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EXPLORING, OVERREACHING, GIVING UP: THE UN AND INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN KASHMIR, CONGO, AND EAST PAKISTAN

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Cold War

conflict management

Congo

East Pakistan

global governance

Kashmir

United Nations

This essay examines the attempts of the United Nations (UN) to become an active force in Cold War politics. It explores three major moments of crisis that triggered UN involvement: Kashmir (1947–1949), Congo (1960–1965), and East Pakistan (1971). The essay demonstrates how in the Kashmir crisis, UN negotiators initially benefited from a malleable international environment and sincere support by both India and Pakistan to solve their territorial dispute. Yet as the UN explored its role as conflict "manager", it soon faced the limits of both its power and its legitimacy in attempting to overcome national suspicion and the insistence on state sovereignty. In contrast to Kashmir, the Congo Crisis was a case of overreach. Under the lead of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, UN officials transformed an intervention to assist the Congolese government in ending Belgian interference to an overly ambitious exercise in state-building. The East Pakistan crisis reveals that the UN had by then given up on playing an active overt role in the political settlement of international crises. As millions of East Pakistanis, accused of separatism,

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fled a massive military crackdown by the West Pakistani government into neighbouring India, the UN confined its reaction to expressions of concern, offers of mediation, and provision of humanitarian aid. UN officials' subsequent attempts to use humanitarian assistance and impartiality as a cover to achieve a covert solution deepened the crisis rather than contributing to solving it. The essay argues that by the early 1970s, the UN's ambitious approach to international conflict management and foreign intervention had given way to a pragmatic focus on the "humanitarian" aspect. This adaptation by the UN to a difficult international environment in shying away from the overt pursuit of political solutions has had lasting consequences for the UN's role in the international system.

As Western enthusiasm about the victory of the Cold War and the global spread of liberal democracy has eroded, criticism of humanitarian interventions – one of the key instruments of post-1989 foreign policy – has mounted. In the past decade, notably political scientists and international relations scholars have begun to point out a wide range of weaknesses and more fundamental problems associated with foreign military interventions conducted under the banner of human rights or the more recent doctrine of the "responsibility to protect" (see e.g. Autesserre 2019; Coyne 2013; de Waal 2007; Downes and O'Rourke 2016; Menon 2016; Sandstrom 2013; Turner and Kühn 2015). The growing scepticism among scholars towards humanitarian intervention and foreign aid is the result of a sober assessment of three decades of erratic and frequently unsuccessful endeavours by the United Nations (UN) and several "coalitions of the willing" of using force in the name of human rights (see e.g. Jamison 2011; MacQueen 2011; Wheeler 2000; Weiss 2012, 43–56; Williams and Bellamy 2021). The assertive and value-driven approach to international conflict management and foreign intervention that marked the early 1990s – and, in more unilateral and military form, the early 2000s in Afghanistan and Iraq – has since the disastrous British and French intervention in Libya in 2011 given way to a more pragmatic, if not at times hesitant or downright cynical, approach by international political leaders towards a growing number of cases of massive human rights abuses and political conflicts in countries such as Syria, Venezuela, Belarus, Myanmar, China, Haiti, Sudan, and Ethiopia. The initial Western enthusiasm about the end of the Cold War, the global spread of liberalism, and, more recently, the emergence of the responsibility to protect doctrine has given way to widespread exasperation about an existential crisis of

liberal internationalism reminiscent of the 1930s and 1940s (Bellamy 2020; Dingwerth et al. 2019; Ignatieff 2021; Ikenberry 2020; Kagan 2008; Lake, Martin, and Risse 2021; Mearsheimer 2019; Zürn 2018). It remains to be seen whether the current wars in Ukraine and Gaza will mark a return to a more unified and robust international response to international conflicts and crises, or whether they will deepen the fragmentation and weakness of global governance and international conflict management (for further discussion of current and past trends see also the introduction to this special issue).

This essay aims to provide the debate surrounding foreign intervention and global governance with insights from historical analysis. Focusing on the Cold War era, it examines the role the UN played in three major international conflicts of this period: the Kashmir dispute (1947–1949), the Congo Crisis (1960–1965), and the East Pakistan crisis (1971). From the UN perspective, all three cases constituted threats to international peace and security. They also featured human rights violations, including charges of genocide, which potentially justified UN action. The essay draws on a wide range of primary sources that allow us to investigate the cases in considerably more depth than more recent UN operations, for which most sensitive materials remain classified. Based on this historical analysis, the essay seeks to contribute to a dialogue about conflict management and foreign interventions between political and social scientists, legal scholars, and historians.

The essay argues that between the late 1940s and the early 1970s, the UN tried and failed to establish itself as a major international political authority. During this era, UN leaders aimed to position their organization as a morally and politically superior alternative to European (post-)colonial repression, Cold War realpolitik, and destructive nationalist passions (see the important recent studies by Muschik 2018, 2022; O'Malley 2018; and Tudor 2023). UN officials presented themselves and their organization as rational, scientific, and disinterested actors driven by the imperatives of international cooperation. They pursued their wider political ambitions through arbitration, development aid, peacekeeping, and military intervention. The key strategy consisted in reframing domestic and regional disputes as international crises requiring an equitable supranational settlement. Yet as the three cases analysed here demonstrate, the UN was at most partially able to fill the "vacuum" left behind by European colonialism and to exploit the gap opening up in the bipolar order through the emergence of the non-aligned movement.[1] By the early 1970s, as Cold War tensions were settling down and anti-colonial movements had lost their momentum, UN leaders had effectively abandoned the idea that the organization ought to play an active and overt role in the political management of international conflicts.

Reconceptualizing UN conflict management during the Cold War

This essay offers a reassessment of UN Cold War conflict management, arguing that the organization moved from an early phase of exploring its global role to a brief phase of overreaching its capabilities and legitimacy, before "giving up" on the original ambition of taking the lead in the resolution of international conflicts and crises. It builds on a growing number of studies by international historians working on UN peacekeeping within a Cold War context, notably the important contributions by Alanna O'Malley (2018), Eva-Maria Muschik (2022), and Margot Tudor (2023). Their studies demonstrate that UN interventions and peacekeeping operations from the early 1950s were driven by an ambitious UN leadership that sought, but ultimately failed, to seize the opportunity offered by decolonization to establish the organization as a powerful political force in the Cold War international system. The essay revisits the contradictory and conflicting relationship between the UN, former European colonial powers, and post-colonial leaders as part of a wider international shift where one framework of global governance – European imperialism and Western dominance – was challenged and superseded by another – UN conflict management – within a competitive Cold War international order.

