendered negotiations on the Congo's conflict a complex labyrinth to chart. Expectedly, a second South African-led mediation attempt was scuppered.

The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement reached on 10 July 1999 ushered in a momentous breakthrough, and the United Nations Security Council expeditiously passed Resolution 1279 (S/RES/1279) of 30 November 1999, sanctioning the deployment of the *Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo* (MONUC) under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, to strengthen the ceasefire. Supporting the government of the DRC and administered by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the mission comprised four phases: establishing peace; supervising ceasefire; DDRRR (disarmament, demobilisation, reinsertion, rehabilitation, and reconciliation); and support to the DRC's political transition and organisation of elections. The mission initially included 17 030 troops, 760 military observers, 391 police instructors, and 750 members of constituted police units. UN Resolution 1756 (S/RES/2007) of 15 May 2007 extended the mission until 31 December 2007, which has recently been re-mandated as MONUSCO to emphasise the stabilisation component.

This resolution originally provided useful breathing space for the battered country to stand on its feet again. Rather ironically, Laurent Kabila's assassination in January 2001 by a bullet from his bodyguard's rifle proved somewhat beneficial to Congo's peace process as his more compromising son, Joseph Kabila, who took after him demonstrated more verve in the pursuit of meaningful democratic transition for the country (Anstey 2006). This new found tenacity to move forward beyond the prevalent political logjam yielded dividends, and the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD) was subsequently held at Sun City, South Africa (25 February to 19 April 2003).

Joseph Kabila would subsequently go on to win the presidential elections in 2006, although their results failed to mark new beginnings for the Congolese nation. The DRC continues to be ruffled by various dimensions of insecurity

ranging from pockets of violence across the country to full-scale war in the east. Cabals of warlords and spoilers continue to derail the country's return to peace (Adebajo and Landsberg 2000) with campaigns of violence and brutality against unarmed civilians. Like most modern African wars, the perimeters of the Congo's battlefields have extended to villages and communities where men, women and children are caught in the crossfire. In these attacks, the frequency of rapes and sexual violence – and the impunity with which such acts have been perpetuated against women – in places like Ituri and Kivu, have attained sub-human dimensions (Amnesty International 2007). Consequently, in ways that are tragically telling, women's bodies have become the battlefields upon which the Congo's wars are being fought. Even the strong UN presence has not dissuaded the dastardly human rights violations.

3. Dag Hammarskjöld, the UN and the Congo crisis

As the foregone historical contextualisation has demonstrated in somewhat greater detail, the Congo's current predicament is more or less the sour verdict of a long-storied process of virulent external interests and internal imbalances which continue to cast long shadows on the country's future. But the Congo has also been the site of immense lessons for the international community. The territory is the place where the UN cut its teeth and tested the strength of its 'world society', and, unfortunately, the reason for which the organisation lost its ebullient Secretary-General. Whether the topical Congo crisis measured Hammarskjöld as a man of inexorable grit and unperturbed tenacity, or as a rebellious maverick determined to chart his own path for the UN, is still open for debate. But what is certainly indubitable, is the fact that the first Congo crisis – as complex as it was – provided Hammarskjöld with the world's podium to articulate a set of ideals and embark on a course of actions that would forever set him aside in a league of his own among the statesmen of his time. He might have himself (along with Patrice Lumumba), been one of the greatest symbolic casualties of the Congo war, but his handling of the conflict reveals important lessons for the UN's work in the territory.

In many respects, as the UN commemorates 50 years since Hammarskjöld's passing, its current mission in the Congo (MONUSCO) has potential lessons to

learn from the false starts and successes of the first deployment (MONUC) in 1960/61. This is all the more important in illuminating the path forward, even though the present context of international security, just as the UN's work, has been tremendously transformed in our time; not the least by the ubiquitous forces of 21st century globalisation. There are many reasons why history should be kind to Dag Hammarskjöld. He built a reputation, even amongst his fiercest critics (Zacher 1970; Gibbs 2000) for routinely venturing out of the carapace of institutional comfort into the political minefields of practical action. As David Gibbs (2000:361) further stresses: 'The Congo operation was the main substantive contribution of Hammarskjöld ... and given the substantial scale, duration and scope of its activity, the operation was several decades ahead of its time ... [Consequently, it is Hammarskjöld] more than any other single figure, who is cited as the principal inspiration to present-day peacekeeping efforts.' It is easy to see him as a martyr for the course of collective human security, especially as he lost his life actively trying to attenuate a potential bloodbath in the Congo. In fact, much of his legend derives from these two sources, and it frankly amounts to little surprise when one of his successors, Kofi Annan (2001), lifts him up to the very quintessence of leadership in the UN.

