



NHSMUN

Background Guide | *HSC*

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to NHSMUN 2026! Our team is super ecstatic for you to compete at NHSMUN 2026! My name is Alex Bland, and I have the utmost honor of serving as your Session One Director for the Historical Security Council: United Nations Historical Council committee this year.

My co-director, David, and I are deeply invested in historical matters concerning the United Nations. The year 1962 saw much change throughout the world, particularly in the state of Katanga and in Portugal where independence and colonialism crossed pathways, creating conflict and solution. As we place ourselves in these historical events, there will be much debate and discourse from different blocs, and thus I cannot wait to explore how all the different arcs shape the course of this committee!

To introduce a little bit more about me, I am a junior at the University of Southern California, majoring in public policy, and I am from Massachusetts. This is my third semester as a general member of the MUNSC team at my school and my first time serving as a NHSMUN Director, so I am especially excited for what this specialized committee will turn into!

In addition, I have served as a crisis director for both SCMUN (high school-level conference hosted by MUNSC) and TrojanMUN (collegiate-level conference hosted by MUNSC). Outside of Model UN, I'm involved with my sorority, an on-campus job, and the lacrosse team. Aside from academics and extracurriculars, I love going to South Bay beaches, swimming and running, and trying different restaurants around LA with my family and friends.

This specialized committee is bound to be super invigorating as we discuss historical issues that are rampantly present in today's society throughout the world, so I am expecting an abundance of creativity and innovation from this one. The HSC Historical Committee debate has so many dimensions, and opinions surrounding it to take, and now it is your turn to use these positions to your own advantage! I promise to do my part in ensuring all these considerations of the United Nations Historical Council are accounted for to build a strong and thought-provoking specialized committee.

Please email me about any questions concerning this committee or the NHSMUN conference. We cannot wait for March. Best of luck!

Sincerely,

Alex Bland (she/her)

Director, HSC Session I

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Executive Committee

Ana Margarita Gil

Ming-May Hu

Chris Talamo

Althea Turley

Dear Delegates,

Hello, and welcome to NHSMUN 2026! My name is David Phipps, and I am so excited to serve as your Session 2 Director for the Historical United Nations Security Council committee. My session 1 co-Director, Alex, and I worked diligently to develop the best possible topics. Both topics have an expansive history, extending from early colonialism to long after our committee takes place in December 1962.

To introduce myself, I'm from San Jose, California. I am currently a Junior at De Anza College in Cupertino, California with a major in mathematics. I plan on transferring to San Jose State University in the Spring, working towards my bachelor's and teaching credentials. In my free time, I enjoy playing games with friends and listening to music. I've also swam competitively for much of the past 15 years. In addition to sports, I've participated in Model UN since high school as one of my extracurriculars. Luckily, the Bay Area has plenty of conferences, including ones at Stanford and Berkeley, to name a few. I took part in committees ranging from LEGAL and DISEC to a simulation of a Great Flu Epidemic in 2018 to a full ad hoc US Senate simulation.

I first attended NHSMUN as a delegate in 2018 in the UNESCAP committee and in 2019 in DISEC. This will be my third year as a director of NHSMUN, with my first two years acting as the director for UNSC-A in 2024, and as the director for UNSC-B in 2025. Throughout my time in Model UN, and NHSMUN in particular, I've met and interacted with so many smart, well-spoken, and fun people. NHSMUN, whether as a delegate or on staff, has been an incredible experience. I hope that I can pass along the same amazing experience as my directors before me. Whether it's your first NHSMUN or your last, I sincerely hope you have a great time and learn something along the way.

The topics that we chose may feel like a long time ago, in a 'galaxy far, far away,' halfway across the world from NHSMUN in New York. However, these topics are as relevant to today as they were to 1962. Katanga, along with many other former colonies, still faces rampant racism and discrimination. Additionally, Africa still faces political instability as a result of the collapsing colonial governments and borders that split up native lands. This resulted in civil wars and ongoing tensions that remain in 2026. Our BG should set the stage for the topic and provide a solid foundation for research. I am very excited to see how you build on that foundation in your position paper and at the conference.

We are here to help you, so feel free to reach out if you have any questions about research, resources, the background guide, or simply want to say hello. I am looking forward to meeting you all in March! NHSMUN 2026 will be here before you know it.

Sincerely,

David Phipps

Director, HSC Session II

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A NOTE ON RESEARCH AND PREPARATION

Delegate research and preparation is a critical element of attending NHSMUN and enjoying the debate experience. We have provided this Background Guide to introduce the topics that will be discussed in your committee. We encourage and expect each of you to critically explore the selected topics and be able to identify and analyze their intricacies upon arrival to the conference.

The task of preparing for the conference can be challenging, but to assist delegates, we have updated our [Beginner Delegate Guide](#), [Advanced Delegate Guide](#), [Research Guide](#), and [Rules of Procedure Guide](#). In particular, these guides contain more detailed instructions on how to prepare a position paper and excellent sources that delegates can use for research. Use these resources to your advantage. They can help transform a sometimes overwhelming task into what it should be: an engaging, interesting, and rewarding experience.

To accurately represent a country, delegates must be able to articulate its policies. Accordingly, NHSMUN requires each delegation (the one or two delegates representing a country in a committee) to write a position paper for each topic on the committee's agenda. In delegations with two students, we strongly encourage each student to research each topic to ensure that they are both prepared to debate throughout the committee. More information about how to write and format position papers can be found in the Research Guide. To summarize, position papers should be structured into three sections.

I: Topic Background – This section should describe the history of the topic as it would be described by the delegate's country. Delegates do not need to give an exhaustive account of the topic. It is best to focus on the details that are most important to the delegation's policy and proposed solutions.

II: Country Policy – This section should discuss the delegation's policy regarding the topic. Each paper should state the policy in plain terms and include the relevant statements, statistics, and research that support the effectiveness of the policy. Comparisons with other global issues are also appropriate.

III. Proposed Solutions – This section should detail the delegation's proposed solutions to address the topic. Descriptions of each solution should be thorough. Each idea should clearly connect to the specific problem it aims to solve and identify potential obstacles to implementation and how they can be avoided. The solution should be a natural extension of the country's policy.

Each topic's position paper should be **no more than 10 pages** long double-spaced with standard margins and 12 point font size. This is a maximum; **3–5 pages per topic is often a suitable length**. The paper must be written from the perspective of your assigned country and should articulate the policies you will espouse at the conference.

Each delegation is responsible for submitting position papers on or before **February 20, 2026**. If a delegate wishes to receive detailed feedback from the committee's dais, a position must be submitted on or before **January 30, 2026**. The papers received by this earlier deadline will be reviewed by the dais of each committee and returned prior to your arrival at the conference. Instructions on how to submit position papers will be shared directly with faculty advisors.

Complete instructions for how to submit position papers will be sent to faculty advisers via email. If delegations are unable to submit their position papers on time, please contact us at nhsmun@imuna.org.

Delegations that do not submit position papers will be ineligible for awards.

COMMITTEE HISTORY

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was created in 1945 through the UN Charter as one of the six main organs of the United Nations. It was established with the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.¹ Since its first meeting on January 17, 1946, the Security Council has been housed at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City but has held sessions in other cities. In 1962, the council was composed of 11 members: six non-permanent and five permanent members. The five permanent members are known as the P5, which includes France, the Republic of China, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States.² The six non-permanent members are allocated based on a geographic representation quota and serve two-year terms each. This committee will also feature an additional four states directly related to each topic.

Each member of the Security Council has one vote. An affirmative vote of nine members passes resolutions in the Security Council. However, only the P5 possesses the unique “right to veto” any resolution. If a P5 member votes “no” to a presented resolution, veto power is activated, and the resolution fails automatically. The P5’s veto power is often used to defend their national interests or uphold foreign policy.³ Many member states argue that vetoes harm the Council’s ability to address some of the most serious violations of the UN Charter and international law, stopping the council from achieving the aim of peace. Therefore, delegates are discouraged from using the veto power unless strictly necessary to maintain policy.

According to Chapter VI of the UN Charter, the UNSC should always call upon the parties to a dispute by peaceful means and recommend methods of adjustments or terms of settlement initially. The UNSC intends to end conflict quickly if hostilities break out. It gives cease-fire orders to prevent further escalation and sends military observers or peacekeeping forces to monitor cease-fires, alleviate tensions, and separate opposing forces.⁴ Unlike the General Assembly, decisions made by the Council are legally binding and must be carried out by member states. To enforce these decisions, the Security Council may enact economic sanctions, weapons embargoes, financial penalties, travel restrictions, and even military intervention. It can also break off diplomatic relations, erect blockades, or sanction military involvement to restore peace.

One notable use of the Security Council’s authority was Resolutions 82 and 83. It condemned the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s invasion of the Republic of Korea and authorized the use of armed military to repel invading forces. Notably, the USSR was unable to veto this resolution on account of its boycott of the UN Security Council in 1950.⁵ As this committee takes place early in the history of the UNSC, many of its powers lack historical precedent; therefore, delegates should consider how their actions in committee may set the stage for future action by the UNSC.

A critical component of the Security Council’s approach is to focus on people who initiate or perpetuate conflict while aiming to minimize negative consequences on the wider population and economy.⁶ When delegates propose these sort of binding measures during committee through directives, they will be expected to be acquainted with, and mention the provisions that allow them to take such measures in the name of the council.

¹ United Nations, “United Nations Charter,” Article 24 (Jun. 26, 1945) www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text.

² United Nations, “United Nations Charter,” Article 23 (Jun. 26, 1945) research.un.org/en/unmembers/scmembers.

³ Security Council Report, *The Veto : UN Security Council Working Methods* (New York: SCR, Feb. 13, 2024) www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-security-council-working-methods/the-veto.php.

⁴ United Nations, “United Nations Charter,” Article 33 (Jun. 26, 1945)

⁵ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “United Nations Security Council: History,” *Britannica*, Sep. 4, 2025, www.britannica.com/topic/United-Nations-Security-Council/History

⁶ United Nations, “United Nations Charter,” Articles 39-51 (Jun. 26, 1945)



G-AOVG

The Situation in the State of Katanga (1962)

Photo Credit: Anefo

The Republic of the Congo (Léopoldville) became a center of global conflict within weeks of independence from Belgium on June 30, 1960. Katanga, a province rich in minerals, declared its own independence soon after the Congo gained freedom. Moïse Tshombe led this breakaway.¹ The sudden move caused chaos in the Congo and across Central Africa. The split also put the Congo's unity at risk.² The UN Security Council (UNSC) has played a big role in Africa since its creation in 1945. During the 1950s and 1960s, many colonies became independent, and the world order changed. The Council took note of unrest, breakaway movements, and actions of old colonial powers that troubled new African states.³

The United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) deployed about 20,000 soldiers from more than 30 countries. This made it the largest peacekeeping mission the UN had attempted up to that point.⁴ The mission reflected the wider struggle between new African states and former colonial rulers. The Soviet Union said the UN was a tool of the West. Reports suggested that Belgium, France, and the United States continued to protect certain political or commercial interests in the region, even while publicly supporting Congo's unity.⁵ Even with these disputes, the Congo mission became a model of later UN work in African conflicts, such as in Sudan, Rwanda, and Somalia.

The UNSC responded to the Congo Crisis with Resolution 143. This created the ONUC and approved the use of peacekeeping troops. The ONUC had to balance outside interference, ethnic divisions, and Cold War rivalries. At the same time, it struggled to broker a political settlement in an unstable and violent setting.⁶ As of December 17, 1962, after multiple mediation attempts and limited UN operations, Katanga still refused reintegration under Secretary-General U Thant's Plan for National Reconciliation, forcing the Council to weigh renewed talks against a stronger mandate.⁷

TOPIC BACKGROUND

Colonial History and the Congo Free State 1885-1908

The Congo Basin's history goes back about 90,000 years to the Paleolithic era. Major changes occurred with the Bantu migration,

which introduced farming, herding, and Iron Age technology, displacing hunter-gatherer groups in the east and southeast.⁸ The geography of this region played an important role in its history. The first settlers in Katanga were ancestors of the Baluba (Luba) people.⁹ The Congo was previously ruled by the Luba

Empire and the Lunda Kingdom. In the mid-19th century, a trader from Tabora (modern-day Tanzania) founded the Yeke Kingdom. The trader, Msiri, called that region Katanga and became its ruler.

Around this time, the Congo's colonial history began. In the 1870s, European explorer Henry

1 John Kent, *America, the UN and Decolonisation: Cold War Conflict in the Congo* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

2 Colin Hendrickx, "Tshombe's Secessionist State of Katanga: Agency Against the Odds," *Third World Quarterly* 42, no. 8 (May 31, 2021): 1809–28, doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2021.1920832.

3 Jane Boulden, *Peace Enforcement: The United Nations Experience in Congo, Somalia, and Bosnia* (Westport, Ct: Praeger, 2001).

4 William J Durvh, *Evolution of UN Peacekeeping: Case-Studies and Comparative Analysis* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993).

5 Kent, *America, the UN and Decolonisation: Cold War Conflict in the Congo*.

6 United Nations Security Council, Resolution 143, Calling upon Belgium to withdraw its troops from the Congo (capital Leopoldville, S/RES/143(1960), (Jul. 14, 1960), undocs.org/S/RES/143(1960).

7 David N. Gibbs, "The United Nations, International Peacekeeping and the Question of 'Impartiality': Revisiting the Congo Operation of 1960," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 38, no. 3 (September 2000): 359–82, www.jstor.org/stable/161703.

8 John Mack, "The Emergence of Farming and Bantu Migrations," Pressbooks, accessed September 18, 2025, pressbooks.pub/abriefhistory1/chapter/chapter-2-the-emergence-of-farming-and-bantu-migrations.