The essay also draws on recent historical studies that have examined the ebbs and flows of post-1945 concepts and politics of human rights and humanitarianism (Burke 2010; Eckel 2019; Eckel and Moyn 2014; Heerten 2017; Jensen 2016; Keys 2014; Klose 2022; Moyn 2010, 2019; Paulmann 2016). These works reveal how Western governments gradually lost the political and moral initiative on humanitarianism and human rights after the end of World War II as they faced the rise of anti-colonial activism and non-aligned states abroad and growing popular dissent at home. Despite important differences in these scholars' historical assessments of the causes and long-term implications of these wider shifts in Cold War politics, they broadly concur that from the late 1970s, the West – having (at least on the surface) overcome colonialism, the Vietnam War, and domestic racism and authoritarianism – began to regain the global moral high ground. It did so through a renewed emphasis on individual human rights and a neoliberal global order just as communism had lost its appeal, while much of the Third World descended into frustration over economic stagnation and the proliferation of authoritarian regimes (Moyn 2019). Building on these studies, the essay demonstrates how the temporary shift away from Western dominance, the rise and fall of the anti-colonial movement, and the fluctuations in humanitarian politics brought both major opportunities and frustrations for the UN in its attempt to play a major role in the Cold War order.

The essay uses a comparative historical approach to connect UN conflict management and global governance ambitions to the shifting historical context of the Cold War and decolonization. It examines three key international crises from different eras of the Cold War that resulted from decolonization and prompted a UN response: the Kashmir conflict (1947–1949), the Congo crisis (1960–1965), and the East Pakistan crisis (1971). The comparison of UN involvement in these three historical conflicts has its limitations. Not only are the three cases highly diverse in their causes, but they also attracted diverse forms of UN involvement, ranging from monitoring a ceasefire and mediation in Kashmir to fully fledged military intervention and nation-building in Congo right up to humanitarian aid and refugee relief efforts in East Pakistan. Moreover, all three crises saw different UN bodies take the lead, illustrating the complex and multi-layered structure of the organization (Hanhimäki 2015, ch. 2; Weiss and Daws 2018).

Despite these limitations and the important differences between the three cases under examination, the essay contends that their comparison still allows us to identify and examine the diverse facets and broader patterns of UN conflict management and their change over time. The narrative advanced in this essay – from exploring and overreaching to "giving up" on establishing the UN as a major political force in Cold War conflict management – is not merely an illustration of various facets of UN approaches to international conflicts. Instead, it indicates more general changes in UN conflict management during the Cold War that are corroborated by other cases of UN involvement in conflicts and crises in this period. Thus, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) operation in China in the late 1940s (Chen in this special issue) and military intervention in Korea in the early 1950s (Tudor 2023, ch. 1) can be seen as part of the early phase of exploration, when various UN bodies launched politically ambitious missions with often inadequate means. As in the case of Kashmir, the early enthusiasm about the UN and the moral impetus of World War II created a fluid situation where UN officials and leaders sought to pursue what they saw as great opportunities for their young organization to shape post-war international relations. The UN peacekeeping operations of the 1950s and 1960s in the Middle East (Jorgensen in this special issue; Tudor 2023, ch. 2), West Papua, and Cyprus (Tudor 2023, chs. 4 and 5) show the rise and fall of the UN's proactive and assertive approach to global governance and conflict management. From the mid-1960s, UN involvement in conflicts and crises began to move away from aiming to achieve political solutions, nation-building, and peacekeeping to a restricted focus on providing humanitarian aid and mediation. At the same time, the UN used its various specialized bodies to pursue political aims informally and covertly as in the East Pakistan crisis of 1971. UN involvement in Vietnam in the late 1970s as discussed by Cosemans and Vinh in this

special issue is another case in point.[2] This fundamental change in UN conflict management is reflected in the sharp decline of new UN peacekeeping operations: while there were eight such missions between 1956 and 1965, there were only three in the period from 1966 to 1987.[3]

The following case studies trace this rise and fall of UN ambitions in conflict management and global governance from the late 1940s to the early 1970s. The conclusion discusses implications for the present.

Kashmir, 1947–1949

The Kashmir dispute resulted from the partition of India, a complex and violent process that accompanied the hasty withdrawal of the British Empire from South Asia in August 1947.[4] British India had a multi-layered territorial structure, including nearly 600 princely states indirectly ruled by Britain.[5] Following independence, several of these states did not accede to either side, creating a fragmented and highly unstable Indo-Pakistani border. The result was violent clashes between India and Pakistan over the states of Junagadh, Hyderabad, and Jammu and Kashmir.[6] While the former two joined India following successful military campaigns in 1947 and 1948, the latter conflict ended in a stalemate. After the end of British rule, Kashmir's head of state, Maharaja Hari Singh, a Hindu, had initially pursued a course of independence. But pressures from both sides quickly mounted. From September 1947, Kashmir faced incursions of Pakistan-backed raiders from the adjacent North-West Frontier Province threatening to overrun the state and enforce accession to Pakistan. On 26 October 1947, as the tribesmen were closing in on the capital of Srinagar and under pressure from Lord Mountbatten to take a decision on accession, Singh appealed to India for help. The following day, the Indian government under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru accepted Kashmir's accession and sent troops to repel the pro-Pakistani tribesmen. Nehru promised to settle the issue peacefully according to the wishes of the local population once law and order were restored. Yet the military confrontation dragged on as Pakistan provided support for the raiders while the Indian army proved to be unable to win a decisive victory short of an invasion of Pakistani territory. It was in this moment that Nehru decided to take the issue to the UN. On 1 January 1948, under Article 35 of the UN Charter, India officially referred the matter to the Security Council.

In Nehru's view, Kashmir was of high strategic and symbolic value for India, yet it also had the potential to showcase, on a world stage, India's pledge to self-determination and the superiority of its secular philosophy of the state compared to Pakistan's religious roots. Nehru's intention in

referring the issue to the UN was to brand the Pakistanis as the aggressor; force them to withdraw the raiders and their regular troops; gain time to win over the population of Kashmir for India's cause; and then, and only then, conduct a plebiscite under circumstances defined by India and sanctioned by the UN. It was this insistence on India as the ultimate political authority to define the "rules of the game" in the settlement of the Kashmir dispute that would present an insurmountable obstacle to UN efforts to hold a plebiscite and eventually resolve the conflict.

The Indian government understood its appeal to the UN Security Council as a "unilateral reference" demanding the UN to compel Pakistan to suspend its support of the tribesmen and end its interference in Indian domestic affairs. In the Indian view, Kashmir had legally acceded to India and was now under sovereign Indian control.[7] But once the UN took charge of the matter, British and American policymakers and diplomats worked behind the scenes to redefine the Kashmir dispute as an open-ended conflict between two equal sides that required international settlement under the auspices of the UN. Between January and March 1948, they at first considered, but then rejected, ambitious plans for an indefinite UN trusteeship for Kashmir that would have involved "[o]ne thousand international troops in Srinagar" and "[s]cores of 'UN observers' in the Indian and Pakistan occupied zones", reminiscent of the situation in post-war Germany.[8] Instead, they settled on the idea of placing Kashmir under temporary UN supervision. The plan foresaw that a UN commission should "exercise final authority" in all matters pertaining to the plebiscite. The Security Council would appoint a "Plebiscite Marshal" with supreme authority over "all military forces stationed in the State".[9] Moreover, the UN commission were to elect a "Plebiscite Magistrate", who would have "appellate and final jurisdiction" over all legal issues concerning the plebiscite.[10] Not surprisingly, Sir Girja Bajpai, the Indian representative to the UN, rejected this plan in talks with the Americans. In Bajpai's opinion, the UN observers ought to merely "report what was happening" rather than exert administrative and military control.[11]