On 12 July 1960, the United Nations confronted a seminal moment in her young history. Invoking article 35, paragraph 2. under chapter IV of the United Nations Charter, which recognises the right of 'A state which is not a member of the United Nations ... to bring to the attention of the Security Council or General Assembly any dispute to which it is a party ...', President Kasavubu and Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, on behalf of the Central Government of Congo, dispatched a cable to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, requesting assistance to ward off 'Belgian aggression'. It read:

The Government of the Republic of Congo requests urgent dispatch by the United Nations of military assistance. This request is justified by the dispatch to the Congo, of metropolitan Belgian troops, in violation of the Treaty of Friendship signed between Belgium and the Republic of the Congo on June 29, 1960. Under the terms of the treaty, Belgian troops may only intervene on the express request of the Congolese government. No such request was ever made by

the Government of the Republic of Congo and we therefore regard the unsolicited Belgian action as an act of aggression against our country ... The essential purpose of the requested military aid is to protect the national territory of the Congo against the present external aggression which is a threat to international peace. We Stress the extremely urgent need for the dispatch of United Nations troops to the Congo.³

A considerable amount of criticism has been levelled against Hammarskjöld and the United Nations regarding the handling of the first Congo crisis, which has generally vacillated between too much pro-activity on the part of the Secretary-General, sometimes beyond the bounds of his authority as sanctioned by the Charter, and too little initiative to act in the interest of peace. Auma-Osolo (1975), for instance, criticised Hammarskjöld and the UN for being 'too soft' in condemning Belgian aggression after the receipt of the first cable from Lumumba and Kasavubu on 12 July 1960, even though barely two days later (14 July 1960), the UN Security Council (UNSC) unanimously adopted a resolution sanctioning the deployment of military aid to the Congo, while formally asking Belgium to pull out her forces from Congolese territory. Conversely, some scholars have rather maintained that in effect, Hammarskjöld actually moved the UN to act too soon; stating that in many ways, the Secretary-General actually went beyond the limits of constitutionality in his intervention in the first Congo crisis. E.M. Miller (quoted in Auma-Osolo 1975) contends that 'neither ... [the first] resolution nor any subsequent resolutions ... expressly provided for a United Nations force ...', stressing that none of the resolutions explicitly authorised the Secretary-General to compose, and dispatch a UN force to the Congo. To whatever degree one chooses to consider these arguments, it rests solely on the body of evidence available. Nevertheless, both arguments reveal important clues about Hammarskjöld's 'pro-activeness', and to a considerable extent, his impartiality and neutrality. Empowered by article 99 of the Charter 'which allows the Secretary-General, on his own initiative, to bring matters to the Security Council's attention when in his view they may threaten the maintenance

3 See UN Doc. S/4382(1960). Further see UN Doc. A/4390/Add.1(1960).

of international peace and security' (Annan 2001), Hammarskjöld, as a seasoned European, pushed for more robust action against another European country, for the sake of collective security and justice. Consequently, on 18 July 1960, Hammarskjöld was pleased to report the arrival of 3 500 troops to the UNSC, and promised to send more.⁴

As Zacher (1970) points out, 'Dag Hammarskjöld stressed the importance of an impartial and objective UN Secretariat, whose personnel would be able to adopt a truly international perspective'. This was very much evidenced in the composition of the UN peacekeepers for the First Congo Mission. Fully aware of the need to develop a more holistic and encompassing orientation for peacekeeping that went beyond just putting troops on the ground, Hammarskjöld effectively directed the UN towards establishing a UN Civilian Operations Programme in Congo, massively deploying hundreds of UN technocrats and specialists to assist the Congolese Government in areas of health, education, transport, emergency food relief and natural resources governance (UN 1985, UN 1961, cited in Gibbs 2000:364). For this, he unknowingly nurtured the complex process of multidimensional peacekeeping, the so-called peacebuilding approach, which typifies a bulk of the UN's work today. As Lippmann (1961) further comments about the man he knew very well, 'Dag Hammarskjöld ... was not an innovator because he had an itch to change things. He was a political innovator because there was no decent alternative. He saw no alternative to intervention by the United Nations in a crisis where there was a bitter confrontation in the Cold War'.

