

Dag Hammarskjöld: Apostle of Mediation

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Abstract: Dag Hammarskjöld is considered as one of the ‘best, most dynamic and influential Secretary General of the United Nations. He is one of the most pro-active diplomats whose lasting legacy was the focus on the quiet diplomacy, peace keeping and development aid. These three key features of the United Nations of today were the result of Hammarskjöld’s ideas. His legacy in United Nations is considered as a beacon and legend for men who are seeking the road to international peace and security and a moral compass for international civil service. This article tries to capture some of his contribution of his signature ‘quiet diplomacy’ (informal private mediation) to resolve some of the world’s worst crisis.

Resumen: Dag Hammarskjöld es considerado uno de los mejores Secretarios Generales de las Naciones Unidas, entre los más dinámicos e influyentes. Es uno de los diplomáticos más proactivos cuyo legado duradero se centra en la diplomacia tranquila, el mantenimiento de la paz y la ayuda al desarrollo. Estas tres características fundamentales de las Naciones Unidas de hoy en día son el resultado de las ideas de Hammarskjöld. Su legado en las Naciones Unidas se considera un faro y una leyenda para aquellos que busquen el camino hacia la paz y la seguridad internacional, y una brújula moral para los funcionarios internacionales. Este artículo intenta captar parte de la contribución a su conocida «diplomacia tranquila» (mediación privada informal) para resolver algunas de las peores crisis que ha visto el mundo.

Key Words: Dag Hammarskjöld, United Nations, Secretary General, Quiet Diplomacy, Mediation.

Palabras claves: Dag Hammarskjöld, Naciones Unidas, Secretario General, diplomacia tranquila, mediación.

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Dag Hjalmar Agne Carl Hammarskjöld was a Swedish civil servant, diplomat, economist, and author who was born as the youngest of four sons of Agnes (Almquist) Hammarskjöld and Hjalmar Hammarskjöld, prime minister of Sweden, member of The Hague Tribunal, Governor of Uppland, Chairman of the Board of the Nobel Foundation (United Nations, 2012). He served as second secretary-general of the United Nations, from April 1953 until his death in a plane crash in September 1961. He is considered as one of the 'best, most dynamic and influential Secretary-General the United Nations has seen (Annan, 2007; Thakur, 2015) and President John F. Kennedy referred him as one of 'the greatest statesman of our century' (Linnér, 2007). He is among the only four people who have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1961 posthumously but having been nominated before his death and the only Secretary General of the United Nations who died while in office.

On his legacy, Secretary General Kofi Anan expressed, *«His life and his death, his words and his actions, have done more to shape public expectations of the office, and indeed of the Organization, than those of any other man or woman in its history. His wisdom and his modesty, his unimpeachable integrity and single-minded devotion to duty, have set a standard for all servants of the international community – and especially, of course, for his successors – which is simply impossible to live up to. There can be no better rule of thumb for a Secretary-General, as he approaches each new challenge or crisis, than to ask himself, 'how would Hammarskjöld have handled this?'... What is clear is that his core ideas remain highly relevant in this new international context. The challenge for us is to see how they can be adapted to take account of it»* (Annan, 2001). This statement is the perfect reflection of his legacy, of his contribution to the foundation of the United Nations as a multilateral institution with an impartial undertaking of existing global challenges.

Dag Hammarskjöld's Early Career

In a brief piece written for a radio program in 1953, Dag Hammarskjöld spoke of the influence of his parents: «From generations of soldiers and government officials on my father's side I inherited a belief that no life was more satisfactory than one of selfless service to your country – or humanity. This service required a sacrifice of all personal interests, but likewise the courage to stand up unflinchingly for your convictions. From scholars and clergymen on my mother's side, I inherited a belief that, in the very radical sense of the Gospels, all men were equals as children of God, and should be met and treated by us as our masters in God» (Hammarskjöld, 1962). One of the most interesting aspects of his career is that he never joined any political party, always regarded himself as an independent, which shows his true character of impartiality in his responsibility. He

devoted thirty-one years in Swedish government in various capacities as public civil servant and diplomat.

