

**Dag Hammarskjöld and Conflict Mediation:
Ethics, Principles, Practices and Lessons – Integrity Matters**

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It is more important to be aware of the grounds for your own behavior than to understand the motives of another.

The others “face” is more important than your own. If, while pleasing another’s cause, you are at the same time seeking something for yourself, you cannot hope to succeed.

You can only hope to find a lasting solution to a conflict if you have learned to see the other objectively, but, at the same time, to experience his difficulties subjectively.

The man who “likes people” disposes once and for all of the man who despises them.

All first-hand experience is valuable, and he who has given up looking for it will one day find – that he lacks what he needs: a closed mind is a weakness, and he who approaches persons or painting or poetry without the useful ambition to learn a new language and so gain access to someone else’s perspective of life, let him beware.

A successful lie is doubly a lie, an error which has to be corrected is a heavier burden than truth: only an uncompromising “honesty” can reach the bedrock of decency which you should always expect to find, even under deep layers of evil.

Diplomatic “finesse” must never be another word for fear of being unpopular: that is to seek the appearance of influence at the cost of its reality.

Dag Hammarskjöld made this entry 1955 into his notebook, discovered after his death and posthumously published.¹ At the time, Hammarskjöld was tested for his ability to mediate in conflict situations and find ways for peaceful solutions to threats of local as well as regional or global security. Since then, Hammarskjöld has been considered a role model for the responsibilities executed by a mediator in global governance matters.

Every successful mediator has to find a genuine solution to genuine cases. There are no standard recipes. But there are fundamental values and norms, which could serve as a moral compass for a successful mediation process. Dag Hammarskjöld, despite failures and setbacks, can in retrospective be considered as a successful mediator, guided by strong personal values and ethics committed to global governance and a notion of social justice, integrity and international solidarity.² – All of these are important components in mediation efforts, though no guarantee for success. With a background as a high-ranking Swedish civil servant (who had never been a member of a political party but involved in creating the Swedish welfare state as a trained economist)³ he served as the second Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) between 1953 and his untimely death in September 1961.⁴

¹ Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings*. New York: Ballantine 1993 (16th edition), p. 96.

² See for an introduction Hans Corell, Inge Lønning and Henning Melber, *The Ethics of Hammarskjöld*. Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation 2010; Ove Bring, Henning Melber and Peter Tejler, *Dag Hammarskjöld and Global Governance*. Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation 2011; Monica Bouman, "Dag Hammarskjöld and the politics of hope." In: Carsten Stahn and Henning Melber (eds), *Peace Diplomacy, Global Justice and International Agency: Rethinking Human Security and Ethics in the Spirit of Dag Hammarskjöld*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2014.

³ Maybe the hitherto most instructive essay on the close linkage between the Swedish social norms and values of the time and Hammarskjöld's translation of these into the office as an international civil servant is Helmut Klumpjan, "'Eine Synthese zwischen Nation und Welt.' Dag Hammarskjöld – Der Weltbürger, der stets ein Schwede blieb." In: Manuel Fröhlich, Helmut Klumpjan and Henning Melber, *Dag Hammarskjöld (1905-1961). Für eine friedliche Welt – Ideen und Impulse des zweiten UN-Generalsekretärs*. Frankfurt/Main: Brandes & Apsel 2011; an intimate in-depth study of the spiritual and the secular Hammarskjöld offers Roger Lipsey, *Hammarskjöld. A Life*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 2013.

⁴ His plane crashed under still not clarified circumstances on a mission to find a peaceful solution to the unrest in the Congo. With Hammarskjöld died all 15 others on board. The circumstances of the crash are a matter of renewed investigations, seeking to establish what really might have happened. See i.a. Susan Williams, *Who Killed Hammarskjöld? The UN, the Cold War and White Supremacy in Africa*. London: Hurst 2011; Henning Melber, "The death of Dag Hammarskjöld", *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 41, no. 141, 2014, pp. 458-465; Henning Melber and David Wardrop, From a book to a United Nations resolution: Yes we can! School of Advanced Studies, University of London, SAS Blogs, posted 17 February 2015 (<http://blogs.sas.ac.uk/2015/02/17/from-a-book-to-a-united-nations-resolution-yes-we-can/#more-3838>)

During his terms in office, Hammarskjöld and his team introduced several pioneering innovations to the proactive role of the UN in mediating conflict. These included most notably the conceptualization and design of peacekeeping⁵, as well as the introduction of special representatives to the UNSG⁶ and the notion of 'silent diplomacy'.⁷ As importantly, the 'Hammarskjöld approach' and its underlying principles are well documented in numerous speeches and reports. His diplomatic and negotiating skills were tested to its limits in several cases, most prominently the Suez crisis of 1956 and the Congo in 1960/61. Not every conflict requiring responsible international management would – due to the prohibitive stance of the directly affected party – allow the UN to act accordingly. And not every intervention or mediation was successful. Hammarskjöld's experiences showed the limitations of both his office as well as the international body during the times of the Cold War.

Despite the change of times and constellations since then, the experiences under the UN administration, guided by Hammarskjöld still offer relevant lessons for conflict mediation efforts today as far as regards the potential role of the world body's intervention in conflicts. This paper therefore explores and assesses the Hammarskjöld principles and practices as defined by his understanding of the role of the UN Secretary-General, to establish what we can learn from these for conflict mediation more than half a century later.⁸ In this paper, the cases of the Suez crisis and the Congo serve as case studies to show the manoeuvring space as much as the limitations of Hammarskjöld's diplomacy and negotiation efforts seeking to reduce violence and promote stability.

⁵ Born during the Suez crisis, the introduction of such planned intervention through a UN military contingency under the Secretary-General was as much the achievement of Lester B. Pearson, then Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs and later Prime Minister, who was a close confidante of Hammarskjöld. See Terence Robertson, *Crisis. The Inside Story of the Suez Conspiracy*. London: Hutchinson 1965.

⁶ See Manuel Fröhlich, "The John Holmes Memorial Lecture: Representing the United Nations—Individual Actors, International Agency, and Leadership", *Global Governance. A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2014, pp. 169-193.

⁷ Cf. Peter Wallensteen, "Dag Hammarskjöld's diplomacy: lessons learned." In Stahn and Melber, *op. cit.*

⁸ See among the most authoritative analyses on the political legacy of Hammarskjöld Manuel Fröhlich, *Dag Hammarskjöld und die Vereinten Nationen. Die politische Ethik des UNO-Generalsekretärs*. Paderborn: Schöningh 2002; published in a considerably shorter version also as *Political Ethics and the United Nations. Dag Hammarskjöld as Secretary-General*. London and New York: Routledge 2008.

Hammar skjöld's principles and ethics

“Never, ‘for the sake of peace and quiet,’ deny your own experience or convictions”, penned Hammar skjöld into his private notebook during 1952, a year before his appointment as Secretary-General.⁹ And just before he noted: “It is easy to be nice, even to an enemy – from lack of character”.¹⁰ One could have also added: from lack of empathy and solidarity with those who are victimized by those in abuse of the power they seized or - worse - were entrusted with to serve the people. Service to others in fulfillment of one’s own life was a key issue in Hammar skjöld’s ethics, obvious also from an entry in 1950:

I can realize my individuality to becoming a bridge for others, a stone in the temple for righteousness.