It is very hard to squeeze down the leadership and legacy of a global figure like Hammarskjöld into a few pages; which is why many dimensions of his influence on the body politic of international relations and the UN's work have not been addressed here. There is also a lurking possibility to consider the foregone discussions about his legacy as deprived of a solid critical dimension which could do more to engender the man's shortcomings. That too, would not be entirely false! Indeed, the crux of this article is a 'pious audit' of Dag Hammarskjöld's legacy; an appreciative enquiry, in a manner of speaking, of his contributions

4 See UN Doc. S/4389 (1960).

to the UN and to the Congo question, not a critical analysis of his leadership in the course of the first Congo war. Highly critical volumes of intellectual contributions already abound, with respect to Hammarskjöld's leadership. Not so many contributions, however, show how the current UN mission in the Congo could harness positive lessons from Hammarskjöld's legacy in the Congo, in charting the way forward toward sustained peace and security in the country.

4. The Congo today: Assessing the UN's track record

The Congo is arguably the scene of the biggest human tragedy since the dawn of the 21st century, and with more than four million dead, it is easy to understand why many have described the conflicts there as the 'third World War' (Nugent 2004; Anstey 2006). The largest ever UN peacekeeping force in history with an annual budget of \$1 billion, the approval of the UNSC Resolution 1756, on 15 May 2007, placed five core functions at the heart of MONUC's mandate: guaranteeing the territorial security and integrity of DRC; assistance towards strengthening and consolidating democratic institutions and the rule of law; ensuring the protection of humanitarian personnel, civilians as well as the UN infrastructure and country personnel; the conduct of security sector reform; and the organisation of disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration/repatriation operations (de Carvalho 2007). The UN's multidimensional force has played a crucial role in stabilising the country's troubled security outlook, and in paving the way for eventual development.

Major advances have been made towards the de-gunning and pacification of the country (Rouw and Willems 2010; Amnesty International 2007; Onana and Taylor 2008), and although significant challenges still obscure the efficient overhaul and reform of the Congolese security sector (Amnesty International 2007; Onana and Taylor 2008), the UN at least, deserves a pat on the back for continuing to engage and fund the process. Less than a decade ago, the DRC was the laboratory of dangerous regional military experimentation, and at one point, Congolese soil provided barracks to the boots of at least eight regional armies occupying the country. Today, the UN has largely succeeded in cleaning the slate, forging much needed regional cooperation towards the stabilisation of the territory. In the area of DDR+, the country reaped some positive dividends,

especially linked to the repatriation of foreign fighters from the Congo, and the substantial reduction of armaments. These are laudable achievements within the current troubled context of the country; and the organisation's decision to upgrade the mandate of its mission with a stabilisation component (MONUC to MONUSCO) as from 1 July 2010, is testament of its assessment of more propitious times ahead. Recognising the new phase reached by MONUC, the UNSC unanimously agreed that MONUC should become MONUSCO (United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the Congo) as from 1 July 2010. MONUSCO, authorised initially to stay in the Congo until 30 June 2011, will experience a drawdown of up to 2 000 UN military personnel from areas where security was deemed to have improved, to allow such withdrawal. The UNSC further decided that MONUSCO be comprised of additional appropriate civilian, judiciary and penitentiary components, a maximum of 760 military observers, 19 815 military personnel, 1 050 personnel of formed police units and 391 police personnel. Importantly, it authorised the mission to allocate a standby force ready for rapid re-deployment elsewhere in the country, while focusing the attention of its military capabilities in the unstable eastern part of the country.