Despite these early dissonances, and while fighting continued in Kashmir, the UN began taking the initiative in the settlement of the dispute. On 20 January 1948, the Security Council established the UN Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) to investigate the situation on the spot and make recommendations as to its resolution. The Security Council and UNCIP issued resolutions on 21 April and 13 August 1948 respectively, calling India and Pakistan to agree on a "cease-fire", to be followed by a "truce", and, ultimately, a "plebiscite".[12] On 7 July 1948, UNCIP staff under the lead of the Norwegian and Czechoslovak diplomats Erik Colban and Josef Korbel arrived in New Delhi. Over the summer and autumn, UNCIP held extensive discussions with the Indian and Pakistani authorities as well as representatives of the government in Srinagar under newly

appointed, India-friendly Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah and members of the Azad Kashmir forces on the Pakistani side. On 11 December 1948, they presented their recommendations to the Pakistani and Indian governments, according to which a plebiscite administrator nominated by the UN, vested with sufficient powers by the Jammu and Kashmir authorities, was to carry out the plebiscite. India accepted on 23 December and Pakistan two days later. These UNCIP recommendations formed the basis for the cease-fire on 1 January 1949.[13]

Despite a few setbacks and doubts, the period from early 1948, when the UN began studying the issue, to the beginning of 1949, when the cease-fire came into force, was marked by a spirit of optimism among UN officials. The first study of the planned plebiscite was produced in March 1948, followed by a detailed and highly technical "Master Plan" for its implementation that was revised in several stages between June 1948 and June 1949.[14] In January 1949, Erik Colban, Secretary-General Trygve Lie's special representative for Kashmir, noted in his diary from New Delhi that he had "no doubt that we should be able to solve the problem and overcome all the many and heavy difficulties still ahead of us".[15] In March 1949, a UN information booklet stated that "it is planned to conduct the Plebiscite and to complete the details of the operation" in the "open season" between 1 May and 1 November 1950.[16] This optimistic view of the likelihood of the plebiscite was mirrored in a widespread expectation among Indian, Pakistani, British, and American politicians, journalists, and diplomats that despite serious difficulties and obstacles, the plebiscite would ultimately be taking place.[17]

The widespread confidence in the UN to carry out a plebiscite in Kashmir evaporated from the spring of 1949. On 1 April, in a thorough report on the preparations of the plebiscite, Colban noted that "[i]t is quite remarkable that in the prolonged discussions on the question up to now, it seems that nobody has thought of – or spoken of – the difficulties which will face the Sub-continent after the plebiscite".[18] Colban concluded his report with the caveat that "[a] further study of this problem may even be of value if after all … it should prove practically impossible to solve the Kashmir dispute through a plebiscite".[19] As negotiations on the procedures for the preparation of the plebiscite stalled over the next months, it became apparent that the UN Commission had woefully neglected the political and military aspects of the issue. In October 1949, an internal UN memo expressed frustration that "prolonged negotiations have failed to bring about an agreement on the conditions of a truce which would provide for a progressive stabilization in the State and permit beginning the organization of the plebiscite". The memo concluded that "[i]t is in India's interest to perpetuate the status quo", as it controlled most of Kashmir's territory, was militarily stronger than Pakistan, and was by most accounts less likely to win an overall plebiscite.[20]

The UN's fundamental problem was that it lacked both the power and the legitimacy to serve as the supreme political authority in the settlement of the conflict. On numerous occasions, politicians from India but also from other factions directly challenged the authority of the UN to arbitrate in the matter, let alone impose a solution. On 1 October 1948, for instance, Indian Home Minister Sardar Patel spoke of the UN Security Council as an "'Insecurity Council'". Patel went on to say that he wished "no more sermons from people who still believe that they are trustees here. They must know that they have sufficiently mismanaged affairs in all parts of the world".[21] Shortly before, in early September 1948, Azad Kashmir leader Chaudri Ghulam Abbas told UNCIP members that as "the United Nations could only use its good offices to persuade the parties concerned" rather than use force, they should "sit in a cool and clean atmosphere and work on the basis for a plebiscite while the Azad troops continue their fight with India".[22] In July 1949, at the peak of the controversy over arbitration, Nehru wrote to the Indian Ambassador in Washington, DC, that

> [w]e are going to have no arbitrator anyhow and I rather doubt if we are going to have a mediator. … What is the [UN] Commission here for? … On this Kashmir issue, as I have already told you, there is going to be no weakness on our side. We shall be polite but firm.[23]

In view of the magnitude of the task before them, the initial optimism of UN officials like Erik Colban testifies both to the historical openness and fluidity of the moment and to the high hopes placed in the UN as an effective and legitimate new manager of international conflicts. The case of Kashmir demonstrates that the UN was not just a passive tool of the great powers or a forum for debate, but from its inception sought to become a dominant force in international conflict management. And UN involvement had some positive effects. It added a layer of debate and decision-making to a conflict that could not be resolved bilaterally. Moreover, UN observers on the spot and UNCIP succeeded in stabilizing the status quo along the cease-fire line, building a minimum level of trust between the Indians and Pakistanis, and preventing all-out war. Even so, the UN failed to achieve its aim to resolve rather than manage the conflict.[24] UNCIP was too weak and lacked the legitimacy to deliver a settlement that would have helped the two new-born nations to move past their bitter rivalry and establish peaceful relations.

Ultimately, the failure was not so much the direct fault of individuals, tactical errors, or a lack of workable plans. Rather, it was the result of an experimental process during which the UN had explored the opportunities, and faced the limitations of, its ambitions as a major international political authority.

The Congo Crisis, 1960–1965

On 30 June 1960, following a hasty withdrawal of the Belgian colonial power reminiscent of the end of British rule in India, Congo became an independent country.[25] But things quickly spiralled out of control when Congolese soldiers staged a mutiny against their Belgian officers, who had stubbornly stayed in place and refused to grant Congolese soldiers promotions. As Congolese soldiers began taking Belgian officers hostage, the Belgian government intervened with a contingent of paratroopers to liberate the hostages and, in their eyes, to restore law and order. As a response, the Congolese government under Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba called on the UN to intervene and enforce the withdrawal of all Belgian forces, arguing that the latter had violated Congolese sovereignty. In the meantime, Moise Tshombe, regional leader of the resource-rich and Belgium-friendly southern province of Katanga, declared the independence of Katanga, with the strong support of Belgian mining companies. In the eastern part of Congo, more radical political factions around Antoine Gizenga called for the use of Soviet-backed military force against Tshombe.

Within little more than a week, the new country had thus been plunged into a dangerous and dazzlingly complex post-colonial crisis of outside interference, secession, and civil war. In the view of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, the Congo Crisis was the ideal platform to showcase UN "preventive diplomacy" as an alternative to Cold War escalation, old-school European colonialism, and – which is often overlooked – as an alternative to radical black African nationalism.[26] In contrast to the Kashmir dispute, this time, the UN reacted with impressive speed. On 14 July 1960, two days following Lumumba's request for military assistance, the Security Council passed a resolution that called for Belgium to withdraw its troops from Congo and, in somewhat more vague language, authorized the UN Secretary-General to use force, in consultation with the Congolese government, "until … the national security forces may be able, in the opinion of the Government, to meet fully their tasks".[27] The first UN troops arrived in Congo one day later.