Don’t be afraid of yourself, live your individuality to the full – but for the good of others. Don’t copy others in order to buy fellowship, or make convention your law instead of living the righteousness.¹¹

For Hammar skjöld, the work of the UN should build on the commonality of humankind, its conduct and experience. His ethics, principles and credo were deeply shaped by his commitment to virtues, such as integrity and impartiality, which he used in the cause of both ‘peace’ and ‘justice’. He shared the conviction that the organisation represents more than the sum of its Members. Many of his Introductions to the Annual Reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly and his speeches are masterfully crafted reflections which capture and re-think fundamental principles of international organisation. They address *inter alia* the distinction between ‘impartiality’ and ‘neutrality’ (1954), ‘mediation’ and ‘reconciliation’ (1955), ‘good offices’ (1959), the contours of the Charter as a ‘constitutional framework for world-wide cooperation’ (1960) or ‘international civil service’ (1961). He traced the contours of a ‘United Nations ideology’, based on Christian and universal notions of ‘faith’, ‘hope’ and ‘charity’ which illustrate his ambition to embed executive action in a “political philosophy of the

⁹ *Markings, op. cit.*, p. 71.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

UN".¹² He viewed the UN itself as a means to an end towards the greater good, rather than an end itself. This vision is clearly expressed in his public statement that "the principles of the Charter are, by far, greater than the Organization in which they are embodied, and the aims which they are to safeguard are holier than the policies of any single nation or people".¹³ Since the start of his first term of office, he stressed the need for the UN to engage with the dilemmas of decolonization and greater social justice inside nations.

During a visit to India in early February 1956, he addressed the Indian Council of World Affairs. Prompted by a moving encounter with local culture performed in his honour earlier, one of his few mainly extemporaneous speeches explored the dimensions of human universalism. A commonality beyond Western – or, as a matter of fact, any other culturally, religiously or geographically limited – ideology or conviction:

It is no news to anybody, but we sense it in different degrees, that our world of today is more than ever before *one* world. The weakness of one is the weakness of all, and the strength of one – not the military strength, but the real strength, the economic and social strength, the happiness of people – is indirectly the strength of all. Through various developments which are familiar to all, world solidarity has, so to say, been forced upon us. This is no longer a choice of enlightened spirits; it is something which those whose temperament leads them in the direction of isolationism have also to accept. (...) With respect to the United Nations as a symbol of faith, it may (...) be said that to every man it stands as a kind of 'yes' to the ability of man to form his own destiny, and form his own destiny so as to create a world where the dignity of man can come fully into its own.¹⁴

And as he explained in May 1959 in an address before the Academic Association of the University of Lund back home in Sweden:

¹² See Jodok Troy, "Dag Hammarskjöld: An International Civil Servant Uniting Mystics and Realistic Diplomatic Engagement", *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, vol. 21, 2010, no. 3, p. 441.

¹³ Security Council Official Records, Eleventh Year, 751st Meeting. October 31, 1956. In: *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations. Volume III: Dag Hammarskjöld 1956-1957*. Selected and edited with commentary by Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote. New York and London: Columbia University Press 1973, p. 309.

¹⁴ Dag Hammarskjöld, "The United Nations – Its Ideology and Activities." Address before the Indian Council of World Affairs 3 February 1956. In: *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations. Volume II: Dag Hammarskjöld 1953-1956*. Selected and edited with commentary by Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote. New York and London: Columbia University Press 1972, pp. 661 and 660.

We thus live in a world where, no more internationally than nationally, any distinct group can claim superiority in mental gifts and potentialities of development. (...) Those democratic ideals which demand equal opportunities for all should be applied also to peoples and races. (...) no nation or group of nations can base its future on a claim of supremacy. (...) the Organization I represent ... is based on a philosophy of solidarity.¹⁵

In his introduction to the Annual Report of the UN for 1959-1960 he reiterated:

It is my firm conviction that any result bought at the price of a compromise with the principles and ideals of the Organization, either by yielding to force, by disregard of justice, by neglect of common interests or by contempt for human rights, is bought at too high a price. That is so because a compromise with its principles and purposes weakens the Organization in a way representing a definite loss for the future that cannot be balanced by any immediate advantage achieved.¹⁶

For Hammarskjöld the UN were supposed to be the unique instrument for peaceful solution of conflicts. This required an urgent shift of emphasis from the purpose of preserving the established international (dis)order of the superpower rivalry between the West and the East during the Cold War period to the purpose of meeting and dealing in a constructive way with the challenges represented by the newly independent countries.

Throughout his eight years in office Dag Hammarskjöld lived what he considered as the ethics of "The International Civil Service in Law and in Fact". This was the programmatic title of his address delivered at Oxford University on 30 May 1961 – not much more than a hundred days before his untimely death. As observed by his former legal advisor in the Secretariat twenty years after Hammarskjöld's death: "In its defense of personal integrity against the claims of power, and its invocation of reason and

¹⁵ Dag Hammarskjöld, "Asia, Africa, and the West." Address Before the Academic Association of the University of Lund. Lund, Sweden, May 4, 1959 (UN Press Release SG/813, May 4, 1959). In: *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of The United Nations. Volume IV: Dag Hammarskjöld 1958-1960*. Selected and edited with commentary by Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote. New York and London: Columbia University Press 1974, p. 384.

¹⁶ Dag Hammarskjöld, "Introduction to the Fifteenth Annual Report." New York, August 31, 1960. In: *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of The United Nations. Volume V: Dag Hammarskjöld 1960-1961*. Selected and edited with commentary by Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote. New York and London: Columbia University Press 1975, p. 139.

history, the lecture carries a powerful appeal even today.”¹⁷ According to his conviction then expressed:

...the international civil servant cannot be accused of lack of neutrality simply for taking a stand on a controversial issue when this is his duty and cannot be avoided. But there remains a serious intellectual and moral problem as we move within an area inside which personal judgment must come into play. Finally, we have to deal with the question of integrity or with, if you please, a question of conscience.¹⁸

And he continued:

... if integrity in the sense of respect for law and respect for truth were to drive him into positions of conflict with this or that interest, then that conflict is a sign of his neutrality and not of his failure to observe neutrality – then it is in line, not in conflict with, his duties as an international civil servant.¹⁹

Among the most prominent and biggest challenges for conflict mediation during the era of Hammarskjöld in office, which tested the declared norms and virtues most, were certainly the Suez crisis of 1956 and the battlefield over the resources in the Congo since 1960.²⁰ They serve as examples to illustrate the possibilities but also limitations of the UN under a Secretary-General, who was clearly more General than Secretary.

Hammarskjöld and the Suez crisis

On 31 October 1956, during the Suez crisis, Hammarskjöld stated before the Security Council in no uncertain terms that in his view “the discretion and impartiality ... imposed on the Secretary-General ... may not degenerate into a policy of expediency”.²¹

[Note: the case of the Suez still needs to be added!]

¹⁷ Oscar Schachter, “The International Civil Servant: Neutrality and Responsibility.” In: Robert S. Jordan (ed.), *Dag Hammarskjöld Revisited. The UN Secretary-General as a Force in World Politics*. Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press 1983, p. 41.

¹⁸ Dag Hammarskjöld, “The International Civil Servant in Law and in Fact.” Lecture Delivered in Congregation at Oxford University, Oxford, England, May 30, 1961. In: *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of The United Nations. Volume V, op. cit.*, p. 488.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 489.