4.1 The Congo's Security Sector Reform (SSR)

The military has always played a central role in Congolese life (Onana and Taylor 2008; Amnesty International 2007). Consequently, complementary to the DDR process in the country, reforming the security sector is a matter of utmost priority, if the fledgling security gains are to be consolidated (de Carvalho 2007). MONUC, the Congolese government and other national and international partners displayed remarkable foresight placing DDR operations alongside SSR aspirations, since there is a profound nexus between both processes. However, the SSR process, just like the DDR, has been afflicted by a conundrum of setbacks, some of which are directly related to the chequered history of the Congolese army, while other are linked to serious misjudgement on the part of the national and international partners involved. Waves of defection from the army, for instance, especially in the two Kivu provinces and in the Northern part of the Katanga region which act as strongholds of the *Mai Mai* and RCD-Goma, have proven to be quite problematic. Furthermore, elements of the Congolese

army have been accused of perpetrating human rights abuses including rape, theft and harassment, and killings (Amnesty International 2007). Consequently, local people harbour serious distrust of the army's role as guarantor of security, and by extension, MONUC's. The SMI (Military Structure for [Re-]Integration) process too, was assailed by shortcomings, especially those linked to failures and compromises in the vetting process of former ex-combatants, before their reintegration into the army (Amnesty International 2007). As a result, there have been accusations that certain individuals who committed serious acts of human rights violations have simply received legitimisation through the military, and that the UN has done nothing to redress this.

Key to the Congo's SSR process is the development of a national army that is truly inclusive, disciplined, professional, human rights-based; and which can eventually serve as an instrument of enhancing the country's security, defending its territorial integrity, hence creating conducive space for peace and development to flourish. These expectations are well grounded in the Congolese Ministry of Defence's Operational Plan and the Law on the General Organisation of Defence and the Armed Forces (Amnesty International 2007). Unfortunately, endemic corruption, coupled with poor pay packages, has simply forced many soldiers to use their weapons in making a living. Also, the thorny issue of the *Garde Présidentielle* is setting a worrying precedent. This guard is an elite force trained by Angolan forces and charged with presidential security. However, elements of the presidential guard consider themselves a special army within the Congolese army, above the law, and have consequently resorted to acts that terrorise the masses. For this, they have earned the notorious appellation 'ampicilline' (the name of a medicine) by the inhabitants of Kinshasa. MONUC is currently under pressure to influence the redress of such conduct. Finally, General Nkunda's obstinacy, as well as the refusal of his renegade forces to be part of the national army, exacerbated the difficulties currently facing MONUC and the government with respect to setting up a unified and well-trained army. Many armed groups still have child soldiers within their ranks, and the arduous task of completely relieving the Congo's children of the burdens and brutality of wars, is at the moment, still a bridge too far for the UN to cross.

4.2 The Congo's elections

Elections are crucial to the process of democratic consolidation and renewal, and they serve as vital instruments for enhancing the transition from conflicts to post-conflict dispensations. However, the Congo's experimentation with the enterprise of democratic elections has not always countenanced positive outcomes in terms of democratic consolidation; and the country's own chequered history stares brutally right in the face of good governance.

Notwithstanding this troubled context of elections organisation, the United Nations earned wide acclaim for mustering international attention and support towards overcoming the colossal logistical requirements of free and fair elections in the Congo in 2006. Some 269 parties, 33 presidential candidates and roughly 9 700 parliamentary aspirants throughout 25 provinces amounted to the largest UN investment ever in a project of the calibre. An estimated 15 500 peacekeepers were deployed across the country for several years, including 324 civilian police, 520 UN military observers, and 2 493 civilian staff. Over 200 000 electoral staff and 45 000 police were involved, with 90% of the voting population turning out to cast their vote. Whether or not the impetus and political capital generated in the course of the last elections have actually translated into meaningful progress on the ground is open for debate. The country currently stands at the cusp of yet another election of mammoth proportions, announced for November 2011, in the face of mounting security challenges and growing uncertainty over the UN's future in the country. In eastern Congo, Nyambura Githaiga (2011) recently reported that the 'elections agenda has been eclipsed by recent [tragic] developments in the mining sector ... lingering insecurity, and underdevelopment'. The present angst over the prospects of free and fair elections in the DRC and the political and security implications of its aftermath are justified. By virtue of its sweeping presence in the political life of the Congolese state, it is almost certain that the UN Mission in the country will have axes to grind with many critics should things go wrong.

4.3 Enforcing an arms embargo, territorial security and civilian protection

The Congo still harbours a significant number of foreign fighters and mercenaries serving various interests, ranging from illegal resource mining to engagement in actual military campaigns. This has encouraged the influx of arms across the DRC border, in violation of the arms embargo there, and MONUC troops have been implicated in some of the arms flows, especially in the east of the country (de Carvalho 2007; Boshoff and Vircoulon 2004), in areas like Kivu and Ituri. The arms embargo has once again been extended, although there is little evidence that it is realistically stemming the tide of illicit arms flow into the DRC.