For Hammarskjöld, the ensuing United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC), which would reach a peak of nearly 20,000 troops and last for four years, was supposed to place the UN on an entirely new footing. On 20 July 1960, he announced that

> we are at a turn of the road where our attitude will be of decisive significance, I believe, not only for the future of this Organization but also for the future of Africa. And Africa may well in present circumstances mean the world.[28]

As Ralph Bunche, one of Hammarskjöld's special representatives for Congo, noted in a speech in March 1964, the Secretary-General began to think of the

UN as more than just a public forum: “this in itself, he knew, could never be enough to save the world. In his conception, the United Nations must play an ever more active role, must project itself out and into the very areas of conflict”.[29] Hammarskjöld saw the Congo Crisis thus as a unique opportunity to establish the UN as the major international conflict manager and, if need be, nation builder to fill the “vacuum” allegedly created by decolonization (Hammarskjöld 1960, 4–5) against radical nationalism and any outside interference other than by the United Nations – Lumumba, in his vociferous attacks of UN action and his (mostly alleged) leanings to the Soviet Union came to represent a direct threat to both these ambitions.

Like in Kashmir, but more assertively, the UN redefined the conflict as an international crisis. Within a few weeks, it had transformed Lumumba’s request for limited military assistance against foreign aggression into a peacekeeping and fully fledged nation-building operation that came close to a UN Chapter VII intervention. On 13 July 1960, one day before the Security Council resolution, Hammarskjöld explained that “he did not read it [Lumumba’s request] as a demand for troops to throw out the Belgians” but to “restore the discipline and efficacy of the Force Publique”, the Congolese army. UN intervention, the Secretary-General went on to say, “must imply the exclusion of any other kind of external intervention in the Congo”.[30] Five days later, Hammarskjöld argued that the collapse of law and order in Congo represented “a threat to peace and security justifying United Nations intervention”. In his view, the conflict between the Belgian and Congolese governments was “legally not essential for the justification of the action”.[31] Lumumba’s rejection of Hammarskjöld’s interpretation of the 14 July resolution as “unilateral and erroneous” one month later had no effect.[32] Instead, the Secretary-General specified that while the UN had not formally used Articles 41 and 42 of the UN Charter under Chapter VII, the UN resolutions on Congo “may be considered as implicitly taken under Article 40 and, in that sense, as based on an implicit finding under Article 39”.[33] This reading of the resolutions would free the UN to a considerable extent from the oversight and control of the Congolese authorities.

Hammarskjöld’s far-reaching ambitions brought him into open conflict with the Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba. The latter’s vociferous rhetorical attacks questioning the legitimacy and impartiality of UN action, his refusal to recognize the UN as the dominant and only foreign intervening force in the conflict, and his charisma and widespread popular appeal among the Congolese population made him a direct threat to Hammarskjöld’s strategic objectives. Lumumba pursued a non-aligned course in the Cold War, refusing to choose a side and seeking instead to exploit superpower rivalry and to benefit from the historical impetus of the anti-colonial movement. In his view, the role of the UN was to place its military forces at the disposal of his government, allowing him to end Belgian interference and the secession

of Katanga in a rapid military operation and to restore national unity under a strong central government (for a further discussion of the dispute between Lumumba and Hammarskjöld, see Gibbs 2000, 367–369).

Hammarskjöld pursued an altogether different strategy. His primary aim was to facilitate a process of national reconciliation, whereby ONUC would enforce the gradual withdrawal of Belgian military, restore law and order, and then engage in negotiations with the different political factions. Rather than oppose Tshombe militarily, Hammarskjöld hoped to cut his foreign support so that Katangese independence would collapse from within. This approach allowed the UN to uphold its image of political neutrality while asserting its ambition as the overarching political authority to broker a political settlement and pave the way for long-term economic modernization and technical support under the auspices of the UN. The Secretary-General saw the Belgians as an alien element to the conflict that needed to be removed, "less because they represent any kind of war risk than because they vitiate the balance in the situation; they are a kind of interference in the natural processes of political development".[34] To prevent "a confused Spanish [Civil War] situation", moreover, ONUC "cannot continue if it is being pushed around by various leaders and factions in the Congo". Instead, ONUC must be "a serious and authoritative factor in the local situation", and "any immobilism" or "emasculated passivity" were not "permissible".[35] In other words, Hammarskjöld intended to establish the UN as the unchallenged foreign intervening power and a dominant political, military, and administrative authority in Congo.

Things came to a head in late August and early September 1960, when Lumumba first appealed to the Soviet Union for military supplies and subsequently moved the Armée Nationale Congolaise (ANC) into the small renegade province of Kasai, north of Katanga, where undisciplined soldiers committed a series of massacres against the local Baluba population (on the notoriously undisciplined Congolese army, see Barron 2013). Although British intelligence reports and recent historical research in Soviet archives confirm that the impact of Soviet military assistance was marginal, Lumumba's request to the Soviet Union triggered alarm bells among Western states and in Hammarskjöld's "Congo Group".[36] More significantly, it was an open blow against the United Nations' ambition to represent the dominant and sole external force in Congo. The violence of Lumumba's forces in Kasai provoked a heated debate in the UN's "Advisory Committee on the Congo", which had been created by Hammarskjöld in late August 1960 and was composed of representatives of those UN member states that had committed troops to ONUC (Muschik 2022, 226). In a meeting on 2 September 1960, Hammarskjöld called a massacre of 130 Baluba civilians in Bakwanga "genocide" and called for the deployment of ONUC forces to intervene. The UN could not stand by "as a silent and passive witness to acts which go directly

against principles upheld by the Organization itself'".[37] The delegates from Morocco and Guinea warned the Secretary-General that such an action would violate the UN's pledge of political neutrality as it would help the secessionist forces in Kasai and Katanga. Instead, ONUC should focus on the secession of Katanga as the root cause of the conflict.[38]

With Western support, Lumumba's political enemies used the Bakwanga incident as a pretext for a coup d'état against the prime minister, which was carried out by Joseph Mobutu, the leader of the Congolese army. On the same day as the stormy session of the UN's Advisory Committee on the Congo took place, Congolese Foreign Minister Bomboko had issued a strongly worded memo that it "would be 'suicide' to think of getting rid of the United Nations". Interestingly, Bomboko used an argument anticipating the "responsibility to protect" doctrine when he added that "'Independence … means not only a country and people, but the ability to govern; failing that other countries have the right not only to come in and protect their own nationals, but even our people if they ask this'".[39] Lumumba was arrested on 14 September by Mobutu's troops and placed under house arrest, guarded by ONUC troops.