9 Wikipedia, "History of Katanga," last modified April 23, 2023, en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=History_of_Katanga&oldid=1151382731

Morton Stanley reached the Congo River Basin. Stanley wanted to explore a region that no European had visited.¹⁰ In 1876, after surveying the Congo River Basin, he publicized his findings in Britain. The British government showed limited interest, so Stanley turned to King Leopold II of Belgium for help.¹¹ Stanley's goals matched Leopold II's plans, because the Belgian king wanted to create a colony to govern.

After Stanley told Leopold II about the Congo River Basin, the king held a Geographic Conference in September 1876 with 13 Belgian officials and 24 European guests.¹² At the meeting, Leopold II and the guests made a plan to colonize central Africa. Leopold wanted to establish colonial posts in specific areas of the Congo River Basin.¹³ Before their meeting ended, the International African Association was formed with a main office in Brussels.¹⁴

The International African Association appeared to be a shared educational group for Europeans. In reality, it was a cover for Leopold II's colonial plans. He wanted control of central Africa without

other states stopping him. To achieve this, he turned to Henry Morton Stanley.¹⁵ The two agreed on a contract for exploration.¹⁶ On his trips, Stanley saw that the local people were not a threat and that the region was divided. This made Leopold's goal easier. Stanley built trading stations along the Congo River and made a route to move supplies. In 1881, he founded Léopoldville in the center of the Congo.¹⁷

The next step in Leopold II's plan was to have 450 Congo Basin chiefs sign treaties. These agreements gave control of the land to King Leopold II's representatives from the International Association of the Congo, which later became the Congo Free State. Many chiefs knowingly signed over land and labor in exchange for goods like cloth. Leopold wrote the treaties in a complex language, making them hard to understand. This let him take advantage of the chiefs' trust.¹⁸ Later, in 1884, the Berlin Conference happened. This was a meeting of European colonial powers to control European colonization and trade in Africa. They distributed the continent

among themselves without any African representation.¹⁹

The Congo had many resources, so countries wanted to claim it fast. Otto von Bismarck, Germany's chancellor from 1871 to 1890, led this conference and set rules for dividing Africa. This process became known as the Scramble for Africa.²⁰ Seven primary countries joined: Belgium, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. The conference's goal was to avoid conflicts between European countries, have free trade, and safe navigation on Africa's major rivers.²¹

In 1884, the same year as the conference, Stanley's contract with Leopold ended. Therefore, the conference was convenient for King Leopold. The outcome gave Leopold full control of the Congo Basin. He claimed the region and created the Congo Free State.²² Msiri, ruler of the Katanga state, tried to delay Leopold's expeditions to protect his kingdom. However, Leopold was determined to raise the Congo Free State flag by force if necessary. Leopold launched the Stairs Expedition of Katanga, Msiri did not back down from

10 Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 72–73.

11 "Henry Morton Stanley, Colonial Administrator Born," African American Registry, January 28, 2025, aaregistry.org/story/henry-morton-stanley-born/.

12 Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 74–78.

13 Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 78.

14 John Delaney, "Brussels Geographic Conference (12–14 September 1876)," *To The Mountains of the Moon: Mapping African Exploration, 1541–1880*, 2007, static-prod.lib.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/africa/afterwords/afterwords.html.

15 Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 98–102.

16 Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 105–106.

17 Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 112–113.

18 Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 119–122.

19 Shola Lawal, "Colonising Africa: What Happened at the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885?," *Al Jazeera*, February 27, 2025, www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/2/26/colonising-africa-what-happened-at-the-berlin-conference-of-1884-1885.

20 M. E. Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2010), 3–4, doi.org/10.4324/9781315833668.

21 Kulik, R.M., "Scramble for Africa," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified August 29, 2025. www.britannica.com/event/Scramble-for-Africa.

22 Lawal, "Colonising Africa."

his defense, and a leader on the expedition shot him in 1891.²³ After Msiri's death, Katanga came under Leopold II's control as part of the Congo Free State.²⁴ Yet it was not formally administered until 1900, when the Comité Spécial du Katanga was created. This was a semi-autonomous company jointly run by the Congo Free State and private investors to govern the province.²⁵

Leopold II wanted the Congo Free State to serve as a resource hub, while promising to bring European "civilization" to local people. By 1889, more than 430 of his agents arrived by steamboat to begin planning a railway. Harsh and unfamiliar conditions slowed construction, delaying the tracks.²⁶ At the same time, Leopold was running low on money. The Belgian government was hesitant to approve a large loan. To gain support, Leopold branded himself as a humanitarian. In 1889, he hosted an Anti-Slavery Conference.²⁷ There, he convinced delegates that funding his colonial project would help fight slavery. He secured a loan of 25 million francs.²⁸ To repay his debt, Leopold turned to the Congo's resources, which were mainly rubber, palm oil, and ivory.



The main street of the entrenched camp at Yambuya, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1888 (Credit: James Sligo Jameson)

This led to the heavy exploitation of land and labor, with wealth extracted from the region to fuel his plans.

By the 1890s-1900s, the Belgian regime had become infamous for its brutal treatment of the Congolese people.²⁹ At first, American historian George Washington Williams supported Leopold II's rule, but that changed when he visited the Congo. Williams saw that while the territory was "free" in name, almost every Congolese

person was enslaved through forced labor.³⁰ Leopold II relied on the Force Publique, a mixed military and police force widely reported to have enforced the system through extreme violence and coercion. These included mutilations for failing rubber quotas, the burning of villages when people resisted, and sexual assault against women. Williams also condemned the lack of public services and reports of Congolese people being hunted for sport.³¹ Many locals died under

23 Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo From Leopold to Kabila: A People's History* (New York: Zed Books, 2002).

24 "History of Katanga," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Last modified June 5, 2025, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Katanga

25 "History of Katanga," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Last modified April 23, 2023, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Katanga.

26 Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 139-151

27 Realfonzo, Ugo, "Today in History: The Brussels Anti-Slavery Conference that shaped European colonialism," *The Brussels Times*, November 17, 2025, www.brusselstimes.com/801229/today-in-history-the-brussels-anti-slavery-conference-that-shaped-european-colonialism

28 Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 154-157

29 Momodu, Samuel, "Congo Free State (1885-1908)," *Blackpast*, January 20, 2023, www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/congo-free-state-1885-1908/

30 Elnaïem, Mohammed, "George Washington Williams and the Origins of Anti-Imperialism," *JSTOR Daily*, June 10, 2021, daily.jstor.org/george-washington-williams-and-the-origins-of-anti-imperialism/

31 George Washington Williams to King Leopold, July 18th, 1890, Stanley Falls, Central Africa, www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/george-washington-williams-open-letter-king-leopold-congo-1890/



Cartoon depicting King Leopold II and Congo Free State, 1906 (Credit: Francis Carruthers Gould)

this regime. Disease, torture, and malnutrition killed millions. Those who resisted led rebellions, but the Force Publique crushed them with violence.³²

Williams wrote about this, and the letter created outrage in the international community. Many countries were already angry at the monopoly Leopold II held over trade in central Africa. To defend himself, Leopold and his advisors released a series of articles denying the claims. This campaign slowed the criticism for a short time, but it did not last.³³ Soon, the

outrage returned. British journalist Edmund Dene Morel began his own investigation into the Congo Free State.³⁴ He noticed that ships leaving Belgium for the Congo were filled with weapons, while ships coming back carried only rubber and ivory. From this pattern, he concluded that the Congolese were being forced into labor on a massive scale.³⁵

In 1904, Morel founded the Congo Reform Association (CRA), a human rights group, and the West African Mail newspaper. Through these outlets, he

published eyewitness accounts that described violence, mutilation, and exploitation. His work revived the case first raised by George Washington Williams and gave it new life. Public anger grew across Europe. By 1908, international pressure reached its peak. Leopold II could no longer hold his private colony. The Congo Free State was handed over to the Belgian government, which renamed it the Belgian Congo.³⁶

Belgian Congo (1908-1956) and Decolonization

The Belgian Congo replaced the Congo Free State, but King Leopold II and his staff stayed in power at first.³⁷ Forced labor continued and Belgian control did not stop the abuses. When Morel and the Congo Reform Association (CRA) learned of this, they urged the United Kingdom and United States not to recognize Belgium's rule.³⁸ To gain approval from other states, Belgium created a "Ministry of Colonies" to manage the Congo.³⁹ The first Minister, Jules Renkin, argued that the Congolese were "primitive" and required European tutelage. His early reforms introduced limited free trade, shifted taxation from

32 Crooks, Mary, "Feb 5, 1885 CE: Belgian King Establishes Congo Free State," *National Geographic Society*, last modified November 1, 2024, education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/belgian-king-establishes-congo-free-state/

33 Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 184-187

34 "Morel, E. D. (Edmund Dene), 1873-1924," *Archival Collections Catalogue*, McGill Library, last accessed June 16, 2025, archivalcollections.library.mcgill.ca/index.php/morel-e-d-edmund-dene-1873-1924

35 McGill Library, "Morel, E. D. (Edmund Dene), 1873-1924."

36 Norton, Matthew, "Narrative Structure and Emotional Mobilization in Humanitarian Representations: The Case of the Congo Reform Movement, 1903-1912," *Journal of Human Rights*, volume 10, no. 3, (2011): 311-338 doi:10.1080/14754835.2011.596054.

37 T. K. Welliver, "Belgium Annexes the Congo," Ebsco, 2023, www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/belgium-annexes-congo.

38 Welliver, "Belgium Annexes the Congo."

39 Bertrand, Jane, "The Belgian Congo," In *Fifty Years of Family Planning in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, (Routledge, 2024), 15-39, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781032718897>

forced labor to cash and goods, dismissed some corrupt officials, and established a colonial training school in Belgium.⁴⁰ Renkin, with help from King Albert I of Belgium, kept power in Belgian hands. These cosmetic changes satisfied European and American observers. In 1913, the CRA disbanded, and both the United Kingdom and the United States formally recognized Belgian sovereignty over the Congo.⁴¹

During Leopold II's time, rubber was the Congo's main product. After 1907, rubber declined, so Belgium turned to mining and plantations.⁴² Diamonds and copper became the new exports. To use the Congo's copper, Belgium set up the Union Minière du Haut-Katanga (UMHK) in 1906. Along the same lines, the Bas-Congo au Katanga Railway Company (BCK) was created to transport exports from Katanga to the Congo River.⁴³ These companies operated under highly favorable fiscal regimes and profit-sharing arrangements with the colonial

state. As jobs grew, taxes had to be collected. Former chiefs acted as tax collectors and were paid in money, not goods. These changes made the Congo more like other European colonies.⁴⁴ Belgium used less violence but still denied Congolese people political rights, higher education, and fair pay.

In 1914, World War I began and Germany invaded Belgium. Belgium then ended the Congo's "neutral" position and used the colony in the war.⁴⁵ The Congo's army, the Force Publique, joined British and French forces. From 1914 to 1916, they fought in Ruanda, Urundi, Tanzania, Cameroon, and Rhodesia.⁴⁶ Belgium wanted to stop fighting at Tabora in Tanzania, but the United Kingdom wanted to go further. Disputes broke out, and the United Kingdom won control of Tabora. The United Kingdom then refused to support Belgium on other territories, weakening Belgium's role after the war.⁴⁷

The Congo suffered during World War I. Tens of thousands Congolese porters were conscripted for Belgian campaigns, suffering extremely high mortality from exhaustion and disease.⁴⁸ Despite this sacrifice, porters were never honored after the war. Only the Force Publique was recognized.⁴⁹ After the war, Belgium focused on industry, labor, and taxes. A 1922 law promised workers pay in money, food, and housing, but the pay was very low.⁵⁰ To block workers from uniting, the BCK divided the labor force into classes.⁵¹ From 1906 to 1950, workers lived in overcrowded, dirty mud houses, which caused deaths. Later, tin houses replaced them, but this only created more anger. When the Great Depression hit in the 1930s, wages were cut and taxes raised. The harshly treated Pende tribe rebelled in 1931.⁵² This was one of many uprisings during the Great Depression. The Force Publique crushed the uprising, killing about 500 people. Violent and peaceful protests were both met with killings.⁵³ For example, African

40 Welliver, "Belgium Annexes the Congo."

41 Welliver, "Belgium Annexes the Congo."

42 Bertrand, "The Belgian Congo," In *Fifty Years*.

43 Bertrand, "The Belgian Congo," In *Fifty Years*.

44 Welliver, "Belgium Annexes the Congo."

45 van Ypersele, Laurence, and Enika Ngongo, "Situating the Belgian Congo in Belgium's First World War Centenary," In *Commemorating Race and Empire in The First World War Centenary*, edited by Ben Wellings and Shanti Sumartojo, (Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 2018), 51-62 doi.org/10.4000/books.pup.49793

46 Pesek, Michael, "Force Publique," in *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2017), dx.doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.11092

47 van Ypersele and Ngongo, "Situating the Belgian Congo..." In *Commemorating Race*, 51-62.

48 van Ypersele and Ngongo, "Situating the Belgian Congo..." In *Commemorating Race*, 51-62.

49 Murphy, Mahon, "Carrier Corps," in *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2015), dx.doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.10660 ; Realfonzu, Ugo, "Belgium to pay tribute to Congolese soldiers of 1914-1918 for the first time," *The Brussels Times*, November 10, 2023, www.brusselstimes.com/790568/belgium-to-pay-tribute-to-congolese-soldiers-of-1914-1918-for-the-first-time

50 Yelengi, Nkasa, "LABOR POLICIES AND HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC STRATEGIES AMONG THE RAILWAY WORKERS IN KATANGA, Belgian Congo, 1928-1960," *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale Di Studi e Documentazione Dell'Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 55, no. 4 (December 2000): 463-87, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40761478 .