Another grave challenge is the issue of civilian protection. Ultimately, the success or failure of MONUC's mission in Congo will be judged against progress made in protecting civilian populations from physical and psychological harm. The recurrence of grave human rights violations, and the impunity with which they are committed, has provoked an international outcry and consternation. Arbitrary executions of civilians by various armed groups are rife, brazen extortion is common, and of course, the serious issue of rape (de Carvalho 2007). Unfortunately, an alarming number of reports from victims of these violations point embarrassingly to certain elements within the Congolese national army (FARDC) and police; as well as militiamen and rebel groups locked in armed confrontation with the Congolese government, especially in places like Kivu, in the east. To be fair, MONUC continues to play a key role in investigating and reporting such allegations, although it is difficult to exact justice to perpetrators, since many government officials are often allegedly involved in such violations (de Carvalho 2007). Importantly, MONUC must endeavour to put its own house in order. Many allegations implicating United Nations civilian and peacekeeping personnel in illegal mineral mining transactions (de Carvalho 2007) grossly shame the mission's credibility as a point of reference in the country.

4.4 The Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme

The importance of the DDR process to any quest for lasting peace in the DRC has already been abundantly espoused in academic literature and by facts on the ground (Wanki forthcoming; Amnesty International 2007; Anstey 2006; Rouw and Willems 2010). The 1999 Lusaka ceasefire agreement set the framework for the implementation of the Congo's DDR process, and the extremely complicated context of the Congolese conflict led to the implementation of a DDR+ (see Centre for International Cooperation and Security 2006; Hanson 2007; Bouta 2005; Douma and Van der Laar 2008, Willems et al. 2009).

Backed by UN guidance and support, a national commission for the implementation of the DDR process in Congo (CONADER) was eventually established by a series of presidential decrees (December 2003), and ultimately charged with the administration of the national DDR programme (PNDDR), which was adopted by another presidential decree (May 2004). This effectively created a nation-wide legal framework under the supervision of the Congo's UN mission. Recognising the link between DDR and SSR (Onana and Taylor 2008), a military component was created alongside (*Structure Militaire d'Integration*, SMI) charged with the military dimension of the process (World Bank 2009). The joint PNDDR/SMI process commenced work with a caseload figure of approximately 300 000 ex-combatants, and making provision for about 150 000 ex-fighters which included 30 000 child soldiers. Generally, the commencement of DDR programmes in the Congo was met with widespread enthusiasm, despite serious security risks confronting combatants as they streamed to MONUC/CONADER-run *Centres de transit et d'orientation* (CTOs, disarmament and demobilisation centres) to hand in their weapons (Amnesty International 2007).

4.4.1 Miscalculations about Disarmament

A major flaw with the Congolese disarmament process was its hyper-focus on guns, and perhaps, in comparison, relatively limited focus on the combatants themselves. It is understandable that owing to the bouts of violence and human rights violations prevalent in eastern Congo, MONUC was mandated

to prioritise the de-gunning of the region. Consequently, combatants were strictly required to present their weapons in order to be granted access to the PNDDR-run CTO. Many combatants who could not present weapons were summarily sent away (Rouw and Willems 2010; Van Puijenbroek et al. 2008), and given limited options of joining a crash UNDP-supervised manual labour-for-cash scheme. There are two pitfalls with the gun-in-the-hand prerequisite for disarmament. The first derives from the fact that not all combatants own guns; in fact more than twenty combatants, especially those from the *Mai Mai*, could share a single rifle while in the jungle (Rouw and Willems 2010). The second has to do with specific choice of instruments for violence. Nowhere has it been pre-ordained that being a militiaman requires one to only possess a gun. Machetes (which by the way are designed to be agricultural implements) have equally been used repeatedly before in African warfare to inflict tragedies in proportions that have been quite dispiriting, as was the case in the course of the Rwandan genocide. *Mai Mai* militiamen, for instance, armed with *armes blanches* who were turned away simply resorted to stealing the identity cards of demobilised people to secure benefits (Rouw and Willems 2010). All together, the above considerations point to a quintessentially myopic misreading of the local context of the Congolese war, which could most probably have been avoided had MONUC and its partners actively involved local actors in their planning.