Patrice Lumumba and Dag Hammarskjöld would both lose their lives in or near Katanga, which had become the focal point of the conflict. While Lumumba, after a botched escape attempt from UN confinement, was arrested, transferred to Katanga, and assassinated by a Belgian-sponsored Katangese firing squad with the connivance of the CIA and other Western security services on 17 January 1961, Hammarskjöld died on 18 September 1961 near the Katangese Northern Rhodesian border in a plane crash whose cause remains unresolved (de Witte 2001; Williams 2017). Meanwhile, although a new pro-Western government under Prime Minister Cyrille Adoula had been formed in Leopoldville on 2 August 1961, the UN was gradually forced to step up the military pressure on Tshombe, who refused to surrender Katangese independence or disband his force of white mercenaries. In several consecutive military operations between September 1961 and January 1963, ONUC troops finally defeated Tshombe's troops, occupied Katanga's capital Elisabethville, and forced Tshombe into exile. As pressure from the Afro-Asian states rose and US foreign policy changed under John F. Kennedy in November 1962, the UN had finally endorsed the policy that Lumumba had envisaged from the beginning.

The instability of Congo coupled with the acute shortage of educated administrators, military personnel, and political thinkers – a legacy of Belgian colonial rule – meant that the UN's far-reaching ambitions dragged the organization ever deeper into Congolese politics. Through their presence alone, UN troops, diplomats, and technical advisors became a party to the conflict, and any action or inaction inevitably had political ramifications. Seeking to establish itself as the supreme authority in Congo, the UN

undermined exactly the domestic political development it intended to facilitate. By December 1960, Hammarskjöld admitted that "it was inevitable that, while maintaining of course the façade of Congolese responsibility, the United Nations would, in fact, have to take more initiatives in more fields".[40] Meanwhile, UN officials on the spot lamented the "low quality of the ministers" in Congo and the lack of "an adequate administrative staff".[41] Consequently, "[m]any of his [Adoula's] letters, ordonnances and speeches have thus been prepared by us in the past". To strengthen the government, it was necessary "to put at the disposal of the Government efficient UN personnel to assume important executive functions" in "the office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of the Interior, the Bureau of Economic Coordination and the Monetary Council".[42] In filling administrative posts, negotiating separately with the different political factions, and training the ANC, the UN increasingly looked like a more benign version of the former Belgian colonial masters.

Eventually, the UN operation in Congo ran out of funding and political support, and with the defeat of Tshombe and the establishment of a central government under Adoula, the UN assumed that its mission had been a success, which allowed them to pull out. On 30 June 1964, four years to the day after Congo had gained its independence, ONUC troops withdrew from the country. Yet Hammarskjöld's warnings of leaving behind a "vacuum" proved to be accurate. Within a month, the newly appointed Prime Minister Tshombe faced an allegedly communist rebellion in the east of the country that was in fact the result of popular discontent with the government and a sign of a failed state.[43] After a protracted military campaign, Tshombe finally crushed the rebellion with the help of white mercenaries and Belgian and US military intervention during a hostage crisis in Stanleyville that was strongly reminiscent of the beginning of the Congo Crisis.[44] This time, there was no UN intervention, and the protests by the Organization of African Unity remained without effect. In its military intervention in Congo, the UN had overreached its military, financial, and political power.

East Pakistan, 1971

The Congo operation exposed not just the limitations but also the dangers of large-scale UN-led military intervention. The immediate lesson more optimistic UN leaders like Ralph Bunche learned from ONUC was that much more careful strategic planning, a workable exit strategy, and substantially greater funds were needed for similar UN missions in the future.[45]

Among many other UN officials, however, a "new wariness" made itself felt after the Congo mission, and there was little enthusiasm for the UN to

become involved in such risky operations.[46] By the late 1960s, moreover, the anti-colonial momentum had largely dissipated in the grim post-colonial reality of economic stagnation, coups, and proxy wars that many newly independent African states faced until the end of the Cold War (Byrne 2013, 111–118). Cold War tensions calmed down, giving way to a process of détente that made UN intervention appear less urgent in the prevention of global military escalations of regional conflicts.

Even so, there was no shortage of political and humanitarian crises featuring massive human rights abuses that potentially constituted threats to international peace and security. The violence that erupted in East Pakistan in March 1971, causing the death of tens if not hundreds of thousands of civilians and forcing over ten million people to flee to nearby India, was among the most severe of them.[47] When the West Pakistani military under the lead of General Yahya Khan's regime began cracking down on students, intellectuals, and increasingly also the Hindu minority in East Pakistan, whom they accused of separatism, they created almost a textbook case for international conflict management and military humanitarian intervention.[48] Charges of genocide quickly mounted, while a massive refugee crisis ensued that threatened to destabilize the geopolitical balance in South Asia. The Indian government, genuinely sympathetic to the democratic movement for autonomy of its eastern neighbour, but at the same time strategically aiming at weakening and potentially breaking up Pakistan, raised the issue in the UN General Assembly and Security Council.[49] Yet over the following eight months, the UN did not move past expressing its "concern" over the situation, offering its good offices and humanitarian aid, and calling India and Pakistan to refrain from military action and to seek a peaceful solution. Focusing on the East Pakistan crisis of 1971, this final part of the essay will explore to what extent and with what consequences the UN had indeed "given up" its ambitions of playing a role in international conflict management by this point.

Like in the cases of the Kashmir dispute and the Congo Crisis, the UN at first sought to redefine the situation in East Pakistan. To the chagrin of the Indian government under Indira Gandhi, Nehru's daughter, the UN refused to accept India's argument that the massive violence meted out by the West Pakistani military constituted "genocide". In view of the growing stream of refugees crossing the border to India and the danger of Indian military intervention in East Pakistan, the UN depicted the situation as an Indo-Pakistani conflict. The Indian government had a different view. It argued that what was happening in East Pakistan was a humanitarian and political crisis caused by the brutality of the Pakistani government, with India bearing the enormous costs of accommodating millions of refugees (Bass 2015). In the eyes of the Indian government, what was required was a robust international response, possibly military intervention, to stop the killings and pave the way for the return of the refugees and self-determination in East Pakistan.

In marked contrast to the previous two cases discussed in this essay, the UN limited its actions to vague appeals for restraint and the offer of humanitarian aid. A few days after the military crackdown in East Pakistan had begun, UN Secretary-General U Thant stated that he was unable to act due to the two "insuperable obstacles" of non-interference and lack of authoritative information.[50] After consulting with his legal advisors, on 22 April 1971, U Thant offered the government of Pakistan humanitarian assistance, pledging absolute political impartiality.[51] In the following months, U Thant continued to voice his concern about the evolving humanitarian crisis but avoided any open criticism of the Pakistani government.

