

Forum: Historical Security Council (HSC)

Issue: The question of the situation in Congo (1960)

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Introduction

In 1885, King Leopold II arrived and took over Congo. He 'owned' the entire country of Congo privately, despite the many that had and still do live there. Leopold had stated that he wanted to bring civilization but rather than bringing civilization to an already populated region, he largely brought terror (National Geographic). Many people from Congo were murdered as an effect of this terror, dying through malnutrition, diseases, and torture, with those that were not killed were punished through the use of amputations. In 1908, Leopold had to give Congo to Belgium due to societal pressures, however, that was not the end of the control over Congo. Once given up to Belgium, Congo was renamed the Belgian Congo and the natural resources and human labor were still exploited, thus commencing the colonization of Congo (National Geographic).



King Leopold II (Royal Family)

Today, more than 75 years after first being colonized, Congo has only just been able to emerge from this stronghold grip that Belgium had. Just this year, Congo changed the official country name from the Belgian Congo to Congo due to their independence. Due to the fact that Belgium had such heavy control over a long period of time, after gaining independence, Congo was still reliant on Belgium for economic and control over Congo even though it is now considered independent. Furthermore, the lack of education led to a pressing issue of leadership. By 1960, June 30, there were only 13 college graduates total (grin). Not only was the country largely uneducated but the country was incredibly divided.

After winning the election for the soon to be independent state in May of 1960, on June 30, 1960, Patrice Lumumba became the first elected Prime Minister of independent Congo. Lumumba was accused of being a communist due to him turning to the Soviet Union. Lumumba turned to the Soviet Union for economic aid considering the reliance they needed on their previous colonizers which was not of interest for the state (adolophine).

Definition of Key Terms

Colonization

Colonization refers to the act of one group moving into another group's territory and establishing control over the area. In most situations, colonization is referring to countries. For Congo, once Leopold gave up the Congo land to Belgium and Belgium took control over Congo, that is when the colonization began.

Government

Government is the group of people that run a state. There are many types of government: democracy, dictatorship and monarchy are among the most common, however, there are many different governments. In 1960, Congo became a democracy.

Natural resources

Natural resources are the materials of which can be found naturally in nature. Congo has materials such as copper, cobalt, and many other natural resources considering that they have the second largest rainforest in the world (worldbank).

The United Nations

The United Nations (UN) was created in the early 20th century after World War 2 as a means to create peace and prevent another World War. The UN worked and continues to work to prevent rising tension between Congo and Belgium

Independent

Independent refers to the state of being on one's own. For Congo, this was when Belgium gave Congo independence earlier this year. However, this adds another layer of complexity considering the fact that Congo still relied heavily on Belgium seeing as the economy was not ready to be independent as it was dependent for so long. This means that while Congo is technically independent, it can still be exploited by Belgium as Congo needs support.

Development

Development means for something to change and grow, progressing generally in a positive way. Here it means for Congo to develop into an independent country. In order to achieve this, Lumumba worked to receive help from the Soviet Union considering the economic and social power it wields. However, this made other countries, including the United States of America, to call Lumumba and Congo

communist which pushed away from some development in terms of relations with the United States of America.

Peacekeeping

Peacekeeping refers to the act of staying neutral as well as working towards creating a calm and productive environment for solutions. The UN will send out UN peacekeepers as a way to do this when there are conflicts between countries. Here, the UN was trying to prevent conflict between Congo, Belgium and Katanga, a Congan state that succeeded.



Peacekeepers (Peacekeeping)

Dismissing

Dismissing means for someone to ignore or not discuss a topic or instance. When discussing the term 'dismissing' in the UN Security Council, it refers to the act of a Permanent 5 (P5) member forcibly removing or changing a clause through the use of a veto. The P5 consists of: the United States, the Soviet Union, United Kingdom, Republic of China, and France.

Disarming

Disarming is when one side's weaponry is removed from another side, sometimes done by an outside party. During the Congo crisis, the UN disarmed Belgium after the murder of Lumumba due to the obstute inequality and unfairness shown by the Belgian side.

Succeed

Succeeding is when one part of a state decides it no longer wants to be a part of the state and thus succeeds. Succeeding is more often than not met with resistance from the state. Here, the first succeeding state was Katanga, followed by South Kansai. These states succeeded because the government did not give these states recognition and without recognition, these states had no power and thus tried to leave the state. As of right now, these regions have still not rejoined.

Background Information

Early

On the 30th of June when gaining freedom, there was much tension between Congo and Belgium. Belgium has an overwhelming and unfair amount of power and control in Congo especially considering the difficult transition many countries, including Congo, have experienced when emerging

from colonization. Furthermore, there were also tensions between regions as well as the government, all of which made being an independent state very difficult.

Resources

Congo had a lot of natural resources and because of that, Belgium decided to take over and get profit from their natural resources. This is a primary reason why Leopold wanted Belgium and why Belgium colonized it after Leopold. Furthermore, in order to gain these resources, they did detrimental damage to the environment in the process, thus making the already taken resources gone but also limiting the regrowth of resources.