²⁰ Amazingly, there are still monographs on the Congo, which manage to brush over this crucial period of 1960/61 on less than two pages without any reference to Hammarskjöld. See Guy Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo, 1885-1980*. New York: Cambridge University Press 2012, pp. 202f.

²¹ Security Council Official Records, Eleventh Year, 751st Meeting. October 31, 1956, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

The UN intervention in the Congo

Hammar-skjöld's efforts to steer the UN in the Congo crisis, however, was in the midst of escalating Cold War antagonisms, similar to the challenges faced by navigating through Scylla and Charybdis. What made it worse was an authorisation of the UN presence in the country by a Security Council resolution, which lacked any clear and concrete guidance. While this provided space for navigation – at times deliberately used by Hammar-skjöld at his discretion – it also risked that, in the absence of clarity, parties with their own interests involved were critical of whatever the Secretariat under the Secretary-General did (or did not) do:

in directing the Secretary-General to eliminate any justification for foreign intervention by restoring law and order, as far as possible with the help of the Congo government but without using force or interfering in internal affairs, the Council from the start injected an inherent contradiction into the Congo operation.²²

The Western interests vested in the Congo, and seeking to influence Hammar-skjöld's policies, put enormous pressure on his office. After an initial (short) period of mutual support, he faced suspicions and criticism for almost every decision from the hegemonic states either in the East or in the West, who were all eager to influence him enough to give in to what they considered their interest. Hammar-skjöld tried to escape these efforts of big states to hijack the UN's role and derail its policies, by seeking the cooperation of as many states as possible from the non-aligned movement. India (Nehru), Egypt (Nasser), Guinea (Touré), Ghana (Nkrumah) and Tunisia (Bourguiba) became important counterparts and at times even allies to bring a visible involvement of the South in international affairs and peacekeeping efforts. He stressed time and again – as late as a day before the fatal flight to Ndola – that “the solution of the problem of the Congo lies in the hands of the Congolese people themselves without any interference

²² Brian Urquhart, *Hammar-skjöld*. New York: Harper & Row 1972, pp. 403f.

from outside".²³ This is of course a contradictory position, given that the UN had already been tasked to intervene, though explicitly also reminded that this intervention should not be interference in internal affairs. - Talk about a mission impossible!

When Lumumba was ousted from the office he held as Prime Minister of the Congo's first government, Hammarskjöld and his staff were at pains to decide how the UN should position itself. The Congo mission was tasked by the Security Council resolution to act in consultation with the constitutional government. But when President Kasavubu and Prime Minister Lumumba clashed in early September 1960, the question was who, by virtue of the position held, can claim to represent the government. Hammarskjöld concluded that the provisional constitution for the Congo, the *Loi Fondamentale*, allowed the Chief of State (which was the President), under Article 22, to dismiss the Prime Minister and appoint a new one, if his action was endorsed by at least one minister, which had been the case.

On the other hand, there could be no doubt that the Prime Minister's attempt to dismiss the President was unconstitutional and had put Lumumba in a very doubtful position. For all practical purposes, it seemed that in the present circumstances the UN must inevitably regard the Chief of State as the only unquestioned constitutional authority.²⁴

After the rapidly escalating conflicts between the internal factions culminating in the ousting of Lumumba, the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev accused Hammarskjöld of being a lackey of Western interests. When demanding his resignation at the UN General Assembly in early October 1960, the Secretary-General responded with the following historical words:

It is not the Soviet Union or indeed any other Big Power who needs the United Nations for their protection, but all the others. In this sense, the Organisation is first of all their Organisation, and I deeply believe in the wisdom with which they will be able to use it and guide it. I shall remain in my post during the term of my

²³ Dag Hammarskjöld, First Message to Mr. Tshombé, September 16, 1961. Security Council Official Records, Sixteenth Year, Supplement for July, August and September 1961, document S/4940/Add.4. In: *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of The United Nations. Volume V, op. cit.*, p. 570.

²⁴ Urquhart, *op. cit.*, pp. 443f. He refers to Catherine Hoskyns, *The Congo since Independence – January 1960 to December 1961*. London: Oxford University Press 1965, pp. 208-210 for a discussion of this constitutional question.

Office as a servant of the Organisation in the interest of all those other nations, as long as they wish me to do so.²⁵

Hammar skjöld continued to stay on course also in the subsequent debates in the Security Council. He refuted allegations that the UN acted in compliance with Western interests and that it could be held responsible for the brutal murder of Patrice Lumumba. He stated on 13 February 1961, in another response in the Security Council to the continued demands for his resignation (which now were also increasingly made by the Belgian, French and British, who saw their vested economic interests at stake):

For seven or eight months, through efforts far beyond the imagination of those who founded this Organization, it has tried to counter tendencies to introduce the Big-Power conflict into Africa and put the young African countries under the shadow of the cold war. It has done so with great risks and against heavy odds. It has done so at the cost of very great personal sacrifices for a great number of people. In the beginning the effort was successful, and I do not now hesitate to say that on more than one occasion the drift into a war with foreign-power intervention of the Korean or Spanish type was avoided only thanks to the work done by the Organization, basing itself on African solidarity. We effectively countered efforts from all sides to make the Congo a happy hunting ground for national interests. To be a roadblock to such efforts is to make yourself the target of attacks from all those who find their plans thwarted. [...] From both sides the main accusation was a lack of objectivity. The historian will undoubtedly find in this balance of accusations the very evidence of that objectivity we were accused of lacking, but also of the fact that very many Member nations have not yet accepted the limits put on their national ambitions by the very existence of the United Nations and by the membership of that Organisation.²⁶

His even-handedness towards the big powers is documented by an incidence, shared by Sture Linnér (1917-2010) with an audience attending his presentation at the annual Dag Hammar skjöld Lecture in October 2007 in Uppsala. Linnér was at the time of Hammar skjöld's death Under-Secretary-General in charge of the UN mission in the Congo. In July 1961 President JF Kennedy tried to intervene directly. Afraid of Antoine Gizenga coming into political power, then campaigning for election as Prime Minister

²⁵ General Assembly Official Records, Fifteenth Session, 883rd plenary meeting, New York, October 3, 1960. In: *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of The United Nations. Volume V, op. cit.*, pp. 200f. As inserted at the end of this quote: ["Here the speech was interrupted for several minutes by a standing ovation."]

²⁶ Dag Hammar skjöld, Second Statement After Soviet Demand for His Dismissal. New York, February 13, 1961. Security Council Official Records, Sixteenth Year, 933rd meeting. *Ibid.*, p. 349f.

and suspected of representing Soviet interests, Kennedy demanded that the UN should prevent Gizenga from seizing office. He threatened that if not in compliance, the United States of America and other Western powers might withdraw their support to the UN.²⁷ Reportedly, Hammarskjöld in a phone conversation with Linnér dismissed this unveiled threat with the following words: “I do not intend to give way to any pressure, be it from the East or the West; we shall sink or swim. Continue to follow the line you find to be in accordance with the UN Charter.”²⁸

While many, like Linnér, have praised Hammarskjöld for his foresight and diplomatic skills to avoid worse through the specific way he handled the Congo crisis, others have been less positive in their assessment. There were indeed disturbing contradictions and inconsistencies, which suggested that the UN intervention in the Congo was at times more so dependent upon individuals than being an organised and concerted, well planned action based on a clear strategy. There were initiatives by locally deployed high-ranking UN officials (both civilian and military staff) on an *ad hoc* basis, which were not always properly discussed in advance, nor always endorsed by Hammarskjöld, who explicitly disapproved afterwards of some of the decisions taken. The situation on the ground was at times confusing and contradictory, while often requiring quick action, which risked being wrong – and at times was. Furthermore, the communication with varying competing Congolese partners was – to put it mildly – not always reliable and often confusing. Exasperation was at times a crucial factor; it made even the highest-ranking officials (including Hammarskjöld), during the events from mid-1960 to fall 1961 in their interactions with the local counterparts, “more impatient and less diplomatic than they might have been in a more normal situation”.²⁹

²⁷ See for this period and the unusual blunt intervention the comprehensive documentation in Madeleine G. Kalb, *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa – From Eisenhower to Kennedy*. New York: MacMillan 1982, pp. 274-276. See also on this period and US-policy John Kent, *America, the UN and Decolonisation. Cold War conflict in the Congo*. Oxon and New York: Routledge 2010.