In another respect, the DDR programme in Ituri – whose chief aim was to disarm combatants, reduce the proliferation of weapons and pacify the region – initially set out to handle a targeted caseload of 15 000 elements of armed groups who had endorsed the *Acte d'engagement de Kinshasa*. By June 2005 when the programme ended, 15 811 combatants had been demobilised, unfortunately with only an estimated 20% of firearms being secured. In the Eighteenth Report of the United Nations Secretary-General on the Situation in the Congo, he highlighted the prevailing potential for re-escalation of violence in the region, given that '70% of the 6,200 weapons collected were defective and not in a serviceable condition' (quoted in Amnesty International 2007), and hence there was a strong possibility that ex-combatants might have gamed the system. Insecurity continues to ruin lives, rapes are common, and young people continue to experiment with deadly armed brigandage (Van Puijenbroek et al. 2008; Bouta 2005:28).

4.4.2 Missed opportunity: Local grassroots intelligence

By failing to address the marginalisation of local peoples in the DDR process, MONUC missed a golden opportunity to harness local grassroots intelligence on weapon stockpiles, rebel activity as well as strategies for encouraging more voluntary disarmament and demobilisation of members of armed groups. Local communities have better knowledge of the activities of their constituent members; are well aware of those members who own firearms illegally; and possess key information on weapon caches within their communities that will remain unknown to any foreigner, the urban expert, or the MONUC disarmament specialist. This wealth of knowledge could be useful for effective disarmament as well as following up community demobilisation processes. However, as Rouw and Willems (2010:27) once again submit, ‘this function of the community seems largely untapped’, owing to the marginalisation of grassroots involvement in, and ownership of, the DDR process. A Congolese community, in the course of a recent research exercise, asked a telling question as ‘to whom they should go right now, with their knowledge of illegal firearms; the FARDC or MONUC?’ (Rouw and Willems 2010:27)

4.4.3 The Demobilisation Process: A litany of broken promises

The numerous documented accounts of public agitations in the Congo as a result of problems associated with the conduct of demobilisation operations (Amnesty International 2007; Onana and Taylor 2008; Van Puijenbroek et al. 2008; Bouta 2005; Rouw and Willems 2010) behoves us to take a more nuanced look at the process. On 21 May 2005, 50 demobilised men delegated by their fellow colleagues stormed the CONADER office in Bunia, venting their grievances and denouncing the snail pace of the demobilisation process.

Anger over unpaid dues became viral, spreading to places like Kasenyi, Mahagi, Kwandroma and Aveba, where many hundreds of demobilised ex-combatants effectively demonstrated against delays in the payment of *filet de sécurité*.⁵ But disappointment over delays in the payment of dues is just one facet of a contagion of local distrusts with respect to the demobilisation process, which threatens the

5 ‘Security net’ – money paid to cover initial living expenses immediately after demobilisation

centre core of the entire process. Promises made to locals, especially those linked to the bliss of reintegration are yet to be fulfilled many years after, and local Congolese have justifiably begun pointing fingers of distrust at UN officials. In cases where reintegration assistance was provided, the feedback received has not been encouraging. For instance, where vocational career kits have been provided, they usually did not match the professional orientation, needs and desires of the demobilised (Rouw and Willems 2010). The growing perception is that the national agency, CONADER, was riddled with serious and systemic administrative and mismanagement issues, largely as a result of ineffective UN oversight. This led to the siphoning of significant amounts of ex-combatants' resources into private pockets (Rouw and Willems 2010).

Local communities too feel that while they are not being consulted in the DDR process; that the 'demobilized are just dumped into their communities while they still have the esprit of the military' (Rouw and Willems 2010). One community member climaxes this resentment thus: 'They first went out to loot and steal, and now they receive support through DDR. They gain twice while the communities suffer' (Rouw and Willems 2010). There is consequently an urgent need for MONUSCO to sensitise local communities and traditional leaders on the need to be more receptive to these returnees, and the benefits of helping them integrate effectively to the overall peace process.

4.4.4 The marginalisation of local contexts

Reintegration is easily the most complicated and controversial of the three DDR phases. Actually, quarrels over the DDR process begin right at the semantic level where there are cries to clearly problematise and conceptualise the meaning of 'R' in the DDR. While in the English acronym 'R' denotes 'Reintegration', the French 'R' stands for *Réinsertion*, which is not the same.