Below the surface of political impartiality, however, UN officials sought to give their humanitarian mission a political twist. In mid-May 1971, the Pakistani government had agreed to a humanitarian mission under the ambitious lead of Sadruddin Aga Khan, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).[52] Both in the field and in UNHCR's headquarters in Geneva, UN officials used the rhetoric of humanitarian aid as a cover to pursue their more ambitious political aims to manage the conflict. With the tacit support of Britain and the United States, their objective was to restore the status quo ante by convincing the Pakistani authorities to stop the violence, engage in political reforms, and then allow UNHCR to organize the return of the refugees. In a closed meeting with UNHCR staff in late June, Sadruddin explained how he sought to politicize the UN operation in East Pakistan:

> The UN … must be felt as a presence and must not appear to be an acquiescence in or approval of actions by the Pakistan Government and military authorities which prevented the restoration of confidence. The Pakistan authorities must understand that while the United Nations was in East Pakistan to help them, the Pakistanis must help by ensuring proper behaviour by the government and army representatives.[53]

The internal discussions among UNHCR staff reveal the extent of their plans to restore order and "manage" the crisis as a potentially dangerous Indo-Pakistani conflict rather than "resolve" it in the sense of self-determination for the East Pakistani people. The immediate aim of UNHCR was to establish an "effective UN presence"[54] on both sides of the Indo-Pakistani border – something the Indian government staunchly refused. A further step would be to create "neutral zone collecting centers" that could accommodate up to two million refugees. UNHCR could then open humanitarian corridors and organize the return, resettlement, and rehabilitation of East Pakistani refugees to their homes.[55] As Sadruddin's statement indicates, the UN also considered advising the Pakistani authorities and monitoring the conduct of the Pakistani army. In the absence of a mandate for arbitration or open

military intervention, UNHCR officials thus began to covertly envisage a peacekeeping mission akin to the previous operations in Kashmir and Congo.

Yet the constraints of operating covertly meant that the impact of UNHCR's efforts to arrange the return of the refugees and thus mitigate the crisis were severely limited. Not only did the Indian government strongly resist any UNHCR presence on its side of the border, but the Pakistani authorities, too, did not show any sign of ending the violence against civilians or of carrying out meaningful reforms that would entice the refugees to return (for a discussion of the wider international context, see Bass 2013; Cordera 2015; Raghavan 2013; and Prott 2023). As UNHCR's work showed little tangible success even in the more narrow humanitarian sense of delivering food and medicine to the refugees, the UN found itself increasingly challenged by radical activists pushing for a more assertive role of the international community. In Britain, from June 1971, the members of "Operation Omega" began a campaign of illegal and highly publicized border crossings into East Pakistan to deliver aid directly to the population, which resulted in two of their members being imprisoned right up until the arrival of Indian troops in early December.[56] The Indian authorities, meanwhile, received repeated requests from Tytte Botfeldt, a Danish member of "Terre des Hommes", asking for them to send "say, 200 [orphaned] children" for "feeding up" in foster homes in Denmark.[57] When the Indian administrators refused Botfeldt's request with reference to international law, which prevented them from sending foreign nationals abroad without the consent of their parents who were likely still looking for their children, Botfeldt refused to accept this argument and instead offered to charter planes from India to Denmark and pay for the airfares of all the passengers.[58]

The rogue humanitarianism of Operation Omega and Terre des Hommes sought to expose and circumvent the, in their eyes, morally untenable norm of non-interference in the face of a massive humanitarian emergency.[59] Yet their efforts did not venture beyond the moral impetus of embarrassing governments and international organizations in their inability to effectively address human suffering. After all, both Operation Omega and Terre des Hommes focused on humanitarian relief – averting famine and helping orphaned children – rather than placing their activism in the *political* context of East Pakistani self-determination or the prevention of genocide. In this political sense, their activism was much less radical than it appeared at first glance.[60] Their efforts thus need to be understood as a radical critique of established charities and UN aid programmes rather than as advocacy for a politically effective international human rights regime to overcome Cold War realism.

Overall, the failure of the UN and the international community to manage, let alone resolve, the East Pakistan crisis increased the pressure to a point where the Indian government considered war to be the most preferable

option to end the conflict. The result was a brief and successful Indian military intervention between 3 and 16 December 1971 that caused the breakup of Pakistan and paved the way for the creation of an India-friendly independent Bangladesh.

The East Pakistan crisis of 1971 exemplifies the retreat of the UN to a strictly humanitarian definition of its purpose. At least publicly, the organization seemed to have relinquished its aspirations of "preventive diplomacy" and of playing an active political role in international conflict management, seeking instead to confine its actions to the provision of humanitarian aid. This depoliticization of the UN's approach to international conflicts and crises corresponds to a parallel transition of human rights discourses. As Roland Burke has recently argued, human rights advocacy moved from a focus on the state in the 1960s to an emphasis of the moral dimension and avoidance of the state and politics in the 1970s (Burke 2017, 308–309). Yet the East Pakistan crisis also shows that the UN did not simply "give up" its political ambitions. Rather, it adapted to a new "regime" of global governance that provided fewer opportunities for overt foreign intervention than the more malleable and dynamic eras of the early Cold War in the late 1940s and the peak of the anti-colonial and non-aligned movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Conclusion

In the first half of the Cold War, the UN faced the challenge, and the widespread expectation, of establishing itself as both a legitimate and an effective political authority in the settlement of international conflicts and humanitarian crises. This essay has examined three prominent cases of UN foreign intervention and conflict management – Kashmir, the Congo Crisis, and East Pakistan. It has argued that the moral impetus of the end of World War II and the huge transformations brought by the anti-colonial movement emboldened ambitious UN officials to overestimate their influence (Kashmir) and overreach their political power (Congo). Sobered by these experiences and keen to survive and expand as an organization in the more static international climate of the 1970s, UN officials withdrew to a safer policy of providing humanitarian aid and offering their "good offices" rather than actively and overtly seeking to resolve international conflicts (East Pakistan).

Notwithstanding these important shifts in approach, in all three cases, UN involvement did little to pacify and modernize the affected regions and failed to serve the interests of the local populations. In East Pakistan, UNHCR's overt impartiality coupled with covert attempts to establish a political solution failed to "manage", let alone "resolve", the crisis. It was ultimately

settled not by UN action, but by unilateral Indian military intervention that ended West Pakistani military rule and paved the way for an independent Bangladesh. In Kashmir and Congo, UN intervention was successful in preventing Cold War escalation and created a minimum degree of local stability, albeit with hugely detrimental long-term effects for the regions affected. Both regions still today grapple with the legacy of failed international conflict management. In Kashmir, the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) still has 110 observers in the field who monitor the cease-fire line.[61] While the international status of the region remains in limbo with no solution in sight, recent fieldwork shows that many local inhabitants on both sides suffer from unemployment, impediments to trade, military violence, and severe restrictions of civil liberties.[62] At the international level, Kashmir has become a symbol for the failure and inability of the international community to deliver a solution to a difficult territorial dispute. In Congo, the failure of the UN operation had even more devastating consequences. The withdrawal of ONUC in June 1964 heralded a one-year civil war that ended with the establishment of the US-backed dictatorship of General Mobutu. From this moment, the country entered a thirty-two-year-long period of economic decline and mismanagement (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002). Mobutu's rule reached its inglorious finale only in 1997 when the ageing dictator attempted to boost his domestic power by supporting the Hutu *génocidaires* that had fled neighbouring Rwanda following their defeat by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).[63] Revealingly, it was not an initiative by the UN or the international community but intervention by the RPF and Ugandan forces that ended Mobutu's regime (Tamm 2016). Since 2000, the UN is again present in Congo with another "robust" mission called MONUC (renamed MONUSCO in July 2010; see Koko 2012; Autesserre 2014, 2015, 2019; Hellmüller 2018). Its current strength, 13,997 civilian and military personnel, is similar to the size of ONUC.[64] It remains to be seen whether the current UN operation in Congo will be more successful than its predecessor of the early 1960s.