51 Yelengi, "LABOR POLICIES," 463-87.

52 RICHARD B. WOODWARD, "A Rising of the Wind: Art from a Time of Rebellion in the Congo," *Blackbird Archive* 11, no. 1 (2012), blackbird-archive.vcu.edu/v11n1/gallery/woodward_r/balot.shtml

53 Yervasi, Carina "Anti-Colonial Resistance In The Former Belgian Colonies," In *A Historical Companion To Postcolonial Literatures: Continental Europe And Its Empires*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 14-19, works.swarthmore.edu/fac-french/45



Stamp of native East African police officer or soldier (Credit: Post of Belgian Congo)

miners in Élisabethville struck against UMHK over wages and conditions; colonial forces violently suppressed the strike, leaving dozens dead in 1941. The episode fed long-term labor grievances in Katanga's copperbelt.⁵⁴

In World War II, the Congo again supported Belgium. Governor Pierre Ryckmans sided with the Allies in 1940.⁵⁵ The

Congo supplied crops, metals, and uranium, using forced labor.⁵⁶ Forced labor was reinstated for all Congolese men in rural areas to support wartime efforts. The Force Publique fought in Ethiopia, Rhodesia, and South Africa, though fewer joined than in World War I.⁵⁷ After Germany's defeat, the Congo became one of the most industrialized regions in Africa.

After 1945, Belgium launched a ten-year plan to develop the Congo. It made living conditions better because it aimed to improve schools, housing, health care, and transport.⁵⁸ This was also another way to stimulate the productivity of labor in the Belgian Congo. Due to the lack of technical knowledge and skill, they also set up training programs for farm workers. These efforts helped create a middle class called the *Évolués*. In 1953, Congolese people won the right to own homes and property.⁵⁹ Still, racial segregation continued. White settlers and Congolese lived in separate areas.⁶⁰ Thousands of mixed-race children were taken from parents and sent to poor mission schools.⁶¹ Curfews and a lack of social mobility added to the unrest. Anticolonial movements grew.⁶²

In 1950, Joseph Kasa-Vubu founded the ABAKO party, calling for the Congo's independence.⁶³ This rejected a Belgian plan to leave after thirty years.⁶⁴ Kasa-Vubu and his followers were not the only ones who felt this way. Soon, the Baluba people formed

⁵⁴ Yervasi, "Anti-Colonial Resistance..." in *A Historical Companion*, 14-19.

⁵⁵ Martin, Phyllis M, "The Belgian Congo in World War II," *The Journal of African History* 26, no. 4 (1985): 422-24. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/181666>.

⁵⁶ Martin, "The Belgian Congo," 422-24.

⁵⁷ Martin, "The Belgian Congo," 422-24.

⁵⁸ Mawete, Aurelie. *The Leopoldville Riots of 1959: Everyday Violence and Post-Colonial Memory*. PhD diss., University of Florida, 2020. University of Florida Digital Collections. Accessed August 17, 2025. ufdc.ufl.edu/UFE0056577/00001/pdf.

⁵⁹ Mawete, Aurelie, *The Leopoldville Riots of 1959: Everyday Violence and Post-Colonial Memory*. PhD diss., University of Florida, 2020, University of Florida Digital Collections. Accessed August 17, 2025, ufdc.ufl.edu/UFE0056577/00001/pdf; A Rubbens, "Belgian Congo 1953-54," *Civilisations* 5, no. 1 (1955): 130-136, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41230014>.

⁶⁰ www.accord.org.za/ajcr-issues/the-colonial-legacy-and-transitional-justice-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/

⁶¹ Elian Peltier, "Torn From Parents in the Belgian Congo, Women Seek Reparations," *The New York Times*, November 3, 2021, www.nytimes.com/2021/11/03/world/europe/belgium-congo-kidnapping.html.

⁶² Pierre-Philippe Fraiture, Congolese Cultural Production in Africa and the World, *French Studies*, Volume 78, Issue 1, January 2024, Pages 101-127, doi.org/10.1093/fs/knad236

⁶³ Mawete, Aurelie, *The Leopoldville Riots of 1959: Everyday Violence and Post-Colonial Memory*. PhD diss., University of Florida, 2020, University of Florida Digital Collections. Accessed August 17, 2025. ufdc.ufl.edu/UFE0056577/00001/pdf.

⁶⁴ "50 Slain in Congo Republic Riots; Political and Tribal Rivals Clash," *The New York Times*, February 19, 1959. www.nytimes.com/1959/02/19/archives/50-slain-in-congo-republic-riots-political-and-tribal-rivals-clash.html.

the General Association of Baluba of the Katanga (BALUBAKAT) in 1957.⁶⁵ That year, Congolese were allowed to vote in local elections for the first time. ABAKO won in Léopoldville, boosting the call for independence. Other groups, like the Confederation of Tribal Associations in Katanga (CONAKAT) and Patrice Lumumba's Congo National Movement (MNC), also grew. Lumumba wanted fast independence, though his party was divided. By 1959, riots in Léopoldville killed more than thirty people and then Belgium was forced to begin decolonization talks.⁶⁶ Katanga, rich in copper, cobalt, diamonds, and uranium, had its own disputes. In 1958, Moïse Tshombe and local elites formed CONAKAT, which argued Katanga's wealth should stay with its native people.⁶⁷

The Congo's Independence, Mutinies, and Belgian Intervention

On January 20, 1960, the Belgian-Congolese round table started. Belgian leaders met with Congolese political parties. They talked about the Congo's economic and social problems. They also thought about the Congo's future.⁶⁸ On June 30, 1960, the Belgian Congo became independent as the Republic of the Congo (Léopoldville) after 75 years as a colony. Elections were held on May 22, 1960, ahead of independence to choose the new government.⁶⁹

In the May 1960 election, Congolese men over 21 voted for 137 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. More than 50 parties took part, but Patrice Lumumba's Mouvement National Congolais (MNC-L) and the Parti National du Progrès (PNP) were the main contenders in most districts. The MNC-L won the largest bloc of seats and formed a coalition with several smaller parties. Voter turnout overall reached

about 82 percent.⁷⁰ When both houses met in a joint session, they elected Joseph Kasa-Vubu as President while Patrice Lumumba became Prime Minister and Head of Government.⁷¹ The Prime Minister ran the government and had real power and answered to Parliament.⁷² The President's job was mostly symbolic. He approved laws, treaties, and picked top officials.

The new country was called the Republic of the Congo (Léopoldville). Soon after independence, a crisis started. It began as a mutiny in the national army on July 5, 1960. Soldiers protested low pay, limited promotions, and the continued presence of Belgian officers.⁷³ The disorder undermined the new government's authority. Belgium supported local uprisings that weakened the central government. Belgian troops came to protect European lives and businesses, but they did not ask the Congolese government first. In response, Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba appealed to the United Nations for assistance and requested the deployment of a peacekeeping

⁶⁵ Royal Museum for Central Africa, "Round Table," *Indépendance! (Congolese Stories)*, Royal Museum for Central Africa, Accessed August 17, 2025, independance.africamuseum.be/en/exhibition/independance/independance-table-ronde.

⁶⁶ UN News, "Patrice Lumumba," In *Character Sketches by Brian Urquhart*. United Nations, Accessed August 17, 2025, news.un.org/en/spotlight/character-sketches-brian-urquhart. ; "CONGO: The Monstrous Hangover," *TIME*, July 18, 1960, time.com/archive/6807199/congo-the-monstrous-hangover/

⁶⁷ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History* (London: Zed Books, 2002), books.google.com/books?id=qqWivIAe2h4C&dq=CONAKAT+Munongo&pg=PA100#v=onepage&q&f=false.

⁶⁸ "CONGO: The Monstrous Hangover," *TIME*, July 18, 1960, time.com/archive/6807199/congo-the-monstrous-hangover/

⁶⁹ "The Congo, Decolonization, and the Cold War, 1960–1965," *Milestones in the History of US Foreign Relations*, Office of the Historian, US Department of State, Retired, Accessed August 17, 2025, history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/congo-decolonization.

⁷⁰ "1960 Belgian Congo General Election," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Last modified May 26, 2025, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1960_Belgian_Congo_general_election.

⁷¹ C. N. Trueman, "The United Nations and the Congo," *The History Learning Site*, May 26, 2015, www.historylearningsite.co.uk/modern-world-history-1918-to-1980/the-united-nations/the-united-nations-and-the-congo.

⁷² "1960 Belgian Congo General Election," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Last modified May 26, 2025, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1960_Belgian_Congo_general_election.

⁷³ Department of Veterans' Affairs, "Australian Peacekeepers in the Congo with ONUC 1960 to 1961," *Anzac Portal*, Accessed August 17, 2025, anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/peacekeeping/summaries/congo-1960-1961.



Youth in Lèopoldville protest against the Katangese secession (Credit: Congopresse photo- 1960)

force.⁷⁴ The UN then sent peacekeepers to protect the Congo's independence. This made the conflict bigger. The UN had never before stopped a Western power from invading a new state.⁷⁵

During the July 5-11 mutiny of the Force Publique, Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba remained publicly active. Foreign Minister Justin Bomboko helped convene talks between Lumumba, UN representative Ralph Bunche, and representatives of the mutinous troops.⁷⁶ The soldiers demanded immediate pay raises, accelerated

promotions, and the removal of Belgian officers. Lumumba agreed to rapid Africanization of the command and, on July 8, named Colonel Joseph-Désiré Mobutu as the new army chief of staff to restore order. Despite these steps, looting and attacks on Europeans continued in Léopoldville. Many fled across the river to the French Congo (Brazzaville) or sought refuge in foreign embassies, while Belgium airlifted thousands of its nationals and other foreigners out of the country.⁷⁷

Lumumba bent to the requests and President Kasa-Vubu also became commander in chief. The agreement was that now, all local commanders had to be native officers and the army would be run by half Belgians and half Congolese staff.⁷⁸ This calmed some parts of the army, but mutinies continued.⁷⁹ On July 11, 1960, a week into mutinies, CONAKAT leader Moïse Tshombe declared Katanga independent.⁸⁰ Tshombe had won Katanga elections, so he had power locally. Within weeks, central authority had collapsed across much of the newly independent country. Katanga's secession also received financial and logistical support from Western mining companies, deepening international tensions.⁸¹ The Congo's government and the BALUBAKAT party opposed this.⁸²

Even with BALUBAKAT opposing him, Tshombe tried to make Katanga a recognized country. Because the Congo's government ended ties with Belgium and Europe, Tshombe took this as an opportunity to ask his foreign allies for support. Tshombe's Katangese military-style police relied on foreign mercenaries (Belgian, French, British, Rhodesian, and South African). This was often with tacit European support, but without official troop deployments

⁷⁴ Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History*.

⁷⁵ O'Malley, Alanna, "How the Congo Crisis Has Reshaped International Relations," *Africa Is a Country*, April 6, 2017, africasacountry.com/2017/04/how-the-congo-crisis-has-reshaped-international-relations.

⁷⁶ David Zhou, "Congolese Win Independence from the Belgian Empire, 1959–60," *Global Nonviolent Action Database*, Swarthmore College, March 12, 2012, nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/congolese-win-independence-belgian-empire-1959-60.

⁷⁷ "The Congo, Decolonization, and the Cold War, 1960–1965," *Milestones in the History of US Foreign Relations*, US Department of State, accessed August 17, 2025, history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/congo-decolonization.

⁷⁸ Zhou, "Congolese Win Independence from the Belgian Empire, 1959–60."

⁷⁹ Trueman, "The United Nations and the Congo."

⁸⁰ Zhou, "Congolese Win Independence from the Belgian Empire, 1959–60."

⁸¹ Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History*.

⁸² "CONGO: The Monstrous Hangover," *TIME*, July 18, 1960, time.com/archive/6807199/congo-the-monstrous-hangover/

or recognition by Paris or London.⁸³ After Katanga's success, South Kasai also seceded in August.⁸⁴

Cold War and The Congo

The Cold War started soon after World War II, in 1947. The early 1960s was a time when the Cold War paid attention to poorer, new countries. This happened during a big change, when many African countries became free. The Congo was one of these countries. Neo-colonialism means that old colonial powers still kept control of these new countries after they became independent and controlled the economy and politics.⁸⁵

The Congo became a place where the United States and the Soviet Union fought indirectly.⁸⁶ This happened after Katanga broke away from the Congo. Soon after Katanga's secession, Prime Minister Lumumba made friends with the USSR, as he wanted soldiers and weapons. Lumumba also wanted to reunite the Congo either by discussion or by force.⁸⁷ He was an important leader in the country and that worried about the daily suffering and violence that Black



Official government portrait of Patrice Lumumba as the Prime Minister
(Credit: Republic of the Congo (Léopoldville) government)

Africans faced under Belgian rule. He told his people, "We who suffered in our bodies and hearts from colonialist oppression, we say to you out loud: from now on, all that is over."⁸⁸

Lumumba's growing ties with the Soviet Union alarmed both Belgium and the United States, who feared the spread of communism in the Congo. The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) developed plans to remove him, though these efforts

ultimately failed.⁸⁹ In late August, the USSR had provided Lumumba's government with aircraft, military supplies, and advisers. On September 5, 1960, under pressure from the United States, Belgium, and moderate Congolese politicians, President Joseph Kasavubu publicly announced the dismissal of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, who in turn declared Kasavubu's removal.⁹⁰ Soon afterward, Lumumba was placed

⁸³ Jatta, Musa, "Patrice Lumumba Biography," *Patrice Lumumba Resource Guide*, New York Public Library, Last updated July 11, 2025, Accessed August 17, 2025, libguides.nypl.org/lumumba/biography

⁸⁴ "Decolonization: Libya and Congo," OERTX, last accessed June 9th, 2025, oertx.highered.texas.gov/courseware/lesson/6130/student/?section=1

⁸⁵ Kent, J. "The Neo-Colonialism of Decolonisation: Katangan Secession and the Bringing of the Cold War to the Congo." *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 45, no. 1 (2017): 93–130. doi: doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2016.1262644

⁸⁶ Kent, John, "The Neo-Colonialism of Decolonisation: Katangan Secession and the Bringing of the Cold War to the Congo," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 45 no.1 (2017): 93–130, doi: [10.1080/03086534.2016.1262644](https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2016.1262644).

