

Even at the outset, the military role of the United Nations was not solely a matter of dealing with outside intervention or of helping to prevent international conflict. From the start there was a concurrent role of technical and direct assistance to the Congolese government and armed forces. This was broadened, through subsequent mandates from the General Assembly and the Security Council and in recognition of the increasing degree of confusion and conflict in the Congo, until, under the Security Council resolution of February 21, the United Nations forces have a definite role, as well, in the prevention, halting and containment of civil war. At the same time, they remain under the clearest instructions not to be a party to, or to seek to influence the outcome of, any internal conflict; they are, in other words, to be completely impartial.

It would be difficult to argue that measures to bring an end to violence and bloodshed, to prevent or to contain civil strife, are not an essential concomitant to any successful programme for dealing with the two other Congo problems: the problem of needed civil assistance and the problem of a political solution. It can even be maintained, I believe, that they are vital to the other aspects of the military problem, for unrestrained civil strife constitutes an open invitation to outside intervention, and carries with it the possibility of international conflict. Yet for all their justification, it is in these respects that the United Nations operation is breaking new ground. Perhaps it is not surprising that it is here also that it has encountered the most serious difficulties and has met with the strongest criticism.

I do not propose to discuss these difficulties in any detail. For one thing, I do not believe that their solution will be hastened, at this juncture, by making them the subject of partisan debate. They can only be solved by the slow and unspectacular processes of patient negotiation and conciliation.