The semantic debates aside, MONUC-run reintegration activities have been criticised for disregarding the local context within which ex-combatants live in the rush to secure peace (Centre for International Cooperation and Security 2006), even though there are clear guidelines prescribing that reintegration be regarded as a long-term process. Local people have also faulted the process for

not taking their views into account in DDR implementation. Rouw and Willems (2010) highlight a multiplicity of instances where the UNDP and its partners got the priorities of local Congolese people wrong, such as: training people in electrical skills even though they came from communities and villages without electricity, and donating an electricity-powered grinding mill to a community that had never been connected to electricity supply.

The search for durable employment opportunities for ex-combatants is a key issue inhibiting their holistic reintegration into normal civilian life. In light of this, it is easy to see how wanting in scope and relevance the *UNDP three days course in preparation for civilian life* conducted in Ituri, in 2007, was. As Marriage (2007, in Rouw and Willems 2010) further explains, each ex-combatant was provided with \$50, and with a month's food supply for their families. One Nationalist and Integrationist Front (FNI) spokesman struck a vital nerve when he questioned whether such little assistance was expected to transform their *esprit de la guerre* (emphasis mine; cited in Bouta 2005:28). There have consequently been calls for the UN to establish community-based support centres to help ex-combatants continue updating the productive skills acquired at transit centres.

4.4.5 Who's in, who's out?

The cumbersomeness of the DDR funding and implementation contracting chain in the Congo is outrageous (Douma and Van der Laar 2008; Willems et al. 2009:6). For example the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) operates in Congo's DDR process with two US-based profit organisations – ARD and MSI – who, through other chains, function with international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), who in their turn, now collaborate with, and fund the works of local NGOs (Rouw and Willems 2010). This complicates the implementation chain, and alienates local grassroots based NGOs many layers away from the actual design, execution and monitoring process of the programme (Van Puijenbroek et al. 2008:16–17). This encourages corruption and excessive profiteering amongst the international players involved with post-conflict development and makes international partners vulnerable to serious mistakes linked to the understanding of the local context. A recurrent complaint amongst local chiefs, NGOs and even some international partners

in Ituri, was that the UNDP routinely provides incorrect lists of ex-combatants and, consequently, often selects ineligible beneficiaries for their projects.

The truth of the matter is that most international organisations currently face a credibility deficit in the eyes of the local Congolese. The general feeling is that these organisations spend huge sums of money footing the cost of their personal comfort, at the expense of actually carrying out the development tasks for which they have been deployed. To corroborate this position, a UN official in the Congo recently admitted that about a third of MONUC's budgetary allocations were dedicated to transportation costs alone (Rouw and Willems 2010), and many other international partners spent at times exorbitant sums on chauffeurs for their staff. These could be used in supporting local NGOs to carry out DDR work (Caramés and Sanz 2008). In contrast, the local peoples' orientation of the UN Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) articulates the necessity of prioritising local involvement and needs in total 698 times throughout the entire volume (Rouw and Willems 2010).

4.5 Rape, rape, and re-rape: Giving meaning to the words 'Never again'

Few events have embarrassed the UN's mission and questioned its credibility more than the revelations of systematic rape and sexual violence, especially in places where UN forces were supposed to be exacting oversight (Pflanz 2010). Rape is being deployed as a weapon of war. As Carlsen (2009:1) points out: 'The eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is home to some of the world's most horrific documented cases of sexual violence against women'. The scale, and the dehumanising dimensions which these take, clearly corroborates the assertion that women's bodies are the battlefields on which the Congo's wars are fought. Rape is more than just non-consensual sex – the bodily harm (e.g. fistula), and psychological sequelae associated with violent rapes tend to haunt the victims for the rest of their lives. Accompanying this, the stigmatisation intensifies the brunt of misery and hardship. In a recent study (Vinck et al. 2008) one-third of respondents reported that they were not ready to admit victims of sexual violence into their communities. The UN mission is sufficiently mandated by UNSC resolution 1325 to take all steps necessary to halt the perpetuation of rape. However, the alarming recurrence of sexual violence in the country,

especially those committed in areas under the jurisdiction of UN forces, poses telling questions about the mission's credibility. There are justified doubts regarding MONUC's capacity to live up to its expectations, and give meaning to the words 'never again' with respect to the rape of Congolese women.