⁸⁷ Colin Hendrickx, "Tshombe's Secessionist State of Katanga: Agency against the Odds," *Third World Quarterly* 42, no. 8 (2021): 1809–1828, doi: [10.1080/01436597.2021.1920832](https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2021.1920832).

⁸⁸ Chotiner, Isaac, "The Real Story Behind Patrice Lumumba's Assassination," *The New Yorker*, November 6, 2023, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/11/06/the-lumumba-plot-the-secret-history-of-the-cia-and-a-cold-war-assassination-stuart-a-reid-book-review.

⁸⁹ Hendrickx, Colin, "Tshombe's Secessionist State of Katanga: Agency against the Odds," *Third World Quarterly* 42, no.8 (2021): 1809–28, doi: [10.1080/01436597.2021.1920832](https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2021.1920832).

⁹⁰ United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 1603(XV), The situation in the Republic of the Congo, A/RES/1603(XV), (April 15, 1961), [docs.un.org/en/A/RES/1603\(XV\)](https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/1603(XV))

under house arrest, escaped in late November, but was captured by forces loyal to Colonel Mobutu, the army chief of staff, on December 1, 1960 near Port-Francqui (Ilebo).⁹¹ On January 17, 1961, he was transferred to Katanga and executed by Katangese authorities with Belgian involvement. Following Lumumba's death, President Kasavubu nominally resumed authority, but real control rested with Colonel Mobutu, who commanded the national army.⁹² The Congo then closed the Soviet embassy. Lumumba's murder happened seven months after his speech against colonialism.⁹³

During the Cold War, Katanga's Tshombe worked to build ties with other countries. He wanted Katanga to be recognized as a separate country from the Congo.⁹⁴ Belgium was his biggest supporter and helped start the Katangese state. Katanga's rich resources and mines would benefit Belgium greatly. In September 1960, Katanga opened its first office in Brussels.⁹⁵ This office helped recruit mercenaries for Katanga. It also spread Katanga's ideas peacefully. In 1961, a

magazine called Katanga helped the state gain more international support.⁹⁶ Katanga also opened an office in France. The office informed Europeans about Katanga, like advertising Katanga's Elisabethville Fair in Paris. French and other foreign mercenaries served with the Katangese army; there was no official French troop deployment or recognition.⁹⁷

Some Western sympathizers sought to present Katanga as a pro-Western front during the Cold War. Katanga's information office

*"We who suffered
in our bodies and
hearts from colonialist
oppression, we say to
you out loud: from now
on, all that is over."
- Patrice Lumumba*

in New York distributed pamphlets and sponsored radio segments, sometimes described under the banner *Katanga Calling*, to shape

American opinion.⁹⁸ Among its supporters abroad was the African American anti-communist activist Max Yergan, who helped form a small pro-Katanga committee in France. These groups portrayed Moïse Tshombe's secession as a stand against communism, likening it to Hungary's 1956 uprising, but their influence remained limited and did not reflect official US policy, which continued to back the Congo's unity under the United Nations framework.⁹⁹ Though Katanga never got full international recognition, these ties helped stabilize its politics and economy.

The United States officially supported the Congo's territorial integrity and backed ONUC diplomatically and financially. However, Washington grew wary of escalating UN military operations that might appear to favor the Soviet line or destabilize other African states. In practice, the US position was cautious containment, favoring negotiation and limited peacekeeping rather than large-scale combat.

91 Heri Ngorora, Prosper, "'Symbol of resistance': Lumumba, the Congolese hero killed before his prime," AlJazeera, Jan. 7 2025, www.aljazeera.com/features/2025/1/17/symbol-of-resistance-lumumba-the-congolese-hero-killed-before-his-prime.

92 Anna Linderum et al., "Climbing to the top: The Slippery Slope of Instability and Autocracy in the Congo," *EDGE*, last accessed June 9th, 2025, web.stanford.edu/class/e297c/war_peace/africa/hclimbing.html.

93 Chotiner, Isaac, "The Real Story Behind Patrice Lumumba's Assassination," *The New Yorker*, November 6, 2023, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/11/06/the-lumumba-plot-the-secret-history-of-the-cia-and-a-cold-war-assassination-stuart-a-reid-book-review.

94 Chotiner, Isaac, "The Real Story Behind Patrice Lumumba's Assassination," *The New Yorker*, November 6, 2023, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/11/06/the-lumumba-plot-the-secret-history-of-the-cia-and-a-cold-war-assassination-stuart-a-reid-book-review.

95 Heri Ngorora, Prosper, "'Symbol of resistance': Lumumba, the Congolese hero killed before his prime," AlJazeera, Jan. 7 2025, www.aljazeera.com/features/2025/1/17/symbol-of-resistance-lumumba-the-congolese-hero-killed-before-his-prime.

96 Reid, *The Lumumba Plot: The Secret History of the CIA and a Cold War Assassination*.

97 Hendrickx, Colin, "Tshombe's Secessionist State of Katanga: Agency against the Odds," *Third World Quarterly* 42, no.8 (2021): 1809–28, doi:10.1080/01436597.2021.1920832.

98 Reid, *The Lumumba Plot: The Secret History of the CIA and a Cold War Assassination*.

99 "Max Yergan to Friends of Katanga Freedom Fighters Memo, c. January 12, 1962," Grove City College, accessed September 6, 2025, gcc.historyit.com/items/view/digital-collection/24412/search

CURRENT STATUS

Secession Motivations

CONAKAT, based in the prosperous southern mining region of Katanga, represented the Lunda and other southern groups allied with European business interests. In contrast, BALUBAKAT drew support from the northern Baluba population, who favored national unity and opposed secession. The differences between these groups showed how divided the province was.¹⁰⁰ Southern Katanga, in places like Lualaba and Haut-Katanga, had big mining industries. Northern Katanga, in Haut-Lomami and Tanganyika, was mostly farming and was much poorer.¹⁰¹ CONAKAT and BALUBAKAT also competed since they had different ethnic groups and social backgrounds.¹⁰²

Katanga's secession relied heavily on Belgian commercial and technical backing. The Union Minière du Haut-Katanga (UMHK), Belgium's largest mining company, financed Moïse Tshombe's administration and helped pay the Katangese Gendarmerie. Belgian engineers, officers, and advisers remained active, often under the label of "technical experts," while mercenaries from Belgium,

France, Rhodesia, and South Africa supplemented Katanga's forces. Brussels never formally recognized Katanga, but its corporate networks, especially UMHK, enabled the breakaway province to function economically. This foreign support gave Katanga short-term stability but deepened Congo's dependence and internationalized the conflict.

Before his murder, Patrice Lumumba had talked a lot about redistributing wealth, which worried Belgian settlers and businessmen. Many Europeans wanted more power for the provinces, since they thought this would stop Lumumba from having too much control.¹⁰³ The mining cities, such as Élisabethville and Jadotville, also had large European populations who feared losing their influence after independence. These communities became early supporters of Tshombe's call for autonomy. Katanga became a leading province, since it had important mines for copper, cobalt, and uranium. Katanga's history is closely tied to the mining and building industry. When mining grew, the export of these minerals, especially uranium used during the Second World War, tied Katanga's economy closely to Western markets and companies, reinforcing

the region's sense of economic independence.¹⁰⁴

In Katanga, business and government were tightly intertwined. The province embodied the dynamics of neo-colonialism, where foreign companies and local elites cooperated to preserve economic privilege. Moïse Tshombe and European business interests, particularly Belgian mining executives, struck deals that served both their regional and personal aims. Tshombe's administration sought direct access to foreign exchange and revenues rather than routing them through the central bank in Léopoldville, which was controlled by Lumumba's government.¹⁰⁵ Belgium and several Western business groups quietly supported this arrangement, seeing Katanga's stability as vital to their investments. Katanga's copper industry, led by Union Minière du Haut-Katanga, and its European managers and workers profited handsomely. The central dispute centered on mining royalties and tax revenues. Tshombe insisted these funds should remain in Katanga to finance local development, while the national government demanded their transfer to Léopoldville. This clash over fiscal sovereignty

¹⁰⁰ Gobbers, E. (2016). *Katanga: Congo's Perpetual Trouble Spot*. Egmont Institute. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep06553>

¹⁰¹ Nzongola-Ntalaja, Georges. *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*. Zed Books, 2002.

¹⁰² Gobbers, Erik. "Katanga: Congo's Perpetual Trouble Spot." Egmont Institute, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep06553>.

¹⁰³ De Witte, Ludo. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. Verso, 2001.

¹⁰⁴ Gobbers, E. (2016). *Katanga: Congo's Perpetual Trouble Spot*. Egmont Institute. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep06553>

¹⁰⁵ Kent, J. "The Neo-Colonialism of Decolonisation: Katangan Secession and the Bringing of the Cold War to the Congo." *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 45, no. 1 (2017): 93–130.

became the economic foundation of Katanga's secession.¹⁰⁶

Belgian business leaders wanted to keep the Congo's minerals for themselves. The UMHK wanted to keep running the mines. UMHK gave money to Tshombe's CONAKAT party. This party wanted to run things through "provincial autonomy," or ruling your own region, even if you are part of a bigger country. Many Belgian settlers liked this idea.¹⁰⁷ This idea challenged the authority of the central government and reshaped the young state's balance of power. Secession would let CONAKAT have more control and avoid the new central government under Lumumba.¹⁰⁸ The short-lived secession of South Kasai in 1960-61 has also strengthened Katanga's argument for provincial autonomy. This reinforced Léopoldville's fear of state fragmentation and hardened positions on both sides.¹⁰⁹ Regional leaders in neighboring provinces watched Katanga's success closely, seeing it as a possible model for asserting their own economic independence within a loose federal structure.

At present, in late 1962, Tshombe continues to justify Katanga's separation by pointing at the need for regional stability and order. ONUC observers report that the secession has weakened national

revenues and complicated the Congo's economic recovery.¹¹⁰ To signal autonomy, Katanga created customs services, a treasury, and efforts toward a provincial bank and postage.¹¹¹ Yet the region still relied on Congo-wide financial and commercial systems, which underscored the limits of full separation. Katanga also maintains offices abroad, including an information bureau in Brussels,

In Katanga, business and government were tightly intertwined. The province embodied the dynamics of neo-colonialism, where foreign companies and local elites cooperated to preserve economic privilege.

in an effort to gain diplomatic sympathy even though no formal recognition has been granted.

From the start of secession, Tshombe appealed to Belgium for continued backing, arguing that Katanga could maintain stability where Léopoldville could

not. Belgium's contacts remained practical rather than legal, focused on protecting mining interests. By late 1962, ONUC pressure had forced some mercenary withdrawals, but others remained active under the guise of "technical advisers."¹¹² In late 1962, the ONUC maintains forces in and around Katanga. The Security Council has authorized ONUC to prevent the use of foreign mercenaries and to assist the central government in restoring national unity. ONUC's current operations aim to end the secession through negotiation backed by limited force if necessary.

As of December 1962, the situation remains unresolved. ONUC has achieved partial success in reopening transport routes and protecting civilians, but sporadic clashes continue around Élisabethville. The Security Council is expected to debate whether to strengthen ONUC's mandate or seek renewed political talks between Léopoldville and Katanga early in 1963. For now, the Congo remains divided between the central government's vision of a unified state and Katanga's drive for provincial autonomy, a question that continues to shape African debates on sovereignty and self-determination.

¹⁰⁶ Gobbers, Erik. "Katanga: Congo's Perpetual Trouble Spot." Egmont Institute, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep06553>.

¹⁰⁷ Sewell, W. "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation." *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 1 (1992): 1-29. doi: doi.org/10.1086/229967.

¹⁰⁸ Wisdom Library. (2025, July 16). *Provincial autonomy: Significance and symbolism*. Retrieved Aug. 30 2025, from www.wisdomlib.org/concept/provincial-autonomy

¹⁰⁹ "Decolonization: Libya and Congo," OERTX.

¹¹⁰ Trueman, "The United Nations and the Congo."

¹¹¹ Wisdom Library, *Provincial autonomy: Significance and symbolism*.

¹¹² Weissman, Stephen R. *American Foreign Policy in the Congo, 1960-1964*. Cornell University Press, 1974.

UN Involvement

After the mutinies began in early July 1960, Belgian troops were sent in to protect the remaining Belgian people. The United States, United Kingdom, France, and Italy did not want the Belgian troops to leave at first. They said Belgian forces were needed for safety reasons and that it was too dangerous for Europeans in the Congo without them. On the other side, the USSR, Poland, Tunisia, Ecuador, and Ceylon thought Belgium's actions were aggression and strongly supported Belgian troops leaving.