One of his major appointments was Adviser to the Cabinet on financial and economic problems. His responsibilities included organizing and coordinating governmental planning for the various economic problems that arose as a result of the war. During these years, he played an important role in shaping Sweden's financial policy. In fact, he has been credited with having coined the term «planned economy». Along with his eldest brother, Bo, who was then undersecretary in the Ministry of Social Welfare, he drafted the legislation that opened the way to the creation of the present so-called 'welfare state' (Van Dusen, 1967).

In the latter part of his career with the Swedish Government, he drew attention as an international financial negotiator for his part in the discussions with Great Britain on the post-war economic reconstruction of Europe, in his reshaping of the twelve-year-old United States-Sweden trade agreement, in his participation in the talks which organized the Marshall Plan, and in his leadership on the Executive Committee of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation. He led a series of trade and financial negotiations with other countries, among which were the United States and the United Kingdom. This experience really honed his skills as a very experienced mediator who negotiated with Britain and the United States for the post-war swift execution of the Marshall Plan in Europe.

On foreign affairs, he continued a policy of international economic cooperation (Ahlström, & Carlson, 2006). One of the challenging diplomatic negotiations he successfully led during this period was the avoiding Swedish allegiance to the cooperative military set up of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) while collaborating on the political level in the Council of Europe and on the economic level in the Organization of European Economic Cooperation.

Dag Hammarskjöld in the United Nations

Dag Hammarskjöld's represented Sweden as a member of the Swedish delegation to the Sixth Regular Session of the United Nations in 1949 which left his mark at the United Nations. Later, he joined as Vice-Chairman of the Swedish Delegation to the Sixth Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly in Paris 1951-1952, and Acting Chairman of his country's delegation to the Seventh General Assembly in New York in 1952-1953 (United Nations, 2012, p.2).

To his surprise he was unanimously appointed as the second Secretary-General of the United Nations by the General Assembly on 7 April 1953 on the recommendation of the Security Council after the resignation of the first Secretary General of the United Nations Trygve Lie. One of the basis of his selection as Secretary General of the United Nations was that he was respected as a person of utmost integrity,

who acted on the basis of moral and ethical values and always been apolitical and impartial throughout his life, the character which rewarded him with the most difficult job in the world – Secretary General of the United Nations at the heights of the Cold War era. On 10 April 1953, he took the oath of office as Secretary-General of the United Nations for a term of five years. He was re-appointed unanimously for another five-year term in September 1957 – more than six months before the end of his first term.

Brian Urquhart, Hammarskjöld's key advisers and his main biographer, described how the 'Big Powers' then went searching a «yes» man and, «by pure accident, picked up someone who was exactly the opposite of what everyone wanted. They thought they had got a safe, bureaucratic civil servant, non-political, and they got Hammarskjöld. It will never happen again. Nobody is going to make that same mistake twice» (Urquhart, 1994). What the Big Powers soon discovered was that they had elected a man who stood up to them, in particular the permanent members of the Security Council, whenever his conscience or the UN Charter required it. His cardinal values and hallmarks were independence, impartiality, integrity and moral courage. This enraged some of the world's leaders, but at the same time they respected him for it (Gilmour, 2013).

As a legacy to the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld emphasized that a major task of the UN is to assert the interests of small countries in relation to the major powers. He also was among the architects for the UN's peacekeeping forces and above all he used his good offices as a mediator in a range of situations to prevent war and tensions among member states. As Secretary-General he succeeded Mr. Trygve Lie, who had not only built up the United Nations administration and participated in planning its new building, but had also given the post of secretary-general a more important and independent position within the United Nations than had probably been originally envisaged. In other words, he took over an office which had already been given form and an administrative apparatus which had acquired a certain amount of tradition (Jahn, 1961). During his eight years (1953-1961) as Secretary General, he invented and introduced the concepts of «preventive diplomacy» (negotiations to prevent conflict), «shuttle diplomacy» (negotiations to end a conflict), classical «peace-keeping» (troops to monitor a cease-fire and implement peace agreements) and a UN «political presence» in conflict areas (to try to stop conflict from re-erupting), which is still is the major task of the United Nations (Gilmour, 2013).