²⁸ Sture Linnér, “Dag Hammarskjöld and the Congo crisis, 1960-61.” In: Sture Linnér and Sverker Åström, *UN Secretary-General Hammarskjöld. Reflections and personal experiences. The 2007 Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture* Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation 2008, p. 26.

²⁹ Kalb, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

One might also explain these flaws by the extreme pressure exerted through the direct interests of the many different parties involved. This included the variety of Western – anything but identical – interests as represented most prominently by Belgium; but it also included the United Kingdom and France (already at pains with the Hammarskjöld diplomacy since the Suez intervention) and the USA, the British settler colonial minority regimes of the Central African Federation (Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland) and Apartheid South Africa, as well as the opposite interests of the Soviet camp in securing a stake in the resource rich territory – or at least preventing the West from establishing another satellite regime.³⁰

For Hammarskjöld this required a constant navigation through rough waters, with winds blowing from different directions. Failure was almost programmed; both the assassination of Patrice Lumumba and the loss of his own life and that of 15 others on board of the plane that crashed on approach to Ndola, as well as the loss of so many more lives of civilians and soldiers on all sides of the conflict – including the killing of many blue helmets – testified to the costly mission bordering to the impossible. The ‘Congo Club’, those UN higher staff members who were directly involved in the operations both in the Secretariat and on the ground, most notably on the civilian side the US-Americans Ralph Bunche and Andy Cordier, the Irish Conor Cruise O’Brien and the Indian Rajeshwar Dayal, but also the Swedish commander of the UN forces von Horn (who reportedly had absolutely no grasp of the local realities), created a special mixture, where the personal chemistry played an important but rather negative if not destructive role.

The personal account of Conor Cruise O’Brien³¹ is a detailed narrative illustrating “how an international civil service can be forged from men whose national cultures and

³⁰ Matters became even more complicated through a policy change in the US-administration under president J. F. Kennedy, who since 1961 in office deviated from the earlier US-American foreign policy under Dwight D. Eisenhower by seeking to enter closer relations with the newly independent African countries at the expense of uncritically backing the interests of the European colonial powers in maintaining control over their ‘backyards’. See Philip E. Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans. John F. Kennedy’s Courting of African Nationalist Leaders*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press 2012.

³¹ Conor Cruise O’Brien, *To Katanga and Back: A UN Case History*. New York: Simon & Schuster 1962. See for other important (partly deviating) perspectives Rajeshwar Dayal, *Mission for Hammarskjöld: The*

working experience necessarily have a heavy hold on their minds”.³² As claimed by one of the critical assessments of the UN’s Congo mission of the early 1960s, the UN officials having the most influential decision-making impact “shared a common Cold War outlook with Western policy makers, and saw their mission in the Congo as that of preserving the then existing balance of forces in the world”.³³ However, given the evidence available, it seems to be somewhat unfair, if not wrong, to include in this rather sweeping statement someone of Hammarskjöld’s calibre.

But neither should the complicated personal dimensions within the Congo conflict be ignored or downplayed. Ralph Bunche’s interaction with Patrice Lumumba highlights a mismatch due mainly to clashes in their personal chemistry, suspicion on both sides and miscommunication. Altogether, this escalated into a relationship characterized by animosity and mutual contempt. As ridiculous as it sounds, the exchanges between the Afro-American Bunche and the Congolese Pan-African nationalist Lumumba displayed strong racist undertones on both sides. The unfortunate role played by the Swedish commander von Horn in charge of the UN military operations, who was never able to relate to the African realities on the ground, was an additional ingredient to the recipe for disaster. But neither was Lumumba’s behaviour a reliable criterion for policy decisions. The complicated mixture of domestic political rivalries, external influences by other states, an unclear framework for UN intervention and personality clashes, ended in deadly consequences for Lumumba and one of the biggest failures of a mission in the history of the UN, even though it averted another conflict of even bigger magnitude. Diagnosed as a “fatal encounter”, the mismatch between Bunche and Lumumba resulted in a tragic constellation in as much as “the flow of information that shaped their understandings was so completely at odds that one might imagine that they were engaged in wholly separate settings”.³⁴

Congo Crisis. London: Oxford University Press 1976; Brian Urquhart, *A Life in Peace and War*. New York and London: W.W. Norton 1987, pp. 145-188.

³² Leon Gordenker, “Conor Cruise O’Brien and the Truth About the United Nations”, *International Organization*, vol. 23, no. 4, p. 908.

³³ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People’s History*. London and New York: Zed Books 2002, p. 114.

³⁴ Crawford Young, “Ralph Bunche and Patrice Lumumba. The Fatal Encounter.” In: Robert A. Hill/Edmond J. Keller (eds), *Trustee for the Human Community. Ralph J. Bunche, the United Nations, and the*

Hammar-skjöld was personally blamed for not restoring Lumumba's role in the government of the Congo after he was ousted as Prime Minister by the State President. While Hammar-skjöld held the view that this would have been an undue intervention into the domestic affairs of the country (and that the dismissal was within the discretion of the constitutional powers of the State President), others even in the UN administration reached opposing conclusions. It therefore remains a contested matter: to what extent the passivity of the UN was at least an indirect support to the Western interests in removing Lumumba from office and finally taking initiatives to eliminate him physically. Along similar lines, it remains a matter of controversy to what extent the UN should have protected Lumumba even after he had decided to leave at his own risk the house in which he stayed under UN observation. As Hammar-skjöld and others argued, by removing himself from the direct protection offered, in order to mobilise for the restoration of his political influence, Lumumba was returning by his own decision into Congolese politics. Protecting him in this role would therefore have been tantamount to an undue interference into the political affairs of the country.

The most pronounced critique of the passive role of both the UN and its Secretary-General Hammar-skjöld with regard to the domestic policy matters in the Congo and the subsequent assassination of Patrice Lumumba has hitherto been presented by Ludo de Witte. In the preface of the English edition of his study, he maintains that without the involvement not only of the Western powers but also the UN, "the assassination could never have been carried out".³⁵ The critical review of the English edition of his book by

Decolonization of Africa. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press 2010, p. 129. See also Brian Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche. An American Odyssey*. New York and London: W.W. Norton 1993, chapter 22.