The surrender of the United Nations' overt political ambitions in global conflict management remains a lasting legacy of the organization's Cold War operations. The oft-repeated phrase of "never again" or the more recent "responsibility to protect", even with "teeth", tend to avoid difficult questions of politics and strategy. In fact, their moral fervour has rarely been coupled with a sound political rationale aimed at resolving international conflicts in a durable manner, as the examples of Somalia in 1993, Bosnia in 1995, or more recently Libya after 2011 indicate.[65] While such conflicts and crises are of course easier to assess in historical hindsight, it is clear that the international community, at least in the form of the UN, still lacks not only the tools and the legitimacy but also

the ambition to address such situations at their political roots. It thus remains to be seen whether the UN will be able to reinvigorate its political and military authority within the international system – or whether it will remain an organization of marginal political importance that provides humanitarian aid and its "good offices" to soften the edges of international crises and conflicts, leaving the field open to covert intervention and power politics.

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Notes

1. This language of filling the "vacuum" created by decolonization pervaded UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld's introduction to the 1960 UN annual report, written on 31 August 1960 and therefore only shortly after the beginning of UN intervention in Congo. See Hammarskjöld (1960).
2. Tudor (2023) follows a similar narrative in her recent study on UN peacekeeping from "testing the waters" (1945–1955) and "imperial aspirations" (1960–1961) to "stagnation and insignificance" (1964–1971). The difference from the approach pursued in the present essay is that Tudor ascribes the last phase to an attempt by the UN to repair its reputation, whereas this essay sees it as a fundamental paradigm shift away from ambitions of direct political power to one relying more on informal and covert forms of exerting limited political influence while publicly and legally pledging neutrality and impartiality.
3. United Nations Peacekeeping, "List of Peacekeeping Operations, 1948–2019," https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/unpeacekeeping-operationlist_3_1_0.pdf (accessed 13 December 2024).
4. For an excellent synthesis of the history of the partition of India, see Khan (2017). On the process of border drawing see Chester (2009). An overview of the literature is provided in Gilmartin (2015). For a

recent transnational exploration of the partitions of Ireland, Palestine, and India, see Dubnov and Robson (2019). See also Raghavan (2020) for an innovative recent exploration of the difficult first years of Indo-Pakistani relations.

5. The following is based on the excellent historical overview in Raghavan (2010). For an in-depth historical account of the Kashmir conflict see Schofield (2010).
6. For simplicity's sake, I will henceforth refer to the state of Jammu and Kashmir as "Kashmir."
7. Nehru to Mountbatten, 26 December 1947, 7, quoted in UK Delegation to the UN, New York to CRO, 27 December 1947, The National Archives, London (henceforth TNA), Dominion's Office (DO), 133/73.
8. This was the suggestion by British Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations Philip Noel-Baker in a meeting with American colleagues on 10 January 1948. See the minutes of the meeting, 2, National Archives and Record Administration, Washington, DC (henceforth NARA), Record Group (RG) 59, Central Decimal File (CDF), 501.BC/1–48, box 2139.
9. Draft resolution on Kashmir case, undated (ca. late February/early March 1948), 7, 9, ibid.
10. Ibid., 10.
11. Memorandum of Conversation with the Indian delegation to the UN, 22 March 1948, 2, ibid.
12. It must be added that the UNCIP resolution of 13 August 1948 did not explicitly mention a plebiscite but referred more generally to "the will of the people." See Security Council Resolution 47 of 21 April 1947, S/724 (available here: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/111955/?ln=en, accessed 13 December 2024) and UNCIP Resolution of 13 August 1948, quoted in full in the Interim Report of the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan, 22 November 1948, S/1100, paragraph 75, pp. 28–30 (available here: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/473732, accessed 13 December 2024).
13. Summary of the Kashmir Dispute, 15 March 1949, United Nations Archives, New York (henceforth UNA), S-0692-0001-04.
14. See C. L. Griffin, Memo on conducting the plebiscite, 18 March 1948, UNA, S-0005-0003-04 and "United Nations Plebiscite Mission for Jammu and Kashmir: Master Plan," dated 1 June 1948 but revised on several occasions, UNA, S-0692-0004-02.
15. Colban to Lie, 25 January 1949, transmitting his diary of 18–24 January 1949, entry of 18 January, 1, UNA, S-0005-0002-04.
16. Information booklet issued by the United Nations Plebiscite Mission for Jammu and Kashmir, undated [31 March 1949], 6, UNA, S-0005-0002-01.
17. See e.g. the comments in the Pakistani press in January and February 1949 in the reports by the Press Information Bureau, Government of India, "Gleanings from Pakistan Press and Radio," UNA, S-0694-0001-14 and the report by the Indian High Commissioner in Karachi, Kirpalani, to Subimal Dutt in the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, dated 18 February 1949, in which Kirpalani mentioned "an air of optimism" about the plebiscite taking place soon. See Kirpanali to Dutt, 18 February 1949, National Archives of India (henceforth NAI), 2-1/48-Pak I, Ministry of External Affairs (MAE), Pakistan I Section.
18. Erik Colban, "Preparation of the Plebiscite," 1 April 1949, 13, UNA, S-0005-0002-04. The troublesome issue of the difficult implementation of a plebiscite, even if it had taken place, is discussed in Snedden (2005).
19. Colban, "Preparation of the Plebiscite," 14.
20. "The India-Pakistan Question: Review of the Situation Regarding Kashmir," unauthored UN memo, 10 October 1949, 1, 3, UNA, S-0005-0003-02. On the difficulty of predicting the result of a plebiscite see Colban, "Preparation of the Plebiscite," and more recently Snedden (2005).
21. Donovan, US Embassy New Delhi, to Secretary of State Marshall, 3 October 1948, 1–2, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1945–1949, 501.BC/Kashmir, box 2159.
22. "Notes on the Informal Meeting of the Commission with the Representatives of the 'Azad Kashmir Government'" in Karachi, 4 September 1948, 7–8, UNA S-0005-0003-06.
23. Nehru to Shrimati Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Embassy of India, Washington, DC, 11 July 1949, 1, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library (henceforth NMML), Jawaharlal Nehru Papers post 1947, I. Instalment, No. 26.
24. On the difference between "managing" and "resolving" conflicts and the different levels of "success," see the introduction to this special issue.

25. For a concise outline of the historical background see e.g. MacQueen (2011, 25–30), Schmidt (2013, ch. 3), O'Malley (2018, 10–12), and Muschik (2022, 202–208). For the wider historical context from a Congolese perspective see Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002).

26. Hammarskjöld outlined his concept of "preventive diplomacy" in his annual report to the UN General Assembly on 31 August 1960; see Hammarskjöld (1960). On Hammarskjöld's crucial role in the Congo Crisis, see O'Malley (2018, ch. 2), Muschik (2018, 2022, ch. 6), and Tudor (2023, ch. 3). On the radical global challenge of anti-colonial activism, see Getachew (2019).