Dag Hammarskjöld's Legacy of (Quiet) Diplomacy

There is no doubt that in accepting this high office Dag Hammarskjöld fully realized that the years ahead would not prove easy. He was all too familiar with the difficulties Trygve Lie

had encountered to have any illusions on that score. Fully aware of the magnitude and complexity of his task, he devoted himself to it completely, exerting all his determination and strength in carrying it out. In a private letter written in 1953 he says: «To know that the goal is so significant that everything else must be set aside gives a great sense of liberation and makes one indifferent to anything that may happen to oneself» (Kuehl, 1975).

Since he assumed the post of Secretary General, he wanted to act a very pro-active role unlike his predecessor. From the beginning, back in 1953, when he outlined the role and activities of the Secretariat and the Secretary-General, he laid down that, while it is clearly the duty of the Secretariat and of the Secretary-General to obtain complete and objective information on the aims and problems of the various member nations, the Secretary-General must personally form an opinion; he must base it on the rules of the UN Charter and must never for a moment betray those rules, even if this means being at variance with members of the UN (Jahn, 1961). His first year as Secretary-General was indeed devoted to administrative responsibilities – to taking hold of the Organization and to restoring the morale of the Secretariat and dignity of Secretary General. He reiterated that the Secretary-General should be «active as an instrument, a catalyst, perhaps as an inspirer – he serves (UNDP, 2012, p. 8).»

From the very first time within the United Nations, he placed great importance on the resolution of disputes through informal mediation (use of the medium of private discussion between representatives of the individual countries), pursuing what has come to be known as the «method of quiet diplomacy». Importance is given to such informal mediation, as informal meetings of this kind have always been and will always be an important part of the work necessary to achieve agreement between conflicting views. In every situation with which he was faced he had one goal in mind: to serve the ideas sponsored by the United Nations. He called himself an international civil servant, with the emphasis on the word international (Hammarskjöld, 1961). As such, he had only one master, and that was the United Nations.

There can be little doubt that Dag Hammarskjöld achieved a great deal through the informal mediation he facilitated, and that in these he demonstrated strong personal initiative (Jahn, 1961). There are numerous occasions where he left his mark as a successful mediator using his 'quiet diplomacy' to resolve tensions amongst the member states. One of the most remarkable successes of his signature 'quiet diplomacy' occurred in 1955 where he mediated with People's Republic of China to secure release of 15 detained American fliers who had served under the United Nations Command in Korea (UNDP, 2012, p. 2).

The first and most challenging disputes which fell to his lot to settle arose in the Middle East. The first of these was the conflict between Israel and the Arab States in 1955. As the representative of the UN, he succeeded in easing the tension by negotiating an agreement between each of the parties involved and the UN, setting up demarcation lines and establishing UN observation posts. But the tension heightened between the Great Britain, France and Egypt after Egypt had nationalized the Suez Canal. He tried to find a solution to this dispute through private negotiations which did not bear any fruits. So he used his diplomatic pressure and hinted to resign unless all member states honored their pledge to abide by all clauses of the UN Charter.

On 1 November 1955, the General Assembly adopted, on the proposal of the United States, resolution 997 (ES-I), calling for an immediate ceasefire, the withdrawal of all forces behind the armistice lines and the reopening of the Canal. The Secretary-General was requested to observe and report promptly on compliance to the Security Council and to the General Assembly, for such further action as those bodies might deem appropriate in accordance with the United Nations Charter. In reality for the first time in the history of the United Nations, the Secretary-General was thus vested with far-reaching powers. This wielding power gave upper hand to Hammarskjöld to mediate a solution between the stakeholders such that France and Great Britain were willing to suspend hostilities, provided that Israel and Egypt were prepared to accept the establishment of a UN force to ensure and supervise the suspension of hostilities and subsequently to prevent the violation of the Egyptian-Israeli border. The result was that the war was brought to an end, a demarcation line was fixed, and a UN force was established to guard it (Jahn, 1961).