5. Hammarskjöld's legacy and the future of MONUSCO

MONUC, now MONUSCO, is still confronting a barrage of challenges it has to overcome in order to fulfil its mandate while improving the country's security, peace and development outlooks. Like most countries emerging from histories of intractable conflicts, the DRC's risk of relapsing into violence is high (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). The UN is facing rising peacekeeping demands in the face of supply that cannot keep pace. Renewed violence in other places puts the UN system under increasing pressure to ration resources. Consequently, MONUSCO will have to be flexible in the discharge of its functions, adapt effectively to the changing political, economic and social context of Congolese society, and learn to be innovative. The recent decision to keep a standby rapidly deployable brigade of peacekeepers from which the mission can call, in the protection of civilians, is a laudable innovation. Furthermore, MONUSCO will have to learn to adapt more effectively to the local context of Congolese society and partner more effectively with local actors in correcting some of the programming deficits of the DDR and SSR processes.

As Dag Hammarskjöld succinctly declared, the '[United Nations] should be the eye of nations, to keep watch upon the common interests, an eye that does not slumber, an eye that is everywhere, watchful and attentive' (quoted from Falkman 2005). It is clear that MONUC slumbered in many areas where the organisation was supposed to be alert. For instance, while Congolese women were being raped systematically; while some of its officials and peacekeepers indulged in the trafficking of conflict minerals; and in the DDR and SSR implementation processes. MONUSCO must now learn to be pro-active, versatile and robust, especially in protecting civilians, disarming child soldiers, and guarding women against rape and sexual violence. It should now live up to its chapter VII mandate, and prioritise the safety and security of the Congo's people above all else.

The Congo war, like conflicts in other African countries, has not received the same measure of attention accorded by the international community to conflicts elsewhere; even though it has produced more tragic consequences and tended to be more brutal. The UN Charter recognises the fundamental equality of all human beings and all member states, and dedicates itself to defending the same. It is safe to contend, with the historical evidence available, that in attending to the serious security challenges facing the Congo in 1960, Hammarskjöld displayed a profound dedication to the principles of equality of all states and peoples, functional neutrality in the discharge of his duties, and impartiality in the pursuit of world peace and security. The UN's role in places like Rwanda, Darfur, and the Congo continues to raise eyebrows on the organisation's true commitments to protecting African lives and ensuring security in the continent. American, British, Chinese, French and Belgian economic interests (all of these countries but one being permanent members of the security council) currently make huge amounts of profit from the Congo's conflict-causing resources; which in turn, are fuelling human rights violations and holding the country's progress down. If Hammarskjöld were alive today, there is no doubt that he would call on these countries to be sincere in their intentions, support the UN's mission wholeheartedly, and stop playing 'games of blood' in the Congo.

6. Conclusion

More than half a century ago, in the introduction to his Annual Report to the United Nations (1956–1957), Dag Hammarskjöld professed that 'the greatest need today is to blunt the edges of conflict among nations, not sharpen them'. He went on to add that, 'if properly managed, the United Nations [could] serve a diplomacy of reconciliation better than other instruments available to nation states'. While today's world has changed with the spectre of a nuclear war between superpowers far faded from our memories, violent conflicts continue to haunt mankind, often on scales and depths that are too horrific to savour. The patterns of our wars have changed – from mostly interstate conflicts as they used to be in Hammarskjöld's time – to intrastate conflicts today. But if he were alive, he would not be too myopic to our new trends of intrastate wars, since he gave his life trying to attenuate the first Congo War – a classic case of intrastate conflict,

feeding on systems of internal and external interests. Yet, Hammarskjöld would evidently be distressed by the fact that the Rwandan genocide was allowed to occur; and that genocides, such as those in Darfur, still shame the conscience of humanity. Even worse, that the Congo – the land for which he gave his last full measure of sacrifice – continues to be harrowed by various incarnations of internal and external greed, complacency, corruption and misrule. He would definitely rebuke the UN for not playing a role robust enough in steering the country's drive towards peace and security, even as he would not hesitate to give up his life again for a more sustainable peace, security and development for the Congo. But since Hammarskjöld cannot be here, we must endeavour to learn from his legacy and then perhaps, build a more secured and peaceful Congo worthy of his great sacrifice.

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