³⁵ Ludo De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*. London and New York: Verso 2001, p. xv; this interpretation is shared at least in tendency by Helen M Hintjens and Serena Cruz, "Continuities of violence in the Congo: legacies of Hammar-skjöld and Lumumba." In: Stahn and Melber (eds), *op. cit.* and to a lesser extent by Jean Omasombo Tshomba, "Lumumba vs. Hammar-skjöld: a story of confrontation", *ibid.* Differing views on Hammar-skjöld's role are offered in the same volume by Maria Stella Rognoni, "Dag Hammar-skjöld and the Congo crisis, 1960-1961", Henning Melber, "Dag Hammar-skjöld and Africa's decolonisation" and Alanna O'Malley, "The Dag factor: how quiet diplomacy changed the role of the Secretariat during the Congo-crisis, 1960-1961", all *ibid.* Parts of this sub-chapter are based on my chapter in this volume. For a less romanticising appreciation of Lumumba's role and his personality see also Leo Zeilig, *Patrice Lumumba. Africa's Lost Leader*. London: Haus 2008. The author also resists the temptation to blame Hammar-skjöld for Lumumba's death.

Brian Urquhart,³⁶ who was also a member of the closer circle of high-ranking UN officials surrounding Hammarskjöld, sparked off an illuminating exchange. De Witte repeated his accusation that “UN Secretary-General Hammarskjöld played a decisive role in the overthrow of the Congolese government of Patrice Lumumba”, thereby willingly accepting his assassination. For him the “UN was the most important vehicle of destroying the Congolese government and laying the groundworks for the dictatorship of Mobutu”. He considered Western criticism of aspects of the UN operation as being merely “for public consumption, or a counterweight to the Afro-Asian pressure on the UN leadership to help Lumumba”.³⁷

Interestingly, a highly credible observer participated in this controversy as a witness. As he claimed, he had personally spoken to a stressed and intoxicated Lumumba, who acted rather irrationally hours before his clandestine escape from UN protection. In his view this “discounts the many erroneous versions of what happened given by critics who have sought to show UN collaboration in Lumumba’s ghastly fate”.³⁸ Urquhart, in his response, qualifies De Witte’s “elaborate fantasy of Hammarskjöld’s conspiracy with the Belgians” as “absurd to anyone who worked with Hammarskjöld at the time and experienced his frustration and his frequent rages at, and denunciations of, both the Belgians and their protégé, the Katangese leader, Moïse Tshombe”.³⁹

At the same time, however, it seems difficult to object to a critical conclusion when glancing through the evidence available with regard to the unfortunate, if at times not disastrous, impact of some members of the ‘Congo Club’ mentioned above. In their role within the Congolese UN mission, they “wittingly or unwittingly” might have “provided to those seeking Lumumba’s demise the justification and the opportunities they needed

³⁶ Brian Urquhart, ‘The Tragedy of Lumumba’, *The New York Review of Books*, October 4, 2001.

³⁷ Ludo De Witte in “The Tragedy of Lumumba: An Exchange”, *The New York Review of Books*, December 20, 2001 (<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2001/dec/20/the-tragedy-of-lumumba-an-exchange/?pagination=false>).

³⁸ Colin Legum (1919-2003), author of *Congo Disaster* (1960), was a widely recognised and respected South African senior journalist, who because of his anti-Apartheid convictions was living in exile until 1991.

³⁹ Urquhart, “The Tragedy of Lumumba”, *op. cit.*

to remove a democratically elected leader from office by illegal means”⁴⁰ – with deadly consequences. While a final verdict on the role of the Secretary-General in this affair seems impossible, it is at least noteworthy that the death of Lumumba did not remain without a personal comment indicating some degree of empathy from Hammarskjöld’s side. In a letter to John Steinbeck he wrote:

Your approach to the Lumumba tragedy – his murder was in Tallyrand’s words: ‘more than a crime, it was a major stupidity’ is unique, no one in these parts, at least, has suggested it, and it invited thought. [...] I incline to the conclusion that *no one*, in the long pull, will really profit from Lumumba’s death, least of all those outside the Congo who now strain to do so but should one day confront a reckoning with truth and decency.⁴¹

Dag Hammarskjöld and 15 other persons (entourage and crew), died in the wreckage of the DC6 airplane ‘Albertina’, which crashed a few miles away from the airport when approaching the Northern Rhodesian mining town of Ndola in the night from 17 to 18 September 1961. Hammarskjöld was to meet close to the border of the Congo the leader of the Katangese secessionist movement, Moïse Tshombe, in an effort to negotiate a peaceful solution to the civil war; previous military efforts of the UN to bring an end to the Katangese secession had dismally backfired in late August and early September 1961, when UN troops failed to solve the impasse by force of arms.⁴²

An exchange of cables just ahead of the flight to Ndola and prior to the operation Morthor, seems to suggest that the Secretary-General was more involved in the discussions preceding the failed military interference than one might have assumed. It is a matter of interpretation how much Hammarskjöld knew in detail before Morthor and to what extent he endorsed the operation, but he was clearly informed about such

⁴⁰ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, “Ralph Bunche, Patrice Lumumba, and the First Congo Crisis.” In: Hill and Keller, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

⁴¹ Letter to John Steinbeck, 28 February, 1961. Dag Hammarskjöld Papers. Royal Library, Stockholm. Quoted in Paul Nelson, *Courage of Faith. Dag Hammarskjöld’s Way in Quest of Negotiated Peace, Reconciliation and Meaning*. Frankfurt/Main: Lang: 2007, p. 218 (fn. 734).

⁴² Operations ‘Rumpunch’ on 28 August 1961 and ‘Morthor’ on 13 September 1961 were disastrous attempts to bring an end to the Katangese secession and clearly executed beyond the original mandate for UN peacekeeping intervention in the Congo through the deliberate application of military means in a domestic conflict. For details see the personal (and possibly biased) account of O’Brien, *op. cit.*, pp. 195ff.

plans. Published recently by 'The Guardian',⁴³ the material reproduced shows that he had consulted his legal advisor Oscar Schachter, who on 7 September 1961 warned strongly against such forms of engagement as undue "violation of the ban against intervention in domestic political conflicts".⁴⁴ But on 10 September 1961 Hammarskjöld cabled to Sture Linnér that, "the speed of developments and the stage reached means that short of a change for the better in Katanga we are beyond the point of no return".⁴⁵ While some take this as proof that Hammarskjöld endorsed Morthor, it still leaves open the question of to what extent Hammarskjöld explicitly authorised the operation. Often before, he had used a form of language, which bordered on that of an oracle and allowed for ambiguous meanings and interpretations. There are however sufficient indications that he was involved in the discussion, regarding if and how the military presence of the UN might be instrumental in reversing the secession of Katanga. The governments in the Western states also became aware of Hammarskjöld's involvement and their strong disapproval was conveyed to him. Dismissing criticism by the USA, Hammarskjöld cabled on 15 September 1961 to Bunche:

It is better for the UN to lose the support of the US because it is faithful to law and principles than to survive as an agent whose activities are geared to political purposes never avowed or laid down by the major organs of the UN. [...] Generally speaking, I have one advice and that is that the major powers do not react until they know the facts and further, that they do remember that they are most likely to keep their positions if they respect principles than if they expect others to break them on their behalf or on behalf of the Welenskys.⁴⁶

There is hitherto no conclusive evidence that the plane crash was the result of external influence upon instruction or with the encouragement of any of the parties who were interested in preventing the UN under Hammarskjöld to end the Katangese secession. But it is not farfetched to conclude that the 1961 UN military operations "were seen as a

⁴³ A series of stories and reproduced cables were posted on the web site of *The Guardian*: guardian.co.uk, 17 August 2011.