This was the first armed United Nations Peacekeeping force known as United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF). The setting up of this first peacekeeping mission was a pure improvisation. First it was designed to replace collective security as envisaged in the Charter of the United Nations (Chapter VII). Cold war's tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States blocked the Security Council preventing the use of the UN to solve international crisis. To address the Suez crisis, Dag Hammarskjöld, acting on a proposal from the Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Lester B. Pearson, had recourse to the General Assembly to launch the new operation. Facing the threat of a British and French veto, Hammarskjöld had to adopt another strategy to deploy the first UN contingent. He did it through the use of the «Uniting for Peace» resolution that was dating from the war in Korea. This highly controversial method allows the UN to authorize the deployment of troops without the approval of the Security Council. After difficult negotiations at the Secretariat, UNEF

was finally authorized to be deployed in Egypt with its soldiers wearing for the first time the blue helmet. This shows the genius of Dag Hammarskjöld in executing his diplomacy in solving the problem despite the heights of cold war tension between the powerful adversaries.

He also made a major contribution to the solution of a crisis between Lebanon, Jordan, and the Arab States in 1958 with the institution and administration of the United Nations Observation Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL) and the establishment of an office of the special representative of the Secretary-General in Jordan in 1958 (UNDP, 2012, p. 2). During these crises, all his qualities were given full scope, particularly his ability to negotiate and to act swiftly and firmly; and to Dag Hammarskjöld must go the principal credit for the fact that all these crises were resolved in the spirit of the United Nations. A state of peace was established in this area (Miller, 1961). This was a triumph for the ideal of peace of which the UN is an expression, and in addition undoubtedly greatly strengthened the position of the Secretary-General (Jahn, 1961).

For Dag Hammarskjöld, the UN Charter has always remained a guiding principle in tackling any problems. His test of leadership was again challenged during the liberation of the Congo on June 30, 1960 which was one of the largest and the richest in resources of the European colonies in Africa to gain independence. The post-colonial government with Joseph Kasavubu as President and Patrice Lumumba as Prime Minister, faced multitude challenges: the administration, which had been in Belgian hands, had broken down; the army had mutinied; a large proportion of the white population had fled; Belgian troops had intervened – in part to protect the white inhabitants; and the province of Katanga declared itself an independent state (Gibbs, 1993). All these factors – the collapse of the administration, the mutiny of the armed forces, and finally Katanga's secession from the rest of the Congo form the background for the request made to the UN by President Kasavubu and Prime Minister Lumumba to the Secretary-General asking «urgent dispatch» of United Nations military assistance to respond to the Belgian action.

The Security Council adopted Resolution 143 (1960) by which it called upon the Government of Belgium to withdraw its troops from the territory of the Congo. This meeting is highly important, for it marks a turning point in the history of the UN. It was the first time that the UN used armed force to intervene actively in the solution of a problem involving the termination of colonial rule (Jahn, 1961). The resolution authorized the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps, in consultation with the Congolese Government, to provide that Government with the necessary military assistance until it felt that, through its efforts with the technical assistance of the United Nations, the national security forces were able to

meet their tasks fully. Following Security Council actions, the United Nations Force in the Congo (ONUC) was established. In order to carry out these tasks, the Secretary-General set up a United Nations Force which at its peak strength numbered nearly 20,000. The UN intervention had not brought about the result President Lumumba had anticipated. The Belgian troops remained in their bases in Katanga, and fresh Belgian troops were dispatched to the Congo. As a consequence, President Lumumba made some highly unexpected moves announcing the possibility of asking for Russian aid if the Western powers continued their aggression against the Congo. This led the Congo crisis became a factor in the East-West conflict, rendering the position of Hammarskjöld and the UN in the Congo immensely difficult.

Dag Hammarskjöld, in the Security Council and in the meetings of the General Assembly, fought in defense of his policy. He insisted throughout that all aid to the Congo civil as well as military – must be made available through the medium of the UN. No vested interests representing any of the power blocs must be allowed to exert their influence. He became a subject of immense criticism from both east and the west. In the calm and dignified answer which Dag Hammarskjöld made to the power brokers within the United Nations, he said that he would remain at his post as long as this was necessary to defend and strengthen the authority of the United Nations (Jahn, 1961). And he added: It is not Soviet Russia or any of the great powers that need the vigilance and protection of the UN; it is all the others (Jahn, 1961). He did not live enough to defend and pursue his ideals and policy to its conclusion.