27. UN Security Council Resolution of 14 July 1960, S/4387 (available here: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/112108?ln=en, accessed 13 December 2024).

28. Dag Hammarskjöld, Statement in the UN Security Council, 20 July 1960, 4, SG/935, UNA, S-0888-0005-06.

29. Ralph Bunche, "The United Nations Operation in the Congo," Dag Hammarskjöld Memorial Lecture at Columbia University, New York, 16 March 1964, 4, Archives of the Belgian Foreign Ministry, Brussels (henceforth SPF), Série Diplomatique (SD), 15.946. On Ralph Bunche see the recent study by Raustiala (2023).

30. Pierson Dixon, UK representative to the UN, New York, to British Foreign Office, 13 July 1960, 1–2, TNA, Foreign Office (FO) 371/146769, JB 2251/8.

31. Dag Hammarskjöld, "First Report by the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution S/4387 of 14 July 1960," 18 July 1960, UN document S/4389 (available here: https://undocs.org/S/4389, accessed 13 December 2024).

32. Lumumba to Hammarskjöld, 14 August 1960, 1, UNA, S-0370-0012-02.

33. Dag Hammarskjöld, Statement in the UN Security Council, 13 December 1960, 19, S/PV.920 (available here: https://undocs.org/en/S/PV.920, accessed 13 December 2024). The legal experts of the British Foreign Office were sceptical about any claims that ONUC may fall under Chapter VII. This classification would have required an explicit "determination" by the Security Council as well as acceptance by the Congolese government of the UN Charter (the Congo was not at the time a member of the UN). See the minute by G. G. Fitzmaurice dated 5 September 1960, 3–4, TNA, FO 371/146779, JB 2251/243. See also Articles 39–42 of the UN Charter here: https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text (accessed 13 December 2024).

34. Minutes of the fifth meeting of the United Nations Advisory Committee on the Congo, 1 October 1960, 121, UNA, S-0849-0001-01.

35. Hammarskjöld, Statement in the UN Security Council, 13 December 1960, 36, 37, 56.

36. On the role of the Soviets see e.g. Marten (Leopoldville) to Foreign Office, 19 November 1963, 1, TNA, FO 371/167239, JB 103138/19, noting that "there are no Soviet citizens or commercial interests in the Congo. It is a safe conclusion that virtually the whole effort and activity of the Soviet Mission is devoted to espionage and subversion against the Central Government and pro-Western elements." See also Namikas (2013, 9, 15) and Mazov (2010, 7). The "Congo Group" was the inner circle of UN officials who advised Hammarskjöld and decisively shaped the UN's Congo strategy. In addition to Hammarskjöld himself, its members were the Americans Andrew Cordier and Ralph Bunche, German-American Heinrich Wieschhoff, and the Indian Indar Jit Rikhye. See Muschik (2022, 220).

37. Minutes of the fourth meeting of the United Nations Advisory Committee on the Congo, 2 September 1960, 29–30, 31, UNA, S-0849-0001-01.

38. Ibid., 46–56.

39. Scott to FO, 2 September 1960, 2, TNA, FO 371/146643, JB 1015/287.

40. Patrick Dean, permanent representative of the UK to the UN, to the British Foreign Office, 13 December 1960, 2, TNA, FO 371/146785, JB 2251/376, reporting a private discussion with Hammarskjöld.

41. Robert Gardiner, "Confidential report to the Secretary-General," April 1963, 4, UNA, S-0219-0004-14.

42. Ibid., 5.

43. See the precise analysis by the British Ambassador to the Congo, Michael Rose, in his "Annual Report on the Congo (Leopoldville) for 1964," 6 January 1965, 2, TNA, FO 371/181656, JB 1011/1.

44. For a concise outline and analysis of the US and Belgian intervention in Stanleyville in November 1964, see O'Malley (2018, 166–196). For discussions of the intervention in the context of the wider humanitarian intervention debate see Chesterman (2001, 66–69).

45. Bunche, "The United Nations Operation in the Congo," 26–27.
46. MacQueen (2011, 29). On the dire consequences of the Congo intervention on future UN peace operations, see also Williams and Bellamy (2021, 59–60) and Muschik (2022, 248).
47. For a brief discussion of the death toll among the East Pakistani Bengali population, with most serious estimates around 200,000 deaths, see Cordera (2015, 48, 58 n. 21).
48. For the historical context of the East Pakistan crisis see Raghavan (2013, chs. 1 and 2) and the more concise account in Bass (2015, 233–235).
49. Scholars still debate whether the Indian government planned military intervention from the start and just waited for the right moment to strike, as Singh (2019, ch. 7) argues, or whether its decision to intervene developed more gradually, as Raghavan (2013, 78–79) argues.
50. Samar Sen to U Thant, 29 March 1971 and U Thant to Sen, 30 March 1971 (also for the following), UNA, S-0863-0001-01.
51. See U Thant to President Yahya (draft letter), 22 April 1971, UNA, S-0863-0001-02.
52. On Sadruddin and UNHCR, see Loescher (2001), Barnett and Finnemore (2004, ch. 4), Myard (2010), Reichel (2019), and Sara Coseman's contribution to this special issue.
53. Summary Record of Meeting with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees held in Room 3858 on 23 June 1971, UNA, S-1072-0004-11.
54. Guyer and Urquhart to Sadruddin, 7 July 1971, UNA, S-0279-0018-02.
55. Haydon to Guyer, "Suggestions for U.N. Relief & Refugee Operations in East Pakistan and India," 17 September 1971, UNA, S-1072-0004-10.
56. On "Operation Omega" see Hannig (2016) and TNA, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 37/966–9.
57. Botfeldt to Gandhi, 21 September 1971, NAI, 7/371/71-Prime Minister's Office (PMS), vol. I.
58. See M. Malhoutra, Deputy Secretary, to Botfeldt, 4 October 1971 and Botfeldt to Gandhi, 18 October and again 20 November 1971, ibid.
59. For a critical assessment of similar radical forms of humanitarian aid see Taylor (2018, 200–201).
60. Cf. Hannig (2016, 329), who argues that "Omega blurred an established distinction between humanitarianism and politics, and sought to redefine the meaning of humanitarian action."
61. For the most recent figures on UNMOGIP see https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unmogip (accessed 13 December 2024).
62. For a recent survey of popular attitudes in Kashmir see Bradnock (2010). On the slim chances for a future settlement of the dispute see Ganguly et al. (2019).
63. For a gripping account of the connected histories of Rwanda and the Congo in the wake of the Rwandan genocide see Gourevitch (1999, 277–302, 321–341).
64. For the latest figures see https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/monusco (accessed 13 December 2024). The similarities between the two Congo operations have also been highlighted by Muschik (2022, 249–250).
65. Honig (2001), for instance, argues that the lack of a political strategy was one of the key causes of the collapse of the UN safe zones in Bosnia, leading to the massacre in Srebrenica in July 1995. On the difficulty of translating moral imperatives into practical action see also Menon (2016, 3).

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