⁴⁴ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/aug/17/un-cable-hammarskjold-katanga-operation-morthor?INTCMP=SRCH>

⁴⁵ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/aug/17/un-cable-hammarskjold-operation-morthor?INTCMP=SRCH>

⁴⁶ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/aug/17/un-cable-hammarskjold-american-criticism?INTCMP=SRCH>. Sir Roy Welensky had been the Prime Minister of the Central African Federation (CAF) between Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland and a fierce opponent to the UN's role in the Congo, which was considered a threat to white supremacy in Southern Africa. Kalb, *op. cit.*, p. 297 describes Hammarskjöld's reaction to the Western demands as "somewhat annoyed".

sacrifice of Western economic interests [...] in return for Soviet support of a negotiated end to the civil war”.⁴⁷ While Hammarskjöld and the UN failed to end the conflict, it at least managed to prevent a further escalation into what might have provoked a much larger and inter-state military conflict over the control of the geostrategic resources. Being aware of this role by the global body, African leaders sought first to influence Lumumba towards measured interaction with the UN and later refused support to the Soviet initiative to oust Hammarskjöld from office: “Whatever its failings, the UN remained the last best chance of keeping the Cold War at bay in the Congo.”⁴⁸ Put differently: “The Congo crisis could easily have provoked armed conflicts in other parts of Africa, even led to a world war. It was Dag Hammarskjöld and no one else who prevented that.”⁴⁹ The following seems to be a fair assessment of Hammarskjöld’s role with regard to the Congo:

Hammarskjöld was certainly pro-Western but did not always go along with the United States, particularly when he determined (or was forced to see) that its goals were not conducive to overall international security (as he saw it). Yet Hammarskjöld was also a diplomat extraordinaire, and had he lived longer the crisis might have ended sooner or more peacefully. A major problem with his legacy is that his imprint on ONUC was so subtly managed and dependent on his personal relationships that it was impossible for others to follow. He was not supposed to die, and his untimely death threw into jeopardy all he had carefully crafted and managed in the Congo.⁵⁰

On the other hand, one should be cautious not to over-emphasize the impact and influence of an individual limited by the environment, in which his office was forced to operate under the political constellation of the time:

One can speculate that the Congo drama might have turned out quite differently if Hammarskjöld had not died (...), but evidence suggests that the outcome depended less on the personality of the Secretary-General than on the interplay of external and Congolese interests.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Timothy Scarnecchia, “The Congo crisis, the United Nations, and Zimbabwean nationalism, 1960-1963”, *African Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2011, p. 65.

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa. From the Cold War to the War on Terror*. New York: Cambridge University Press 2013, p. 64.

⁴⁹ Linnér, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁵⁰ Lise Namikas, *Battleground Africa. Cold War in the Congo 1960-1965*. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2013, p. 226.

⁵¹ Ernest W. Lefever, *Uncertain Mandate. Politics of the U.N. Congo Operation*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press 1967, p. 30.

This is an important and sobering, but necessary reminder not to elevate the Secretary-General to a saintly status, as if he might have been able to achieve miracles in midst of a polarized world divided into the camps of a Cold War at its height. It also points to the fact that while persons and personalities matter, the decisive factors determining the scope for success might ultimately in the bigger picture lie outside of the direct influence of an individual and can only be used favourably (or not) depending on an individual's skills and ability to accommodate differing interests. That, however, is in itself a lesson to take note of.

Hammar skjöld's legacy

Once upon a time there was a Secretary-General of the UN, who was elected into office during the Cold War era because the big powers believed he was just a humble servant to *their* interests. – They were wrong. Even-handedness, integrity, moral leadership, respect for otherness, loyalty to principles and ethical values, as enshrined in the UN Charter, were among the core values he represented. Dag Hammar skjöld held a firm belief in the autonomy of the office of the UN Secretary-General and the Secretariat, which ought not to be degraded to a mere instrument and conference machinery serving the interests of the powerful states. Hammar skjöld was determined not to surrender the power of definition to individual member states. The hitherto un-clarified circumstances of the plane crash, which took the life of all on board of the plane in the night of 17/18 September 1961 nearby the airport of Ndola, has provoked many – often dubious – theories. But,

it is interesting to note that almost all of the major secret services in the world are at least suspects in one or another theory. In retrospect, Hammar skjöld's death becomes singular evidence of the Secretary-General's independence.⁵²

While in office since April 1953, Dag Hammar skjöld was heading the world organization during the period, when its transformation from an almost exclusively Western, post-World-War-II body towards a more global governance institution took place. This was the result of a growing number of newly independent countries mainly from the African

⁵² Fröhlich, *Political Ethics*, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

continent, which impacted on the international policy and geostrategic interests during the bipolar times of the so-called superpower rivalry.

More than half a century and six Secretary-Generals later it is opportune to recall some of the virtues and convictions the Swedish diplomat represented like no other in this office. Against all odds, and at times bordering on stubbornness, he defended the autonomy of the office vis-à-vis the efforts by the big powers to execute their dominance also through the UN. This is in marked contrast to the role the world body has played since then in many international conflicts and subsequent interventions. During his period in office, Hammarskjöld can be attributed to have made three lasting contributions: “peacekeeping operations (a new UN instrument), his realization of the importance of acting at an early stage in crises (preventive diplomacy) and his emphasis on the position of the UN as an international resource (an internationally independent Secretariat).”⁵³

Given the shifts in global policies and interventions, in which the UN are even more involved than during Hammarskjöld’s times, it is therefore worthwhile to recall what the cosmopolitan Swede represented during his time in office. More than by mere coincidence, the Chinese Permanent Representative to the UN, Li Baodong, during a debate in the UN Security Council on 26 August 2011 demanded that the peacekeeping operations of the organization “should adhere to the Hammarskjöld principles”.⁵⁴ In a similar vein, the Cyprus Foreign Minister Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis stressed in a speech on the occasion of a United Nations Day event on 20 October 2011 that “especially small states like Cyprus would like to see the United Nations acting more solidly and with consistency to defend international law when it is being violated” and praised Dag Hammarskjöld “as the dove of preventive diplomacy”.⁵⁵

⁵³ Peter Wallensteen, *Dag Hammarskjöld*. Stockholm: The Swedish Institute 2004, pp. 41f.

⁵⁴ “China calls for necessary improvement of peacekeeping theory, practice”, *People’s Daily Online*, 27 August 2011, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90883/7581592.html>.

⁵⁵ “FM: UN must prove its effectiveness”, *Famagusta Gazette*, 21 October 2011, <http://famagusta-gazette.com/fm-un-must-prove-its-effectiveness-p13258-69.htm>.