Not only natural resources but human labor as well. Approximately, this meant that Belgium was making billions of dollars whilst simultaneously killing millions of people and even once they had left, Congo still needed to sell its resources and Belgium was still making off of that as well (foreign policy).

Belgium colonizing and Katanga

After Congo became an independent state, there were some regions that had little to no influence on the country, one of these regions being Katanga. Katanga was in southern Congo, however decided to succeed after because they felt that the country was communist and the leader Moïse Tshombe decided succession would be best for the region at hand. Afterwards, they invited Belgium to their region as they felt they could mutually benefit from a relationship.

This allowed for much more access to Congo and to the resources because they were invited in. Because of this, the UN peacekeepers went to Congo to prevent much tension, however their actions were limited due to attempting to remain peaceful

More and More tension

After Katanga succeeded, South Kasai followed suit. Shortly after, South Kasai became a microcosm for the conflict happening between Belgium and Congo (atlas). A microcosm is when a region is used for something larger than itself.

South Kasai and Belgium

Eventually South Kasai became a Belgium colony occupied largely by Belgians. This was where a huge majority of Belgians were during this period which led to more tensions between Congo and Belgium because there was more occupation in Congo. This is also why the UN peacekeepers had to intervene as the tensions were too high.

South Kansai and Mainland Congo with the UN

Lumumba launched an attack on South Kansai because of the overwhelming tensions and in order to slow the attack, the UN shut off communications. The UN was hoping that by doing so there would be no access to contacting outside parties or regions thus, maintaining the slow and peaceful methods rather than going to war. Overall, the UN steps in but does not do much in order to stay neutral but this is not quite neutral due to the power and economic imbalance between the two countries.

New govt.

President Joseph and Prime minister Lumumba

President Joseph and the Prime minister Lumumba were elected in May of this year and were actually put into places of power on June 30th 1960, when Congo regained independence. Lumumba tried to work with the USSR which was looked down upon considering how offensive the term communist has become after the word wars. Because of this, President Joseph fired Lumumba and seeing as he does not want Joseph to rule Congo fired him, thus providing the country with no government.

Seeing this as an opportunity, the United States of America gave Congo a president that they felt was not an authoritative communist. This person was Mobutu, and Mobutu Sese Seko. Mobutu was not a great leader, he ended up taking a huge majority of the government money, which creates a lot of issues considering that while Congo is a very resource heavy country, is often exploited and does not retain a majority of the resources that are exported (blogs).

The UN

The UN realized that this situation needed to be solved and with pressing concerns in terms of Belgium and other countries trying to enter Congo, the UN occupied all Congolese airports in hopes of preventing the situation from getting any worse. Even at this point, the UN was still trying to stay neutral and not intervene. Ex-Prime Minister Lumumba is trying to run from Belgium and Lumumba eventually finds a UN site and tries seeking out help but due to their neutrality, they did not keep him safe and Belgians found, tortured and killed Lumumba. This murder was a turning point for the UN as they realized that this is not fair and thus neutrality is not beneficial towards Congo, just towards Belgium

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

The United Nations

The UN worked to intervene to maintain peace and would try to stay neutral, however there were major problems with this due to the fact that this was not equal and thus should not have been treated as though they were. The United Nations only started to push back against Belgium after Lumumba's death on January 17th, 1961 (The New Yorker). The United Nations made many major moves such as stopping communications in and out of Congo after Congo sent an attack on Katanga. The United Nations were not incredibly effective due to the efforts to remain peaceful, however peaceful was merely aiding Belgium as they did not need aid while Congo did.

Belgium

Belgium was a major point of conflict and issue in terms of the Congo Crisis. Belgium created many more challenges towards gaining independence, so much so that it is near impossible to recount the Congo Crisis without mentioning Belgium. Belgium exploited Congo for centuries and once it became an independent state, Belgium used the reliance that Congo had on Belgium as a means to keep exploiting it despite the fact that Congo was independent. Furthermore, Congo also took much residence in South Kasai seeing as it offered itself up to Belgium to avoid the communist ruler Lumumba, thus allowing for more tension between Congo and Belgium.

United States of America (USA)

The United States was not enthused that Congo had turned to the Soviet Union, a communist state, for military assistance. Because of this, once the leadership of Congo had opened again due to the President and Prime Minister being fired, the United States took this as an opportunity (office of the historian). In addition, the United States sent out an 'Operation Supporting Anti-Communist Congolese Politicians', as an attempt to avoid the continuation of Communist leaders in Congo. The United States was less concerned about Congo as an emerging country but more so about the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' (USSR) control and spread of communism.