On July 14, 1960, the Security Council approved a peacekeeping group called the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC). The main job for ONUC was to keep order by stopping the Force Publique and removing foreign influences from the Congo. When ONUC started, its mission was mostly to observe the Congo's situation, not to use force.¹¹³ This marked the UN's first large-scale peacekeeping deployment in Africa and the largest operation in UN history up to that point. Resolution 143 called for the immediate withdrawal of Belgian forces and authorized the Secretary-General to provide military assistance to the Congolese Government to help maintain law and order. Resolution 145 (22 July 1960) reaffirmed the withdrawal order and urged all states not to impede UN



Swedish UN soldier on duty in the Congo in the 1960s (Credit: Pressens Bild)

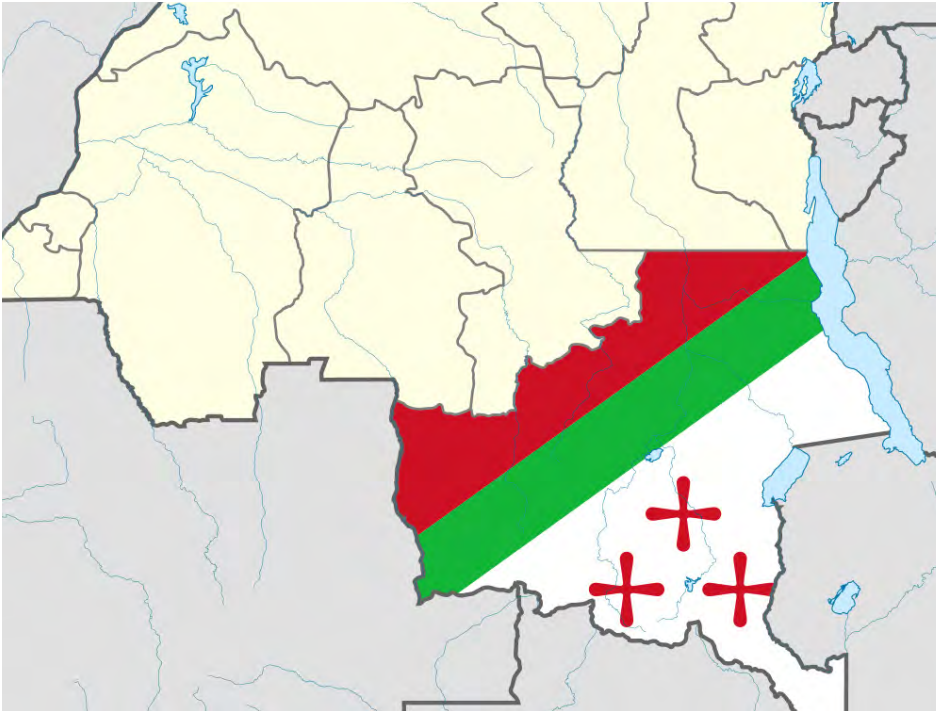
operations. This helped make sure none of the permanent members would veto the decision and allowed ONUC to begin its work. This delicate balance showed how Cold War rivalry shaped the UN's decisions: the Council had to act quickly without appearing to favor either the West or the Soviet bloc.

The UN's policy evolved across six key resolutions: 143 and 145 (July 1960) establishing ONUC and demanding Belgian withdrawal; 146 (August 1960) authorizing entry into Katanga; 157 (September 1960) referring the crisis to the General Assembly; 161 (February 1961) authorizing limited force and expulsion of foreign personnel; and 169 (November 1961) empowering the Secretary-General to apprehend and deport mercenaries.

The first priority for ONUC was to get Belgian troops to leave the Congo, as stated in Resolution 143. Hammarskjöld invoked Article 99 of the UN Charter to call a fast meeting on July 13, 1960. The Security Council adopted Resolution 143 after the Congo asked for help. This resolution ordered Belgian forces to leave and set up a UN group to give "military assistance as necessary."¹¹⁴ During the next few months, UN troops faced many problems. There were issues with how Resolution 143 was planned and implemented. The military operation was messy and unorganized. The Secretary-General's tasks were unclear, there was no timeline, and no clear goals. There was no explanation of the military's role, so many details were

¹¹³ Reid, *The Lumumba Plot: The Secret History of the CIA and a Cold War Assassination*.

¹¹⁴ Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), "Australian Peacekeepers in the Congo with ONUC 1960 to 1961," *Anzac Portal*, Last modified September 27, 2022. anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/peacekeeping/summaries/congo-1960-1961.



Katanga in Democratic Republic of the Congo with the Flag of Katanga marking the territory (Credit: ReneeWrites)

left unattended.¹¹⁵ At its height, ONUC included more than 20,000 troops from over 30 countries, including Ghana, Ethiopia, India, Ireland, Sweden, and Tunisia. These contingents faced poor communications, limited air transport, and competing political pressures from both Cold War blocs.

On July 22, 1960, Resolution 145 stated the Congo was one country and repeated that Belgian troops must leave. The resolution asked Belgium to remove troops and wanted law and order to be restored by the Congo's government. It helped defend the Congo's borders and independence.¹¹⁶ In August 1960, ONUC's next job was

to handle the crisis of Katanga trying to break away. Tshombe said he would not let ONUC into Katanga and would stop them from entering. Still, Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld went to Élisabethville. He tried to persuade Tshombe that ONUC would not interfere in the Congo's local conflicts. They also gave a warning: ONUC's mandate covered all of the Congo, including Katanga. If ONUC was blocked from Katanga, the UN would meet again. Tshombe refused, so Resolution 146 was passed on August 9, 1960.¹¹⁷

Resolution 146 was seen as acceptable by the Congo's government and by the Soviet

Union. It further stated that UN forces would not intervene in internal political conflicts but could operate in Katanga to ensure Belgian troop withdrawal. In August 1960, Lumumba still led the government. This resolution was a turning point because ONUC entered Katanga around this time.¹¹⁸ Lumumba hoped ONUC's presence in Katanga would end the breakaway. The Soviet Union also supported this, because a stronger Congo meant more Soviet influence in Africa. Still, Hammarskjöld ordered ONUC not to take sides with any political party in the Congo. He wanted ONUC to only support the Congo's central government and not get involved in its internal fights. ONUC focused on the Belgian troops still in Katanga. Small groups of mercenaries had stayed, joining Katanga's breakaway movement.

Belgian troops kept leaving while UN soldiers arrived.¹¹⁹ However, Katanga's continued resistance and the growing presence of foreign mercenaries strained ONUC's neutrality. Hammarskjöld's rule of not helping in the Congo's internal politics angered the USSR, who supported expelling Belgians and ending secession while criticizing neutrality. In September 1961, during renewed fighting around Élisabethville, Secretary-General Hammarskjöld was killed in a plane crash while flying to negotiate a cease-fire with Moïse Tshombe. His

¹¹⁵ UN Security Council, Resolution 143, S/4387 (July 14, 1960), docs.un.org/en/S/RES/143(1960).

¹¹⁶ UN Security Council, Resolution 146, S/4426 (August 9, 1960), docs.un.org/en/S/RES/146(1960).

¹¹⁷ S/4426.

¹¹⁸ S/4426, 2-5.

¹¹⁹ "Elizabethville: Belgian Troops Leave as U.N. Force Moves in," Reuters, August 18, 1960, www.britishpathe.com/asset/256859/.

death deeply affected the mission and the UN as a whole.

After Hammarskjöld's death, U Thant became Acting Secretary-General. Even before this transition, Resolution 161 had already broadened ONUC's authority, allowing limited use of force to remove foreign mercenaries and restore order. Under U Thant's leadership, this policy was reinforced and clarified through Resolution 169, which formally condemned Katanga's secession and authorized stronger measures against mercenaries and forces obstructing Congolese unity.

December 17, 1962

The situation in Katanga is still not resolved two years after the province announced it wanted to break away from the Republic of the Congo (Léopoldville). The United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) was sent to restore order and protect the Congo's borders. ONUC now numbers around 20,000 soldiers from more than twenty countries, including India, Ethiopia, Ireland, Sweden, and others.¹²⁰ ONUC soldiers have made important military and political advances. They have pushed Katanga's leaders to negotiate many times.

However, Katanga still controls most of the Congo's copper and cobalt exports, so the central government in Léopoldville struggles to collect revenue without access to these resources.¹²¹ The loss of this income threatens national reconstruction and weakens the authority of now-Prime Minister Cyrille Adoula's government in the Congo.¹²² Moïse Tshombe, the leader of Katanga, has refused the Plan for National Reconciliation. It was meant to peacefully bring Katanga back into the Congo by using a federal system, constitutional guarantees, and political compromise. Many saw this plan as the last chance to avoid more armed struggle. The plan was accepted in principle by Léopoldville, but Tshombe's government delayed implementation, demanding recognition of Katanga's autonomy before any reintegration.

States are divided in their responses. Ghana, Guinea, and the United Arab Republic have urged stronger UN action against secession, while others, including some Western and francophone governments, have emphasized negotiation. This division mirrors the broader Cold War tensions shaping debate in the General Assembly and Security Council. ONUC troops are still in Katanga,

but their orders are to avoid direct fighting with Katangese soldiers unless they are attacked first.¹²³ However, ONUC's rules of engagement were broadened in late 1961 to permit limited use of force to prevent civil war and expel foreign mercenaries. Even with these limits, there are now more small battles between the ONUC and Katangese forces, especially around Élisabethville and Jadotville. The conflict could become even bigger because Belgium is said to still be providing technical and financial support to Katanga through mining companies like UMHK.¹²⁴ Several Belgian officers and other European mercenaries still remain active in the Katangese Gendarmerie despite UN protests.

ONUC patrols report that Katangese forces number roughly 8,000 and are supported by several hundred foreign specialists.¹²⁵ ONUC's Indian and Ethiopian contingents have taken over key airfields to prevent reinforcements from entering the province. The human toll of the crisis has also been severe. ONUC and the Red Cross estimates indicate that tens of thousands of civilians, mostly Baluba communities in northern Katanga, have been displaced by fighting and reprisals since 1961.¹²⁶ Many fled to neighboring provinces or across the border into Rhodesia

120 United Nations Security Council. *Resolution 161 (1961)*. 21 February 1961.

121 Bertrand, "The Belgian Congo," In *Fifty Years*.

122 Central Intelligence Agency, *Congo: The Untold Story*, CIA-RDP75-00149R000200330009-8 (August 2, 1962), <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP75-00149R000200330009-8.pdf>.

123 Weissman, *American Foreign Policy in the Congo*.

124 Sewell, "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation."

125 United Nations, *Questions Relating to the Situation in the Republic of the Congo (Leopoldville)*, 1960 (New York: Department of Public Information for the Department of External Affairs, 1960), www.un.org/Depts/dhl/dag/docs/congo60.pdf

126 United Nations, *Questions Relating to the Situation in the Republic of the Congo (Leopoldville)*.



Stamp of Katanga - 1961 (Credit: Post of Katanga)

and Northern Rhodesia. Food shortages, disease, and blocked transport routes have deepened the humanitarian emergency, straining ONUC's limited relief capacity. Economic problems, people forced from their homes, and lack of basic services cause more suffering.¹²⁷ The province's mining output has also fallen sharply, cutting national revenues and deepening the Congo's economic crisis.

The International Red Cross and UN humanitarian agencies are coordinating relief efforts, but access to northern Katanga remains limited due to road insecurity and sporadic fighting.¹²⁸ ONUC's Civil Affairs officers warn that continued displacement could create long-

term instability even if the secession ends. ONUC's limited orders made it hard to completely stop Katanga's breakaway movement. UN soldiers still fought with Katanga's forces, even though they were supposed to avoid fighting unless necessary. Since late November 1962, ONUC has begun new operations to secure transport routes and remove foreign military personnel from Katanga.¹²⁹ Belgium's continued support for Katanga has made the violence worse and kept the war going.

Prime Minister Adoula's government has sought assurances from key UNSC figures, like the US and UK, that Congo's unity will be maintained.¹³⁰ The Soviet Union has criticized ONUC for not acting

more forcefully against Katanga, while Western powers stress the importance of avoiding large-scale combat. These disagreements continue to shape UN decision-making.

The Security Council has to decide if they will try new talks with Tshombe, who did not seem willing to compromise, or make ONUC take stronger action to restore the Congo's control over Katanga.¹³¹ Delegations support renewed negotiation, but others argue that only firm UN action can end the secession and preserve Congo's unity. The coming weeks may decide whether the crisis moves toward reconciliation or renewed fighting. By December 1962, the Security Council faces two main options: to press Tshombe to accept the Reconciliation Plan through renewed talks, or to authorize ONUC to take decisive steps, possibly including the seizure of Katangese strongholds, to end the secession by force. The outcome will determine whether the Congo enters 1963 as a unified state or remains divided.

¹²⁷ United Nations, *Questions Relating to the Situation in the Republic of the Congo (Leopoldville)*.

¹²⁸ "The ICRC in Katanga," *International Review of the Red Cross* 2, no. 19 (February 1962): 79–86, <https://international-review.icrc.org/sites/default/files/S0020860400012572a.pdf>.

¹²⁹ Weissman, Stephen R. *American Foreign Policy in the Congo, 1960–1964*. Cornell University Press, 1974.

¹³⁰ United Nations, *Questions Relating to the Situation in the Republic of the Congo (Leopoldville)*.

¹³¹ Nkrumah, Kwame. *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1965.

BLOC ANALYSIS

Points of Division

For the purposes of this Model UN simulation, certain Security Council members in this committee [Belgium, Greece, Turkey, and the Republic of the Congo (Léopoldville)] will serve as non-voting participants.

These delegations can vote on procedural matters and make motions but will not vote on resolutions.

The main divisions in the committee come from different views on what action, if any, should be taken about Katanga. The central question is whether the United Nations should continue pursuing negotiation or authorize stronger measures to end the province's secession from the Republic of the Congo (Léopoldville). One big concern is the precedent this action would set. If the United Nations takes strong steps against colonial influence in Katanga, it might do the same in other colonies later. Some Security Council members still control colonies, while others are former colonies themselves.

Economic and political interests also divide the Council. States with commercial or mining ties to Katanga favor a cautious approach, while others, especially those aligned with anti-colonial or socialist ideals, view Katanga's secession as a neo-colonial

enterprise supported by Belgium and Western corporations. Finally, Cold War alignments remain crucial: Western states aim to limit Soviet involvement in Africa, while the USSR and its allies see the Congo as a test case for ending Western dominance on the continent.

Internationalist Bloc

The Internationalist Bloc believes countries should work together through the UN to solve problems peacefully. They would like to keep the Congo as one united country but prefer negotiation instead of force.¹³² These countries usually oppose colonialism but are careful about quick or forceful action. They support the UN Secretary-General U Thant's Plan for National Reconciliation, which suggests bringing Katanga back through a federal system-sharing power between the provinces and the central government.¹³³

Countries like the United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Chile, and Turkey fit into this group. They support the UN peacekeepers (ONUC) but don't want a big new war. For example, the US supports Congo's central government but wants to avoid direct fighting that might upset the Soviet Union. This bloc would

favor renewing negotiations with Tshombe under UN supervision, giving ONUC limited new powers to protect civilians and enforce ceasefires, and offering economic aid or reconstruction incentives to encourage Katanga to rejoin the Congo. They may propose a Security Council resolution that reaffirms the Congo's unity while urging all parties to follow the Reconciliation Plan and stop foreign interference.