The link between Hammarskjöld's intellectual background and his approach towards international law might be instructive.⁵⁶ Hammarskjöld adopted a 'flexible' approach, which reconciled the recognition of global norms and principles with the application of ethical principles.⁵⁷ This is reflected in his contextual vision of norms and principles. Hammarskjöld was one of the early defenders of the link between peace, security and human rights. Hammarskjöld interpreted fundamental concepts, such as collective security or non-intervention through the lens of human rights and human security, namely a focus on 'men' in addition to states, and on 'dignity' in addition to security – a nexus that is recognized in UN peace maintenance today. Hammarskjöld's personal ethics explain his openness towards UN intervention and protection, when the UN crossed the boundaries between peacekeeping and peace enforcement in the Congo. His approach towards law was based on the "natural law" understanding that written law needs to be reconciled "with a law of a higher order" – a position in line with his Christian values.⁵⁸

Already at the beginning of his terms in office, Hammarskjöld used his "Introduction to the Eighth Annual Report" of the United Nations (which he presented on 15 July 1953 as his first one) to identify two fundamental trends in human society as his credo: the one directed "towards wider social justice and equality for individuals", the other "towards equality and justice between nations, politically but also in the economic and social sense".⁵⁹ As he continued: "International equality and justice were prerequisites of the domestic social development of all the peoples of the world and, together, they are the decisive factors if we are able to build a world of peace and freedom."⁶⁰ And he reiterated, "The search for peaceful settlements, for collective security and for ultimate

⁵⁶ See i.a. Ove Bring, "Hammarskjöld's dynamic approach to the UN Charter and international law." In: Stahn and Melber, *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ See also Oscar Schachter, "Dag Hammarskjöld and the Relation of Law to Politics", *American Journal of International Law*, vol. 56, no. 1, 1962, pp. 1-8.

⁵⁸ Bring, *op. cit.*

⁵⁹ Dag Hammarskjöld, "Introduction to the Eighth Annual Report", July 15, 1953. In: *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations. Volume II. Dag Hammarskjöld, 1953-1956*. Selected and edited with commentary by Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote. New York and London: Columbia University Press 1972, p. 68.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

disarmament ... has to be based upon an orderly and steady advance towards higher living standards for all peoples.”⁶¹

During the opening debate on the world economic situation for the 18th session of the UN’s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on 7 July 1954 he identified the problem of internal economic stability in both economically advanced and underdeveloped areas, and the linkage and interdependence between domestic policies and international developments.⁶² Economic stability had for him national and international significance. He therefore pleaded for more awareness about the inter-connectivity and the need for greatest possible cooperation by all. For all the subsequent years he returned to these pleas and advocated a greater responsibility of the developed economies to assist the less advanced. But he also was of the view that this assistance should happen through an international institution such as the UN and not through a club of the wealthy executing power and control at their own terms.

Hammarskjöld was aware of the dialectics and inter-relationship between peace, security and human rights, as his address to the American Jewish Committee in New York on 10 April 1957 testifies: “We know that the question of peace and the question of human rights are closely related. Without recognition of human rights we shall never have peace, and it is only within the framework of peace that human rights can be fully developed.”⁶³ He reiterated his conviction in his last address to ECOSOC in 1961, when he linked the principles of national sovereignty in the times dubbed “the winds of change” with the belief that international solidarity and social consciousness have to go hand in hand by “accepting as a basic postulate the existence of a world community for which all nations share a common responsibility (...) to reduce the disparities in levels

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁶² Dag Hammarskjöld, “Statement in the Economic and Social Council Opening Debate on the ‘World Economic Situation’. Geneva, July 7, 1954.” In: *Ibid.*, pp. 318-320.

⁶³ Dag Hammarskjöld, “Address on Human Rights and the Work for Peace at the Fiftieth Anniversary Dinner of the American Jewish Committee. New York, April 10, 1957.” In: *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations. Volume III, op. cit.*, p. 555.

of living between nations, a responsibility parallel to that accepted earlier for greater economic and social equality within nations.”⁶⁴

Hammarskjöld had formulated his ideals, which as a legacy remain valid until today, only a few months into his office on 14 September 1953 in an address at the American Association for the United Nations:

As individuals and as groups we can put our influence to the best of our understanding and ability on the side of what we believe is right and true. We can help in the movement toward those ends that inspire our lives and are shared by all men of good will – in terms very close to those of the Charter of the United Nations – peace and freedom for all, in a world of equal rights for all.⁶⁵

Any Lessons?

Hammarskjöld’s ethics, his concept of solidarity, his sense of fundamental universal values and human rights in combination with his respect for the multitude of identities within the human family, as well as his responsibility as the world’s highest international civil servant to assume global leadership, set standards that have lost none of their value and relevance.⁶⁶ He was particularly careful in the nature of communication, which after all is among the most essential tools for mediation, since it relates to the notion of trust and reliability required. In late 1955 he entered into his notebook:

Respect for the word is the first commandment in the discipline by which a man can be educated to maturity – intellectual, emotional, and moral.
Respect for the word – to employ it with scrupulous care and an incorruptible heartfelt love of truth – is essential if there is to be any growth in a society or in the human race.

⁶⁴ Quoted from Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Poverty and Inequality – Challenges in the Era of Globalisation. In: Sten Ask/Anna Mark-Jungkvist (eds), *The Adventure of Peace. Dag Hammarskjöld and the Future of the UN*. New York and Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan 2005, p. 222.

⁶⁵ Dag Hammarskjöld, “Address at Dinner in His Honor Given by the American Association for the United Nations in Cooperation with the New York University Institute for Review of United Nations Affairs”. New York, September 14, 1953 (UN Press Release SG/336, September 14, 1953; *United Nations Bulletin*, vol. XV, no. 7, October 1, 1953. In: *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations. Volume II, op. cit.*, p. 89.

⁶⁶ See as a recent affirmation Hans Corell, “Dag Hammarskjöld, the United Nations and the rule of law in today’s world.” In: Stahn and Melber, *op. cit.*

To misuse the word is to show contempt for man. It undermines the bridges and poisons the wells. It causes Man to regress down the long path of his evolution.⁶⁷

Being careful with words at times also implied to use the language deliberately as a tool kit for additional manoeuvring space in his initiatives and actions. This was obvious when he complained about the lack of clarity in Security Council resolutions regarding the Congo mission, while at the same time using this un-clarity:

His interpretations of the already vague Council mandate were often couched in language which meant different things to different people. This was not duplicity on his part. He regarded such abstruseness as essential to give him sufficient latitude to act effectively when there was agreement only that something should be done. The British and French criticized him for this quality. A French representative once called him a 'master of the calculated imprecision'.⁶⁸

That language indeed mattered a lot in Hammarskjöld's diplomacy and negotiation style was also illustrated by the following episode, recollected by an at that time young translator working as from 1959 in the office of the Secretary-General. As he recalled:

Dag Hammarskjöld attended personally to every detail. He once called me early in the morning. I had just arrived at the office and felt honoured to receive a call from the Secretary-General. Actually he went straight to the point and explained the reason for his call:

'Did you edit the French version of the resolution that was distributed this morning?'

'Yes, Mr. Secretary-General.'

'But you changed the text of operative paragraph 2. Why?'

'Yes indeed. The text was submitted in English and in the original language that paragraph had two possible meanings. In order to avoid any ambiguity in French, a precise language, I thought it was my duty to select the only plausible version.'

'That is exactly what you shouldn't have done. The final text was the result of a compromise. Please issue a revised document that restores the original text.'

As I immediately complied with the Secretary-General's instructions, I realized that in spite of the cold war, a draft resolution did not have to be voted upon in its original form but could be negotiated with a view to reaching a consensus. It was really the beginning of a new trend which is now an established practice.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *Markings, op. cit.*, p. 94 (italics in the original).

⁶⁸ *Levefer, op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁶⁹ Jean Gazarian, "Already Fifty Years Ago." In: *Dag Hammarskjöld Remembered. A Collection of Personal Memories*. Edited by Mary-Lynn Henley and Henning Melber. Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation 2011, p. 81.