In an unfortunate accident, he perished on his way to a meeting which he hoped would bring an end to the fighting in the Congo between Katanga troops and UN forces, which had just broken out during the attempt to implement the UN Security Council resolution 161 (1961) of February 21, 1961. This resolution called on UN military forces to take immediate steps to prevent a civil war in the Congo, and to use force only as a last resort. The UN was furthermore enjoined to ensure that all Belgian and other foreign military, political, and other advisers not under UN command should be withdrawn immediately.

Dag Hammarskjöld was exposed to criticism and violent, unrestrained attacks, but he never departed from the path he had chosen from the very first: the path that was to result in the UN's developing into an effective and constructive international organization, capable of giving life to the principles and aims expressed in the UN Charter, administered by a strong Secretariat served by men who both felt and acted internationally. The goal he always strove to attain was to make the UN Charter the one by which all countries regulated themselves.

The following table highlights the number of conflicts/crisis to which Dag Hammarskjöld contributed his expertise as a mediator and United Nations as an impartial/neutral third party to mediate in the conflicting situations. One of the significant similarity and quality as interpreted by Peter Wallensteen is Hammarskjöld's 'ability to interpret mandates and find ingenious solutions, principles for action and practical course of action (Wallensteen, 2011).

Peter Wallensteen, who holds the Dag Hammarskjöld chair of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University (1985-2012), stresses 9 special characteristics of Dag Hammarskjöld's quiet diplomacy (mediation) which led him to success of his efforts in these crises during the heights of the cold war. These characteristics as outlined by Wallensteen are (1) *Travel diplomacy* (going to the area of the conflict as oppose to sending special representatives); (2) *Build on mutual & personal trust* (one to one confidence building); (3) *Creating diplomatic leverage* (using United Nations Charter to create his leverage for mediation); (4) *Act early when possible* (preventing conflict/crisis from escalation or preventive diplomacy); (5) *Coalition Building* (building critical mass who supports his actions and proposals); (6) *Protect the integrity of the office of the Secretary-General* (follows the UN Charter as guiding principles for all his actions and decisions); (7) *Multi-arena diplomacy* (work in multi-dimensional aspect of the crisis both international as well as domestic especially his role in Congo crisis where he worked both with international as well as domestic actors simultaneously); (8) *Risk taking* (being proactive rather than staying dormant and observing the crisis) and (9) *Stamina & simplicity* (Giving priority to mandates and be humble and down to earth) (Wallensteen, 2011).

Among his mediation efforts, the Congo Crisis intervention was considered as one of the most controversial, and the UN's role in the Congo was criticized by almost all sides—both for its design and its execution. Hammarskjöld acidly pointed out to those who accused the UN of failure that dealing with a territory five times the size of France with fewer peace-keepers than there were policemen in Manhattan was unlikely to make the UN more efficient than the NYPD «in the prevention of murder, rape and similar time-honored ways for man to realize himself» (Gilmour, 2013). His words at that time were a bit bitter but later it was realized by the World Leaders. Six months after the fatal plane crash, Hammarskjöld's closest Swedish associate was summoned to the Oval Office. President Kennedy explained that he had belatedly come to realize that he had been wrong to oppose the UN Congo policy on anti-Communist grounds, and regretted that it was too late to apologize to Hammarskjöld in person. «I realize now that in comparison to him, I am a small man. He was the greatest statesman of our century» (Gilmour, 2013).