Socialist/Anti-Imperialist Bloc

The Socialist or Anti-Imperialist Bloc opposes colonialism and neo-colonialism. They believe Katanga's independence is not real, and that it is being controlled by Belgium and other Western powers who want Congo's minerals.¹³⁴ They think international help should be used to defeat colonial supporters.¹³⁵ This group wants the UN to take tough action and use military force to bring Katanga back into the Congo. They also want sanctions against countries or companies helping Katanga. They wanted to change the UN's peacekeeping system to act more strongly.

The Soviet Union loudly criticized Katanga's secession and said the West, mainly the US and Belgium, was using the situation to keep

¹³² United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 161 (1961)*, 21 February 1961.

¹³³ Weissman, S. R. (1974). *American foreign policy in the Congo, 1960–1964*. Cornell University Press.

¹³⁴ Nkrumah, Kwame. *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1965.

¹³⁵ Schmidt, Elizabeth. *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

control of the Congo's resources. Soviet Ambassador Valerian Zorin called for stronger UN military action against secessionists.¹³⁶ Ghana's President Kwame Nkrumah was one of Africa's strongest voices demanding quick action to stop Katanga's independence.¹³⁷ Several post-colonial countries, like the United Arab Republic, joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961. Despite their different views, they usually supported maintaining independence and keeping new countries' borders.¹³⁸

In practice, this bloc may push for expanding ONUC's mandate to allow operations against Katangese forces, freezing Belgian or UMHK assets connected to Katanga, and demanding a Security Council investigation into foreign interference. They may also call for trials of the foreign officials involved in Lumumba's death. To them, the Congo crisis is a test of whether the UN can really protect newly independent states from imperial control.

Reformist Bloc

The Reformist Bloc opposes quick independence or radical change. They prefer gradual reforms and often avoid strong UN intervention. Some of these countries want to keep their business interests in former colonies. They care more about stability and business access than about sovereignty. In 1962, some gave quiet support to Katanga leaving the Congo, especially Belgium.¹³⁹ Belgian companies like the Union Minière du Haut-Katanga (UMHK) had mining interests in Katanga. Belgium kept strong financial and military ties with Katanga. Even though officially denied, Belgian officers are said to have helped train Katangese soldiers.¹⁴⁰

These countries did not want ONUC's military power to grow and preferred negotiations and self-rule for Katanga.¹⁴¹ They feared losing economic influence and starting more anti-colonial

uprisings. For example, France worried this would encourage movements in Algeria, Angola, and Mozambique and opposed UN military actions in Katanga. They often stressed respecting internal affairs and non-interference in UN statements.¹⁴² Delegates of this reformist bloc would likely propose a pause in UN military operations, direct mediation between Léopoldville and Élisabethville, and guarantees for foreign businesses to keep operating once the conflict ends. They might also argue that ONUC should act only with both sides' consent and under strict neutrality.

Some countries have wanted slow change to reduce colonial power in the area. Greece, for example, supported the Congo's independence but was worried about Soviet influence if the Congo became unstable.¹⁴³ Greece thought a slow, careful approach was best to make the Congo stable and free over time.

COMMITTEE MISSION

It is the duty of the United Nations Security Council to determine the appropriate next steps in resolving the crisis in

Katanga. The job of deciding how best to handle the current Katanga situation falls to the UN Security Council, which must balance

respect for state sovereignty with the need to maintain international peace and security under Chapters VI and VII of the UN Charter.

¹³⁶ United Nations Security Council. (1961–1962). *Meetings and resolutions concerning the Congo crisis*. United Nations Digital Library. digitallibrary.un.org/

¹³⁷ Nkrumah, K. (1963). *Africa must unite*. Heinemann Educational Books.

¹³⁸ Prashad, V. (2007). *The darker nations: A people's history of the Third World*. The New Press.

¹³⁹ Schmidt, Elizabeth. *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

¹⁴⁰ Nzongola-Ntalaja, Georges. *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*. Zed Books, 2002.

¹⁴¹ Nkrumah, Kwame. *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1965.

¹⁴² United Nations. (1962). *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1962*. United Nations Publications. unyearbook.un.org/

¹⁴³ Argyrios Tasoulas, "Greek–Soviet Relations 1959–1962: The Greek Response to the Kremlin's Challenge," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 45, no. 1 (2021): 92–109, www.cambridge.org/core/journals/byzantine-and-modern-greek-studies/article/greek-soviet-relations-1959-1962-the-greek-response-to-the-kremlins-challenge/F92FEBB133A3F3A53D41500AB6D6A061.

While remaining rooted in the UN Charter's tenets, delegates must address the conflict's political, legal, and humanitarian aspects.¹⁴⁴ The Council operates under a series of mandates already approved in Resolutions 143, 145, 146, 157, and 169, which authorize ONUC to assist the Congolese government, prevent civil war, and remove foreign mercenaries.

In December 1962, Secretary-General U Thant has proposed the Plan for National Reconciliation, seeking to reintegrate Katanga through negotiation and a limited federal arrangement. However, Katanga's refusal to accept the plan fully has brought the crisis to a breaking point.

There are important considerations to account for, such as the legality of Katanga's secession under international law, the extent of Belgium's continued influence through mining interests, and the mandate limits on ONUC's use of force. Delegates should also consider the broader Cold War implications—the Soviet Union's calls for stronger action against “colonial interference” and the United States' caution about deeper UN military engagement.¹⁴⁵

This committee invites delegates to discuss the boundaries of peacekeeping, evaluate the legitimacy of separatist movements, and strike a balance between national sovereignty and international responsibility.



UN Security Council on 25 October 1962 (Credit: Signaleer)

Delegates must decide whether the Security Council should pursue a renewed diplomatic effort with Tshombe's administration or authorize a more robust ONUC operation, all decisions that could define the UN's credibility in future peacekeeping missions.

The committee's goals include defining the international community's role in preserving sovereignty, advancing peace and stability in post-colonial states, and finding a practical and lawful solution to the Katanga conflict.

To reach a conclusion that reflects both the realities of 1962 and the ideals of the United Nations, delegates are urged to apply historical understanding, diplomatic skill, and creative policy

thinking. The Council's actions in the Congo will set a precedent for how the UN handles internal conflicts, foreign intervention, and the balance between negotiation and enforcement in the decades to come.

¹⁴⁴ United Nations. (1945). *Charter of the United Nations*. www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter.

¹⁴⁵ United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 1 UNTS XVI, Article 33 (Jun. 26, 1945), treaties.un.org/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf.



PORTUGAL
DOODT
ANGOLEZEN
MET
NATO-WAPENS



The Question of Territories Under Portuguese Administration (1962)

Photo Credit: Harry Pot

Portuguese territorial control started in the early 15th century. The first colonies were in what is now Morocco.¹ These efforts were part of European expansion before the 16th century. At that time, Christopher Columbus went to the New World and Vasco de Gama sailed around the Cape of Africa to reach India.²

During the oceanic expansion of the 15th–16th centuries, European states pushed outward, seizing sea routes and fortified ports. In 1510, Afonso de Albuquerque captured the Indian port city of Goa. It remained under Portuguese control until 1961.³ De Albuquerque also took control of the Malaysian port city of Melaka in 1511 and the Strait of Hormuz in 1515. Over time, Portuguese control weakened. Portugal expanded early because it had ships, adventurous explorers, and strong maps. However, it

declined because it stayed small while rival countries grew huge.

In the 19th century, Portugal moved into Africa.⁴ Other powers—including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, and the Netherlands—were also moving into Africa, so they held the Berlin West Africa Conference to avoid fights over the land.⁵ Portugal's claims to Angola and Mozambique were regularized through late-19th-century treaties and the Berlin framework, but Britain consolidated control over Barotseland and Mashonaland, thwarting Portugal's trans-Africa ambitions.

Portugal kept control of its colonies even after both World Wars. This was during a time when most European empires were giving up their overseas territories, but the situation became harder

to maintain. During World War I, German forces attacked Portuguese colonies like Angola and Mozambique, weakening their stability and draining resources. After the war, Portugal faced growing unrest at home.⁶ The old Portuguese Republic collapsed in 1926, and a military dictatorship came to power under António de Oliveira Salazar. The new government saw the colonies as essential to Portugal's wealth and power, so it tightened control instead of granting independence. The colonies became more heavily militarized and local people were often forced into labor and faced discrimination. These policies created deep anger and resentment among those in the colonies, planting the seeds for independence movements that would grow stronger after World War II and especially during the Cold War.

TOPIC BACKGROUND

Expansion of Portuguese Territories

Portuguese expansion began in 1415, when King Dom João

I led the conquest of Ceuta, a key port city in Morocco.⁷ This marked Portugal's first overseas expansion. Controlling Ceuta gave them influence near the Straits of Gibraltar and helped protect trade

routes and military interests. Over the following decades, Portugal continued to expand along the North African coast. They captured cities such as Asilah and Tangier and traded with other coastal towns.⁸

1 José Luís Ferreira, "The Conquest of Ceuta," *The Conquest of Ceuta* | Encyclopaedia of Portuguese Expansion, 2009, eve.fcsh.unl.pt/en/themes-and-facts/conquest-ceuta.

2 João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, "Dom Duarte (1391-1438)," *Dom Duarte (1391-1438)* | Encyclopaedia of Portuguese Expansion, 2009, eve.fcsh.unl.pt/en/people/dom-duarte-1391-1438.

3 B. S. Shastri, "SOME ASPECTS OF THE FIRST CONQUEST OF GOA BY THE PORTUGUESE." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 39 (1978): 385–92. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44139374>.

4 Birmingham, *A Concise History of Portugal*, 121.

5 Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, 53.

6 Osuna, "The Deep Roots of the Carnation Revolution: 150 Years of Military Interventionism in Portugal,".

7 José Luís Ferreira, "The Conquest of Ceuta," *The Conquest of Ceuta* | Encyclopaedia of Portuguese Expansion, 2009, eve.fcsh.unl.pt/en/themes-and-facts/conquest-ceuta.

8 A. R. Disney, *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire: From Beginnings to 1807. Volume 2, the Portuguese Empire* (New York City, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1-2; Ferreira, "The Conquest of Ceuta,".



Expansion of the Portuguese (Green) and Spanish (Red) empires during the Age of Exploration (Credit: Kerr)

There were also failures, like the unsuccessful Tangier campaign of 1437 and the gradual loss of most Moroccan strongholds by the mid-16th century, while retaining Ceuta. Still, these efforts signaled the start of Portugal's colonial ambitions.

During the late 1400s and early 1500s, Portugal entered the Age of Exploration. Under leaders such as King Dom Duarte and Prince Henry the Navigator, expeditions expanded further down the African coast. A turning point came in 1497, when Vasco da Gama sailed around Africa to reach India. His

voyage opened a direct sea route to Asia, making Portugal a global maritime power.⁹

At the same time, Portugal was also expanding westward across the Atlantic. Portuguese explorers reached the coast of Brazil in 1500. This happened about a decade before Portugal established its main colonies in Asia. Over time, Brazil became Portugal's largest and most important colony, supplying sugar, gold, and later coffee to the empire. At first, they traded Brazilwood, valued for its red dye.¹⁰ By the mid-1500s, sugarcane replaced

Brazilwood as the main export.¹¹ Sugar plantations demanded large numbers of laborers. Millions of enslaved Africans, along with enslaved native people, were forced to work in Brazil. By 1617, Brazilian sugar output was on the order of one million arrobas ($\approx 15,000$ metric tons).¹²

In the 1600s, the Dutch tried to seize sugar-producing areas in Brazil. Resistance from Portuguese settlers and locals forced them out by 1654.¹³ Over time, Brazil expanded its territory, settled its borders with Spain, and became central to Portugal's empire. In 1807, when Napoleon invaded Portugal, the royal family fled to Brazil.¹⁴ In 1815, Brazil was elevated to a kingdom. In 1822, it declared independence, becoming the first Portuguese colony to do so.¹⁵

After the loss of Brazil, Portugal's empire in the 1800s was centered in Africa. Colonial expansion had begun earlier with the capture of Ceuta and the islands of Madeira, the Azores, and Cape Verde in the early 1400s. By the 1460s, Portugal had posts on the mainland, including Guinea. Trade in spices, gold, ivory, and enslaved people pushed Portugal to expand inland. They created bases in Mozambique

⁹ K.G. Jayne, *Vasco da Gama and his Successors, 1460–1580*, (London 1910), 35–36.

¹⁰ Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society: Bahia, 1550–1835* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5–6.

¹¹ Dodge, Cameron J. G. "A Forgotten Century of Brazilwood: The Brazilwood Trade from the Mid-Sixteenth to Mid-Seventeenth Century", *e-Journal of Portuguese History* 16, 1 (2018): 1–27.

¹² Leonor Freire Costa, Pedro Lains, and Susana Münch Miranda, *Economic History of Portugal, 1143–2010* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 78.

¹³ Disney, *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire: From Beginnings to 1807. Volume 2, the Portuguese Empire*, 226–231.

¹⁴ Thomas Skidmore, "Chapter 3: From Colony to Independence as a Monarchy," Brown University Library, accessed September 11, 2025, library.brown.edu/create/fivecenturiesofchange/chapters/chapter-3.

¹⁵ Skidmore, "Chapter 3: From Colony to Independence as a Monarchy."

in 1507 and in Luanda in 1576.¹⁶ Angola and Mozambique became the core of Portugal's African empire, tied closely to the slave trade. By the late 16th century, Portugal's empire had expanded to encompass the west coast of Africa, the Cape of Good Hope, and territories across India, Southeast Asia, and East Asia.¹⁷ But inside Africa, Portuguese control mostly stayed near the coast, until the Scramble for Africa in the 1800s.