Hammar skjöld also deliberately introduced and used press conferences as a tool to convey messages. His regular interactions with the press corps “were a masterly mixture of abstraction, reflection and a minimum of hard news”.⁷⁰

His press conferences were often a masterpiece of elliptical statements, circumlocutions and elegant dodging of questions, although when the occasion required he spoke his mind with the greatest clarity. Being hard to get and even harder to pin down was an important asset in preserving the interest of the media and the public.⁷¹

Despite such careful crafting, he all too often faced a mission impossible in executing his tasks to find solutions. Hammar skjöld was aware of these limitations. As he wrote in a letter to his friend Bo Beskow on 27 January 1961: “We are far from a world where even a true national interest leads to the individual subordinating himself, not to mention how far we are from the stage where a question of vital international interest is given superiority over a national one.”⁷²

Shortly before, on occasion of the annual celebration of the Human Rights Day on 10th December 1960, Hammar skjöld contemplated in a short statement the linkage between official policies and individual lack of emancipation, when he reminded his audience: “let us not forget that there is a colonialism of the heart and of the mind, which no political decision can overcome and against which the battle must be waged within ourselves, without any exception.”⁷³ Hammar skjöld was in his personality occasionally perceived as withdrawn or even arrogant by those, who found it difficult to grasp his carefully selected words of reasoning, largely influenced and guided by his intellectual capacity and way of seeking what he considered the most suitable form of expression. But in much of what he lived he remained loyal and faithful to a “modest wish” he had expressed in 1950:

A modest wish: that our doings and dealings may be of a little more significance to life than a man’s dinner jacket to his digestion. Yet not a little of what we

⁷⁰ Brian Urquhart, “Dag Hammar skjöld – Fifty Years Later.” In: *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁷¹ Brian Urquhart, “Dag Hammar skjöld: The Private Person in a Very Public Office.” In: Robert S. Jordan (ed.), *Dag Hammar skjöld Revisited. The UN Secretary-General as a Force in World Politics*. Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press 1983, p. 134.

⁷² Quoted from Lipsey, *op. cit.*, p. 477.

⁷³ Quoted from *ibid.*, p. 462.

describe as our achievement is, in fact, no more than a garment in which, on festive occasions, we seek to hide our nakedness.⁷⁴

He was cautious not to lose sight of the individual side to engagements with the outer world. For him, politics had to do with the human being, as an entry in his notebook of 1956 documents again:

The 'great' commitment all too easily obscures the 'little' one. But without the humility and warmth which you have to develop in your relations to the few with whom you are personally involved, you will never be able to do anything for the many. (...) It is better for the health of the soul to make one man good than 'to sacrifice one-self for mankind.' For a mature man, these are not alternatives, but two aspects of self-realization, which mutually support each, both being the outcome of one and the same choice.⁷⁵

Guided by his values, Hammarskjöld had the desire of "finding the common interests of the parties, before they discover the irreconcilable differences they also have. Acting early, quickly and after careful thought was Hammarskjöld's special strength."⁷⁶ Maybe the most adequate words in recognition of the legacy created by Hammarskjöld during his lifetime were from two of his colleagues working closely with him in the Secretariat. As his legal advisor aptly summarized:

It may be asked whether an emphasis on principles and legal concepts is not incompatible with the flexibility and adroitness that characterized much of Hammarskjöld's political activity. His technique of fusing those opposing elements – rule and flexibility – into workable solutions is not easily described. It is more art than science. (...)

It is also of significance in evaluation Hammarskjöld's flexibility that he characteristically expressed basic principles in terms of opposing tendencies (applying, one might say, the philosophic concept of polarity or dialectical opposition). He never lost sight of the fact that a principle, such as that of observance of human rights, was balanced by the concept of non-intervention, or that the notion of equality of states had to be considered in a context which included the special responsibilities of the great Powers. The fact that such precepts had contradictory implications meant that they could not provide automatic answers to particular problems, but rather that they served as criteria which had to be weighed and balanced in order to achieve a rational solution of the particular problem.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ *Markings, op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁷⁶ Wallensteen, *Dag Hammarskjöld, op. cit.*, p. 40.

⁷⁷ Schachter, "The International Civil Servant: Neutrality and Responsibility." *Op. cit.*, pp. 48 and 49.

And the so far longest serving member of the UN staff ever, who had joined the organisation in 1945 and worked closely with five Secretary-Generals until his retirement observed in retrospective:

Integrity was a quality to which Hammarskjöld attached the highest importance, and it was the keynote of his approach to political and diplomatic action. He would not, indeed could not, undertake an action he thought dishonest or unworthy, and he was thus valued as a friend and interlocutor even by those with whom he strongly disagreed. Within this imperative of integrity, Hammarskjöld was extraordinarily sensitive to the difficulties and sensibilities of the people with whom he was dealing. He had an exceptional talent for suggesting effective solutions that could be accepted without offence by the parties to a conflict. One key to his success as a negotiator was his ability to retain his mobility and to avoid either getting himself boxed in or committing others to rigid public positions that they would have difficulty in changing. By preserving his freedom, he could often make local progress even in situations that appeared hopeless. His keen sense of timing allowed him both to keep alternatives open and, at the right moment, to create new and unexpected options for the parties. In an apparent deadlock he had a talent for spinning a new concept that the conflicting parties might be able to grasp at without losing face.⁷⁸

It is unfortunately reduced to mere speculation, if Dag Hammarskjöld on his way to meet Moïse Tshombe had an idea how to overcome the stalemate in the Congo of the time. Doubts remain, if this might not have been a contributing if not causal factor that he (and those in his company) never arrived in Ndola.

Rolf Edberg, then ambassador of Sweden to Norway, received the Nobel Peace Prize posthumously awarded to Dag Hammarskjöld. In his acceptance speech on 10 December 1961, he reminded the audience that Hammarskjöld had no doubt about the convincing force of his ideals. As he quoted from Hammarskjöld's last article: "Setbacks in trying to realize the ideal do not prove that the ideal is at fault."⁷⁹ And one among those close to him during his time as Secretary-General described the era of Hammarskjöld in his memoirs as

a triumph both of personality and of intellect. In the sometimes almost unbearable frustrations of later years, I have often recalled that time and that

⁷⁸ Urquhart, "Dag Hammarskjöld: The Private Person in a Very Public Office." *Op. cit.*, pp. 140f.

⁷⁹ Dag Hammarskjöld – Acceptance Speech, at http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1961 (accessed on 7 November 2011).

slight, indomitable, strangely innocent figure as a reminder of what can be done through leadership and commitment to an idea.⁸⁰

As Rowan Williams, former Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury stated: “Hammarskjöld was one of the most significant moral influences in international politics in the decades immediately after the war”, who

almost single-handedly shaped the vision for international co-operation and crisis management that we struggle to realise and, however reluctantly, take for granted across a great deal of the globe. (...) Hammarskjöld ... told us, as loudly and clearly as he could, that the vision of a world in which interests converge was a necessary exercise of the imagination. We need a good many more today to echo him.⁸¹

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(NB: Not all references listed are yet included in the currently incomplete paper.)

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⁸⁰ Urquhart, *A Life in Peace and War*, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

⁸¹ Rowan Williams, “A Review of Hammarskjöld: A Life”, in *The Cambridge Humanities Review. A Journal of Literary and Intellectual Essays*. Issue Three, Lent Term 2013, pp. 2-3.

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