Table 1: Twenty Conflict/Crisis: Mediation Efforts of Dag Hammarskjöld, 1953-1961

Conflict/Crisis	Outcome of the Conflict/Crisis	Outcome of Hammarskjöld's Diplomacy
1. Guatemala 1954	Government Overthrown by CIA (USA)	Failure
2. US pilots in China 1954-55	Pilots Freed	Success
3. Middle East 1956 I	Ceasefire Restored	Success
4. Middle East 1956 II (Canal Crisis, Oct.)	No Agreement	Failure
5. Middle East 1956 III (Canal Crisis, 29 Oct. -7 Nov.)	Ceasefire withdrawal, Peacekeeping Operation deployment agreement	Success
6. Middle East 1956 IV (UNEP in Egypt))	Deployment of Peacekeeping Operation	Success
7. Hungary 1956	Invasion (Soviet military intervention in Hungary)	Failure
8. Middle East 1957 (Israel leaving Sinai, Gaza)	Withdrawal, Peacekeeping	Success
9. Lebanon 1958 (infiltration & western intervention)	Observer Group, Withdrawal	Success
10. Cambodia - Thailand	Relations restored	Success
11. UK-Saudi Arabia (Bureimi)	Eventually resolved	Success (After Hammarskjöld's death)
12. Laos 1959 I	UN Subcommittee	Failure
13. Laos 1959 II (UN Presence)	UN Presence, set up by Secretary General	Success
14. Congo 1960 I	Action by Secretary General	Success
15. Congo 1960 II (Katanga)	Removal of Belgian Troops	Success
16. Congo 1960 III	Congo aid through UN	Success
17. Congo 1960 IV (Soviet attack on Hammarskjöld)	Soviet critique, General Assembly Support	Success
18. Congo 1960-61 (Constitutional Crisis)	Assassination of Lumumba	Failure
19. Bizerte 1961 (French-Tunisian conflict)	Agreement Not achieved	Failure
20. Congo 1961 (Katanga)	Katanga secession	Hammarskjöld killed on fatal air crash

Source: (Urquhart, 1994) and (Wallenstein, 2011).

Room of Quiet: United Nations Meditation Room

One of his lasting legacies in UN is the United Nations Meditation Room that first opened on October 14, 1952. The existence of this room was a hard won battle by a group that also saw to it that there would be a moment of silence at the beginning and closing of each General Assembly—a tradition continued to this day. This is a place within the United Nations headquarters, where people could withdraw into themselves, regardless of their faith, creed or religion, but Dag Hammarskjöld wanted something more dignified. In his efforts he was supported by a group, composed of Christians, Jews, and Muslims, the «Friends of the UN Meditation Room», who combined their efforts to transform the Mediation Room into the «A Room of Quiet», a masterpiece which was personally supervised by Dag Hammarskjöld himself. It has been the aim of Dag Hammarskjöld to create in this small room a place where the doors may be open to the infinite lands of thought and prayer.

In the statement during the inauguration of room of quiet he stressed 'this house, dedicated to work and debate in the service of peace, should have one room dedicated to silence in the outward sense and stillness in the inner sense. It has been the aim to create in this small room a place where the doors may be open to the infinite lands of thought and prayer. People of many faiths will meet here, and for that reason none of the symbols to which we are accustomed in our meditation could be used' (Hammarskjöld, 1961).

Conclusion

It is always difficult to summarize the legacy of a man who has achieved so much in course of a very short life he lived. In Dag Hammarskjöld life there was never a dull moment as his extraordinary life with multiple responsibility as a civil servant, economist and finally as a world diplomat, has gone through the best and worst experience one can ever imagine. On his arrival to Idlewild Airport in New York to take responsibility as new Secretary General, he reflected his experience as a mountaineer which can relate to his experience as international mediator. He stressed, 'I am interested in mountaineering, but my experience is limited to Scandinavia, where mountaineering calls more for endurance than for equilibristic, and where mountains are harmonious rather than dramatic, matter of fact (if you permit such a term in this context) rather than eloquent. However, that much I know of this sport that the qualities it requires are just those which I feel we all need today: perseverance and patience, a firm grip on realities, careful but imaginative planning, a clear awareness of the dangers but also of the fact that fate is what we make it and that the safest climber is he who never questions his ability to overcome all difficulties» (UNDP, 2012, p. 9). This

clearly summarizes his endeavor of diplomacy as an 'apostle of mediation' which is reflected on how he handled all the challenges he faced during his role as Secretary General: with perseverance and patience, a firm grip on realities, careful but imaginative planning, a clear awareness of the dangers.

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