Portugal also expanded into Asia in the 1500s. Unlike in Africa and Brazil, the empire in Asia focused more on ports and trade than on territory. They seized Goa in 1510 and Malacca in 1511, then Hormuz in 1515.¹⁸ These new ports gave them control over key trade routes. By 1557, they had also established a base in Macau, China.¹⁹ By the middle of the 1500s, Portugal had created a vast network linking Africa and Asia. They even traded with Japan. The crown tried to enforce a trade monopoly, but holding onto Asia proved difficult. As the Dutch and English gained power, Portugal's hold weakened. The Dutch seized Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Indonesia, and later Malacca in 1641. English-Persian forces expelled the Portuguese from

Hormuz in 1622.²⁰ The Dutch even occupied Brazil briefly. By the late 1600s, Portugal had lost control of most of the Indian Ocean and kept only a few ports like Goa, Macau, and Timor. By the 1800s, only a handful of enclaves remained.²¹

The 15th to 17th centuries marked the height of Portugal's empire. But the 1800s and 1900s brought decline. They lost Brazil, struggled with rivals, and faced political turmoil at home. As global dominance slipped away, Portugal focused on defending its remaining African colonies. The empire slowly shifted from expansion to trying to hold onto what remained. In the 1900s, Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea remained Portuguese colonies. Even after World War II, Portugal refused to let them go, claiming they were "overseas provinces" rather than colonies.²² In truth, they were ruled without democracy and faced armed resistance. By 1962, Portugal still controlled all three, which made up most of its empire in Africa.

The Scramble for Africa and British Ultimatum of 1890

Portugal's political troubles in the 1800s affected how it handled its overseas empire. First, King João fled Portugal because of the Napoleonic invasions. While he was gone, Portugal moved from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. The country also faced many internal fights. After Brazil became independent and the slave trade ended, Portugal turned its attention to Africa. It wanted to strengthen its colonies as other European powers competed fiercely for land.²³

For many centuries, European countries controlled parts of Africa's coasts. European powers—Portugal, the Netherlands, Britain, France, Germany, and Belgium—held coastal trading posts.²⁴ Between 1870 and 1914, there was a global interest in colonizing Africa, as much of America and Asia were already taken. Referred now as the "Scramble for Africa," colonization grew fast. Africa went from 10 percent controlled by Europeans to 90 percent after important events like the Berlin West Africa

¹⁶ World History Encyclopedia, "Portuguese Empire," accessed September 11, 2025, www.worldhistory.org/timeline/Portuguese_Empire.

¹⁷ World History Encyclopedia, "Portuguese Empire."

¹⁸ B. S. Shastri, "SOME ASPECTS OF THE FIRST CONQUEST OF GOA BY THE PORTUGUESE." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 39 (1978): 385–92. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44139374>.

¹⁹ Déjanirah Couto and Rui Loureiro, *Revisiting Hormuz: Portuguese Interactions in the Persian Gulf Region in the Early Modern Period* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz : Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2008).

²⁰ Disney, *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire: From Beginnings to 1807. Volume 2, the Portuguese Empire*, 169–170.

²¹ World History Encyclopedia, "Portuguese Empire."

²² Shreya Hari Nurani, "Decolonization in Goa: Past, Process, and Present," *Community Change* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 2024), doi: [10.21061/cc.v6i1.a.65](https://doi.org/10.21061/cc.v6i1.a.65).

²³ Birmingham, *A Concise History of Portugal*, 121.

²⁴ Leah Fine, "Colorblind Colonialism?," Barnard College, 2007, barnard.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/Fine_ColorblindColonialism_2007.pdf.

Conference in 1884 and the British Ultimatum in 1890.²⁵

Control of sea-lanes (e.g., the Suez route) shaped great-power strategy but only indirectly affected Portuguese claims. The French built it between 1859 and 1869.²⁶ Although Britain was initially skeptical, they bought a controlling stake in 1875 and occupied Egypt in 1882 to secure the route. The canal was very important for trade and military routes.²⁷ It connected the United Kingdom to its colonies in India, Ceylon, and Burma.²⁸ To protect these routes and their colonies, the United Kingdom took control of the canal in 1882 and occupied Egypt.²⁹ At the same time, France took control of Tunisia after entering in 1881 and officially claiming it in 1882.³⁰

In 1884, the United Kingdom and Portugal signed a treaty giving Portugal rights to parts of the Congo. However, it was never formally approved.³¹ Meanwhile,

King Leopold II of Belgium started the International Africa Association which aimed to explore and control Central Africa.³² It later became the International Association of the Congo.³³ Then came the Berlin West Africa Conference, a key event in the Scramble for Africa. It took place from late 1884 to early 1885. Leaders settled land disputes and set borders for places like the Congo and Niger River basins.³⁴ A key decision was to allow free trade along the coast.³⁵ This helped colonization happen faster.

Portugal stayed active in Africa after the Conference. In December 1886, it signed treaties with France and Germany that let Portugal claim Angola and Mozambique.³⁶ Portugal also expanded in nearby areas like Niasa, Mashona, and Gaza.³⁷ These land claims were Portugal's attempt to create a corridor, called the "Rose-Colored Map." This was a corridor that aimed to connect the Atlantic

and Indian Oceans. However, the United Kingdom planned a different route called "Cape to Cairo" that aimed to link the Mediterranean Sea to Cape Town in South Africa.³⁸ Cecil Rhodes, a British businessman who owned diamond mines, led this project.³⁹ He made an alliance with Lobengula, chief of the Ndebele kingdom of Matabeleland in western Zimbabwe. The alliance was made to protect mining and set up a protectorate.⁴⁰

Portugal and the United Kingdom soon clashed. The conflict peaked on November 8, 1889, when their troops fought, and British leaders claimed Portugal attacked its protectorate.⁴¹ At that time, the United Kingdom's Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, faced pressure from Cecil Rhodes to act. On January 11, 1890, Salisbury issued the "British Ultimatum." He told Portugal to pull its troops out of disputed lands at once. He said Portugal's promises

25 Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, 3–4.

26 "Suez Canal History," Suez Canal Authority - Canal History, accessed July 3, 2025, www.suezcanal.gov.eg/English/About/SuezCanal/Pages/CanalHistory.aspx.

27 Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, 35–36.

28 "Supply-Forces in the Mediterranean (Vote of Credit).," SUPPLY-FORCES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN (VOTE OF CREDIT). (Hansard, 25 July 1882), 1882, api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1882/jul/25/supply-forces-in-the-mediterranean-vote#S3V0272P0_18820725_HOC_53.

29 Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, 40–41.

30 "French Tunisia (1881–1956)," Government Public Service and International Studies, University of Central Arkansas, accessed July 3, 2025, uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/middle-eastnorth-africapersian-gulf-region/french-tunisia-1881-1956/.

31 "International Boundary Study No. 112 - August 13, 1971 - Malawi - Mozambique Boundary," United States of America State Department, 1971, library.law.fsu.edu/Digital-Collections/LimitsinSeas/pdf/ibs112.pdf.

32 Padideh Ala'i, "Leopold & Morel: A Story of 'Free Trade' and 'Native Rights' in the Congo Free State," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2005, doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1615662.

33 "King Leopold II," The Belgian Monarchy, accessed July 3, 2025, www.monarchie.be/en/royal-family/history/king-leopold-ii.

34 Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, 53.

35 General act of the Berlin Conference on West Africa, 26 February 1885, 1885, loveman.sdsu.edu/docs/1885GeneralActBerlinConference.pdf.

36 Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, "Germany Portugal Treaty 1886," Ardhi Initiative, accessed September 11, 2025, ardhi.unl.edu/item/ardhi.treaty.00008.

37 Maria Teresa Pinto Coelho, "'Pérfida Albion' and 'Little Portugal': The Role of the Press in British and Portuguese National Perceptions of the 1890 Ultimatum," *Portuguese Studies* 6 (1990): 173–90. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41104912>.

38 Maria Teresa Pinto Coelho, "Vi - Lord Salisbury's 1890 Ultimatum to Portugal and Anglo-Portuguese Relations," University of Oxford, accessed July 4, 2025, www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/files/windsor/6_pintocoelho.pdf.

39 Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, 69–70.

40 Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, 75.

41 Coelho, "'Pérfida Albion' and 'Little Portugal': The Role of the Press in British and Portuguese National Perceptions of the 1890 Ultimatum."

meant nothing unless they left immediately.⁴² Portugal gave in on the same day and gave up its claims. The “Rose-Colored Map” dream ended.⁴³

The results of the British Ultimatum affected far more than colonial borders. In Portugal, it caused outrage among the public, who saw it as a national humiliation. Many believed the monarchy had betrayed Portuguese pride by giving in to British pressure. This anger helped strengthen the growing Republican movement, which wanted to replace the monarchy with a democratic government. Tensions kept rising, and in 1908, King Carlos I and his son, Prince Luís Filipe, were assassinated in Lisbon.⁴⁴ These events deeply shocked the country and weakened the royal family’s power. Just two years later, in 1910, the monarchy was overthrown, and Portugal became a republic.

Portuguese Colonial Policy Under Estado Novo Regime

The new Portuguese Republic brought a lot of changes to how the colonies were managed and governed. During the 19th and 20th century, Portugal lost many territories but focused on expanding others and changing the



Cartoon depicting the Scramble for Africa (Credit: National Museum Nairobi)

understanding of their colonial role in the global conversation. By the mid-1900s, Portugal was ruled by the Estado Novo, a system of strict rule led by Prime Minister António de Oliveira Salazar. His government claimed that overseas territories were not colonies. They were said to be part of Portugal itself.⁴⁵ As other empires decolonized, Salazar advanced “pluricontinentalism”: one Portugal spread across Europe, Africa, Asia, and Oceania.

In 1951, this idea became part of the constitution. Colonies were renamed “overseas provinces,” and the word “colony” was removed.⁴⁶ The goal was clear. Portugal

wanted to argue that its territories were extensions of Portugal. This was also done to try and avoid pressure from the United Nations and independence movements. Portuguese leaders said the empire was a multiracial nation, free from UN decolonization rules. Salazar worked hard to promote this image. In the 1950s, his regime used that claim to fight back against critics. Estado Novo said its overseas territories were natural parts of Portugal. Salazar even declared that Portugal stretched “from Minho to Timor.”⁴⁷

The truth was very different. The reforms of 1951 were supposed to

⁴² Coelho, “Vi - Lord Salisbury’s 1890 Ultimatum to Portugal and Anglo-Portuguese Relations,”

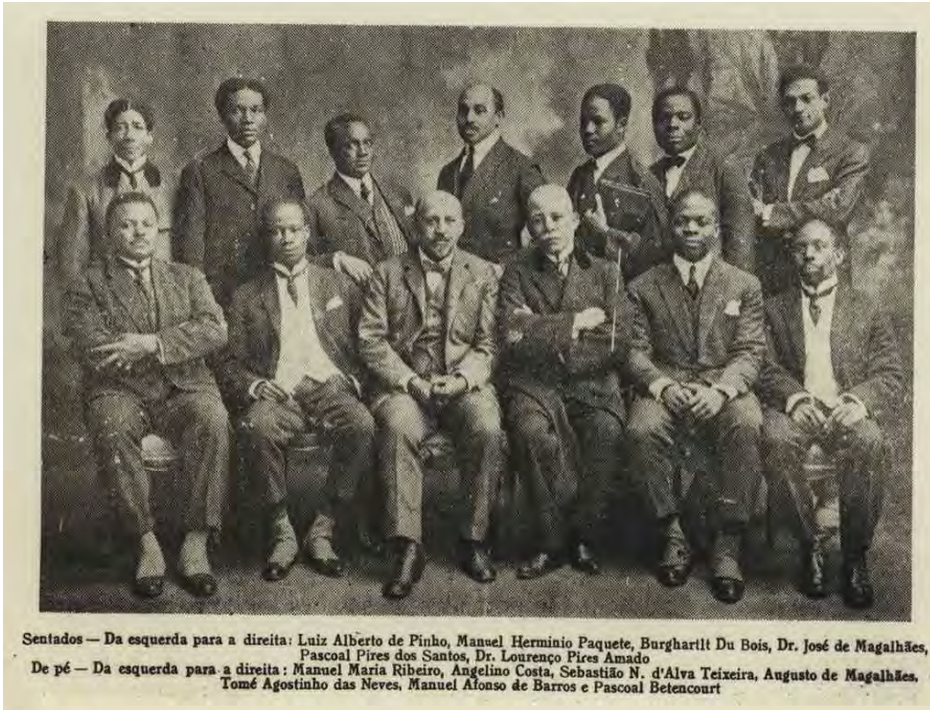
⁴³ Matthew Winslett, “The Nadir of Alliance: The British Ultimatum Of 1890 And Its Place In Anglo-Portuguese Relations, 1147- 1945” (2008). *History Theses*. 66. mavmatrix.uta.edu/history_theses/66

⁴⁴ Douglas L. Wheeler, “The Portuguese Revolution of 1910,” *The Journal of Modern History* 44, no. 2 (June 1972): 172–94, doi. org/10.1086/240748.

⁴⁵ Stewart Lloyd-Jones and António Costa Pinto, eds., *The Last Empire: Thirty Years of Portuguese Decolonization*, The Last Empire: Thirty Years of Portuguese Decolonization (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2003), 6.

⁴⁶ Lloyd-Jones and Pinto, *The Last Empire: Thirty Years of Portuguese Decolonization*, 58.

⁴⁷ Lloyd-Jones and Pinto, *The Last Empire: Thirty Years of Portuguese Decolonization*, 3.