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had a large impact on the Congo crisis. Considering that the Prime Minister Lumumba reached out for help, thus creating more international interest, particularly in the USA. This had its flaws as many were against Congo as the term communism has an overwhelmingly negative connotation due to the dictatorship that has often followed suit. Because of this, Congo was used as a proxy war territory between the United States and the Soviet Union (office of the historian). The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics did send troops to Congo to aim in the Congo crisis (Britannica).

France

France was one of the major countries that colonized Asia and Africa, even having colonized Congo before Belgium. Furthermore, France has much power in terms of security council and before that the Paris Peace Conference (minorityrights). During the Paris Peace conference in 1919, it was decided that colonization had to end. While it took some time this was why colonization came to a stop. Now, almost 40 years later, Congo has finally emerged from colonization, in part due to the treaty, however mostly due to the push back and intensive work the citizens of Congo did in order to become independent.

United Kingdom (UK)

Britain did not and is still not doing enough to help the Congo. Considering the enormous power the United Kingdom has, the country is not doing enough to stop the atrocities of exploitation, both of humans as well as resources (aljazeera). The United Kingdom is also a country that creates and uses the products made of this labor and through this is supporting the trade and exploitation of Congo. Moving forward more needs to be done and a major player in that change in the United Kingdom as without the UK's spending on these items, the market for exploitative work would go down and thus would be hugely beneficial for Congo in terms of actually emerging from colonization.

Republic of China (ROC)

The Republic of China, being another communist state alongside the USSR did not have nearly as much involvement (ThinkChina). China is a mostly self run country and does not take part in most international issues. With that being said, there are intricacies when considering that during this period of time, Congo is being called communist and the limited number of communist countries does suggest that there may be interest for Mao Zedong to take part and thus eventually aid Congo.

Timeline of Events

The Congo crisis was rooted in deep history, with roots starting from King Leopold II, and is still ongoing 75 years later (friends of the Congo).

Date	Description of event
1885	King Leopold II ruled Congo, largely used the resources to make rubber, however, rubber is difficult and dangerous to extract, because of this, Leopold had the Congolese people extract the rubber or very little money and when

expectations were not met, drastic measures such as amputation would be taken to enforce expectations.

1908	Leopold no longer had control and the rule had been given to Belgium. Leopold was forced to give up his rule due to the intense backlash and outcry that was received once these acts of brutality were revealed.
1939	World War 2 (WWII) Colonese people and resources throughout the war, such as the uranium that was used in atomic bombs. Congo was offered to Hitler as an attempt to stop the control over Europe.
June 30, 1960	Patrice Lumumba is elected prime minister and Joseph Kasa Vubu is elected president. Thus marking the creation of a new government as well as the start of independence.
July 11, 1960	Moise Tshombe, the leader of Katanga, has the region succeed because they felt that Lumumba was a communist and Katanga was not getting enough representation.
September 5, 1960	Lumumba and Kasa-Vubu are both excused from office
August 1960	The United States of America send Mobutu Sese Sekou to lead the Republic of Congo. During his time in power, Sese Sekou took about 4 billion dollars, mostly from Congo's mining industry (Washington Post).

Relevant UN Resolutions and Treaties

- Resolution of 21 February 1961, 21 February 1961 (S/4741)
- The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), 20 December 2022 (S/RES/2666)
- The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC sanctions), 20 December 2022 (S/RES/2667)
- The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 30 June 2022 (S/RES/2641)
- UN Members, 20 September 1960 (ARES1480)

Possible Solutions

More UN peacekeeping throughout, UN peacekeepers that will use more force if necessary. During this time of tension, the UN remaining neutral and not aiding either side only empowers Belgium due to their economic and long lasting independence. By remaining neutral, it

creates an alternative issue for Congo and they do not have aid of which is vital. So by proposing a peacekeeping unit that will utilize resources more effectively, this thereby allows for more equality and peace between the two countries. Furthermore, having the UN interfere in more productive ways. The act of occupying airports only disadvantages the Congo side which proves to be an ineffective solution.

More external support from other countries, particularly the P5. Having more relations with other countries is vital during this period of developing as an independent country. Congo has much to offer in terms of resources and those resources can be used as an incentive to create relations. The republic of Congo needs more support in terms of military assistance as well as trade for a more stable economy. Considering the power the P5 has in international relations as well as the security council, this would be ideal. [Education in Congo \(the World Bank\)](#)

More education throughout Congo. Considering the lack of education the people of Congo have received during the period of colonization makes the country highly uneducated. Lack of education or resources for education is a major reason why Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) have a struggle to become a developing or More Economically Developed Country (MEDC). Allowing for more education would allow for more independence. Considering that at the time of independence there were only 13 college students total, allowing for more education is critical (grin).



[Education in Congo \(the World Bank\)](#)

Questions for Further Research

- How do other countries affect the relationship between the mainland of Congo and Kataga?
- How does the ongoing cold war impact the conflict?
- How does the aftermath of both world wars impact the conflict?
- How did the Paris Peace treaty affect the situation?
- What can other countries do to support the UN/Congo?

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