Third Pan-African Congress in Lisbon, May 1923 (Credit: Fundação Mário Soares)

modernize Portugal's empire, but in practice, they changed almost nothing. Real power still stayed in Lisbon, and the system remained highly centralized and authoritarian. This system remained, even after the new constitution.⁴⁸ Officials appointed from Lisbon governed the overseas lands. Local people had almost no rights. Most Africans in the colonies were still treated as subjects, not citizens. The government claimed it was trying to "civilize" them, but in reality, people were denied basic rights and

forced to adopt Portuguese language and culture.⁴⁹

Life in the colonies was very hard. Angola and Mozambique were used for farms, mines, and plantations. Portuguese settlers and companies owned most of the land.⁵⁰ For example, cash-crop plantations, mining enterprises, in Angola and Mozambique were controlled by Portuguese companies or settlers.⁵¹ Profits went back to Lisbon while Africans did the labor. Many were forced to work for months with

little or no pay. Others had to meet crop quotas or face punishment. Forced labor regimes persisted.⁵²

Education and healthcare were also very poor.⁵³ By the 1960s, literacy in the Portuguese colonies remained extremely low. In Mozambique, estimates placed literacy well under ten percent.⁵⁴ Schools were segregated and taught only in Portuguese, while ignoring local languages and history.⁵⁵ Healthcare was weak and was also used to control the people. Authorities could order medical exams, vaccines, or treatment. Sick people could be confined. For many Africans, their first contact with Portuguese rule was through medical inspections. To defend its image abroad, Portugal pointed to vaccination campaigns and medical reports as "proof" of good care. Conditions, however, stayed poor.⁵⁶

By the 1960s, Portugal had a strict colonial system in Africa and Asia. Lisbon said these territories were part of a multiracial Portugal. In reality, they were ruled like old-style colonies. This clashed with the independence movements after World War II.⁵⁷ In 1960, the United Nations issued its Declaration on Independence for Colonies. Many countries

48 Leah Fine, "Colorblind Colonialism? Lusotropicalismo and Portugal's 20th Century Empire in Africa," Barnard College Department of History (Thesis, Barnard College, 2007), 17, barnard.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/Fine_ColorblindColonialism_2007.pdf.

49 Cláudia Castelo, "'Luso-Tropicalism' and Portuguese Late Colonialism

50 Lloyd-Jones and Pinto, *The Last Empire: Thirty Years of Portuguese Decolonization*, 7.

51 Lloyd-Jones and Pinto, *The Last Empire: Thirty Years of Portuguese Decolonization*, 129.

52 Djassi, *The Facts About Portugal's African Colonies*, 3.

53 Lloyd-Jones and Pinto, *The Last Empire: Thirty Years of Portuguese Decolonization*, 49.

54 Antoinette Errante and Jessica Jorge, "Education in Mozambique in the 19th and 20th Centuries," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, April 19, 2022, doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.823.

55 Djassi, *The Facts About Portugal's African Colonies*, 14.

56 Martin Frederick Shapiro, "MEDICINE IN THE SERVICE OF COLONIALISM: MEDICAL CARE IN PORTUGUESE AFRICA 1885-1974" (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1983), ix, accessed September 10, 2025, www.proquest.com/openview/w/689a26c197e8577e9cb9585b2821ae4e/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y.

57 Lloyd-Jones and Pinto, *The Last Empire: Thirty Years of Portuguese Decolonization*, 3.

demanded that Portugal give up its empire. Salazar refused. While other empires left Africa, Portugal kept control. It denied the right of self-rule.⁵⁸

By 1961, the issue reached a peak at the United Nations. Portugal's claim of permanent authority clashed with the principle of independence. Evidence of repression and poverty built up. Inside Africa, independence movements were growing stronger. Together, these forces have been challenging Salazar's Estado Novo and have tested Portugal's "pluricontinental" dream.

Rise of Nationalists Movements and Early Conflicts in Africa

In the early 1900s, nationalism began to spread. World War I had ended several European empires and emphasized the idea of self-determination.⁵⁹ However, colonial powers rarely applied this idea. For example, Egypt and Tunisia asked for freedom from colonization but both were rejected. Still, the demand for freedom inspired many.

In Africa, Pan-African leaders called for an end to European rule. In Asia, movements grew quickly. India's leaders fought against British control and Southeast Asian groups also demanded independence.⁶⁰

World War II gave new energy to independence movements across Africa and Asia. Millions of people from colonies fought or worked for the Allied powers, believing that their service would earn them freedom and equal rights after the war. But when the fighting ended, European countries tried to hold onto their colonies, and many people felt betrayed.⁶¹ In 1941, the Atlantic Charter, signed by the Allies, promised that all peoples should be free to choose their own governments. Many in the colonies saw this as support for self-determination, or the right to rule themselves.⁶² Then, in 1945, the United Nations was created to promote peace and human rights. Its Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 declared that all people are born free and equal. These ideas gave powerful moral and political support to independence movements. People

in colonized states could now point to international agreements that backed their demand for freedom.⁶³

Independence spread quickly after World War II. India won freedom in 1947. Soon after came Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Burma, Indonesia, and Vietnam. In 1955, leaders from 29 states held the Bandung Conference and joined together against colonialism.⁶⁴ Africa followed soon after. In 1960, called the "Year of Africa," 17 new states gained independence.⁶⁵ Cold War politics made the change faster.⁶⁶ The United States and the Soviet Union both pushed for decolonization. By the early 1960s, most of the world agreed that colonialism had to come to an end.

However, Portugal refused to change, which fueled anger, opposition, and resistance groups. The first had appeared in the 1920s. For example, Liga Africana (African League) was founded in Lisbon in 1920 for African students, and organizations like the Liga Nacional Africana in Angola and Grémio Africano in Mozambique appeared after.⁶⁷ These groups were limited and very controlled by police.

58 Lloyd-Jones and Pinto, *The Last Empire: Thirty Years of Portuguese Decolonization*, 3.

59 "Fourteen Points / 1.0 / Encyclopedic - 1914-1918-Online (WW1) Encyclopedia," 1914-1918-Online (WW1) Encyclopedia, July 9, 2024, encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/fourteen-points/.

60 United States Department of State, "Decolonization of Asia and Africa, 1945–1960," Milestones in the History of US Foreign Relations - Office of the Historian, accessed September 11, 2025, history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/asia-and-africa.

61 Timothy Parsons, "Africa's Role in WWII Remembered," Fifteen Eighty Four | Cambridge University Press - The Official Blog of Cambridge University Press (blog), August 25, 2015, accessed September 11, 2025, cambridgeblog.org/2015/08/africas-role-in-wwii-remembered/.

62 United States Department of State, "The Atlantic Conference & Charter, 1941," Milestones in the History of US Foreign Relations - Office of the Historian, accessed September 11, 2025, history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/atlantic-conf.

63 United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," accessed September 11, 2025, www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.

64 Katherine Everett, Emily Hardick, and Damarius Johnson, "The Year of Africa," Origins, December 1, 2020, accessed September 11, 2025, origins.osu.edu/article/year-of-africa-1960-rumba-pan-africanism-Kariba.

65 Austin Ogunsuyi, "Africa's Year of Independence," EBSCO, 2023, accessed September 11, 2025, www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/africas-year-independence.

66 Ogunsuyi, "Africa's Year of Independence."

67 Norrie MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa: Metropolitan Revolution and the Dissolution of Empire* (New York: Addison Wesley Publishing Company, 1997), 14, archive.org/details/portugueseafrika/page/n1/mode/2up.

There was no room for political expression, and effective censorship and secret police surveillance kept opposition controlled.⁶⁸

In the 1950s, these movements surged. Inspired by worldwide independence, new leaders grew bolder. Peaceful reform was impossible under Salazar, so many

turned to armed struggle.⁶⁹ Between 1956 and 1962, key groups appeared. Amílcar Cabral helped found the PAIGC in Guinea and Cape Verde.⁷⁰ In Angola, leaders like Agostinho Neto formed the MPLA.⁷¹ In 1961, India annexed Goa, ending four centuries of Portuguese rule.⁷² Portugal's

decision to hold its empire led to wars and worldwide criticism.⁷³

By 1962, nationalism had reshaped global politics. Colonies across Africa and Asia showed they could achieve self-determination, but Salazar refuses to change the colonial policy.

CURRENT STATUS

Portuguese Colonial War in Africa (Starting 1961)

The Portuguese Colonial War began in Africa on February 4, 1961. It lasted many years. Portugal's government fought independence groups in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau.⁷⁴ In Angola, anger turned into rebellion. On February 4, fighters attacked a prison and police in Luanda. This started the armed fight. On March 15, the União das Populações de Angola

(UPA) attacked farms and towns in northern Angola.⁷⁵ Violence against civilians escalated rapidly on all sides. Rebels killed Portuguese settlers and Africans who helped Portugal. Portugal fought back hard. Militias shot civilians and bombed villages.⁷⁶ By late 1961, many people had died. About 400,000 Angolans fled to Congo.⁷⁷ The United Nations saw this crisis and in June 1961, the UN asked Portugal to stop violence in Angola. Portugal refused.⁷⁸

Rebellions also grew in Mozambique and Guinea-

Bissau. In 1960, police killed about 500 peaceful protesters in Mozambique.⁷⁹ This made more people want independence. In 1962, Mozambican leaders formed the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO).⁸⁰ By late 1962, FRELIMO had formed and cross-border organizing and sporadic actions were reported; full-scale insurgency escalated later. In Guinea-Bissau, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) first used peaceful protest, but after police killed many people during a strike

68 MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa: Metropolitan Revolution and the Dissolution of Empire*, 14.

69 MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa: Metropolitan Revolution and the Dissolution of Empire*, 14.

70 MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa: Metropolitan Revolution and the Dissolution of Empire*, 13.

71 The Editors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 12, 2025, www.britannica.com/topic/Popular-Movement-for-the-Liberation-of-Angola.

72 Praveen Davar, "The Liberation of Goa: How Nehru Defied the US and Used Force Against the Portuguese," *The Hindu*, January 10, 2018, www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-liberation-of-go/article22339624.ece.

73 United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 1514(XV), Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, A/Res/1514(XV), (Dec. 14, 1960), [docs.un.org/en/A/Res/1514\(XV\)](https://docs.un.org/en/A/Res/1514(XV)).

74 Patrick Ferreira, "The Destabilizing Impacts of the Portuguese Colonial War," *The Ascendant Historian* 3 (June 2024): 43, journals.uvic.ca/index.php/corvette/article/view/22015.

75 Ruairidh Nicoll, "The Great Escape That Changed Africa's Future," *The Guardian*, March 8, 2015, www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/08/great-escape-that-changed-africas-future.

76 Nicoll, "The Great Escape That Changed Africa's Future." ; Malcolm McVeigh and American Committee on Africa, "ANGOLA IN REVOLT," *African Activist Archive* (New York: American Committee on Africa, 1961), 6, accessed September 11, 2025, africanactivist.msu.edu/record/210-849-19894/.

77 University of Central Arkansas, "Portuguese Angola (1951-1975)," accessed September 11, 2025, uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/portuguese-angola-1951-1975.

78 University of Central Arkansas, "Portuguese Angola (1951-1975)."

79 University of Central Arkansas, "Portuguese Mozambique (1951-1975)," accessed September 11, 2025, uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/portuguese-mozambique-1951-1975/.

80 University of Central Arkansas, "Portuguese Mozambique (1951-1975)."

in 1959, PAIGC chose armed struggle.⁸¹

By the early 1960s, all three big Portuguese colonies were at war of independence or near war. Portugal acted fast and strong. Salazar ordered troops to respond, saying, "To Angola, quickly and with force."⁸² About 50,000 Portuguese soldiers went to Angola in 1961.⁸³ The army won back many areas by late 1961, but the fighting went on. Portugal sent troops to Mozambique and Guinea too. Tens of thousands fought in Africa.⁸⁴ The army built forts and searched rural areas for rebels. They cut off rebel supplies and armed some local Africans.⁸⁵

Salazar's government regime refused any negotiation on independence. Portuguese officials insisted that Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea were not colonies at all, but an integral part of Portugal. Because of this, the current events were said to be a rebellion and counted as treason.⁸⁶ The Minister of Overseas Provinces declared in 1961 that calling these territories "colonies" was wrong and that anything that happened inside of them was a matter of national structure.⁸⁷ Portugal stubbornly fought hard to keep its empire, while most other European



Portuguese forces in Colonial Africa (Credit: SGH)

countries were pulling out of Africa. Thus, Portugal became isolated in the world. African countries like Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal gained independence, and the world strongly supported their fights for freedom. Salazar's choice to fight wars in Africa against nationalist rebels made Portugal unpopular with the United Nations and new African and Asian countries, who criticized it.⁸⁸

Inside Portugal, the war caused big problems. Fighting wars in three different places over large areas was very expensive. Much of Portugal's

government money was spent on the military to keep fighting.⁸⁹ To keep people supporting the war, the government increased censorship and propaganda. They controlled the news from the war areas, praising Portuguese soldiers and settlers while calling African rebels and foreign critics terrorists and troublemakers. For example, the government hid the large number of civilian deaths in the Angola uprising of March 1961.⁹⁰

No matter the efforts made, the war lowered people's spirits. It also caused fights within the

81 University of Central Arkansas, "Portuguese Guinea (1951-1974)," accessed September 11, 2025, uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/portuguese-guinea-1951-1974.

82 "The War That Tears Estado Novo Down," NewsMuseum, August 13, 2016, accessed September 11, 2025, www.newsmuseum.pt/en/na-frente/war-tears-estado-novo-down.

83 University of Central Arkansas, "Portuguese Angola (1951-1975)."

84 University of Central Arkansas, "Portuguese Angola (1951-1975)."

85 "The War That Tears Estado Novo Down."

86 "The War That Tears Estado Novo Down."

87 "The War That Tears Estado Novo Down."

88 Ferreira, "The Destabilizing Impacts of the Portuguese Colonial War," 46.

89 Ferreira, "The Destabilizing Impacts of the Portuguese Colonial War," 44.

90 "The War That Tears Estado Novo Down."



Portuguese arriving at Goa (Credit: Jhonatan Gomes Diniz)

government. 1961 was a terrible year for Salazar's Estado Novo government. They had faced a failed coup in Lisbon, lost Goa in India, and other major internal struggles. All of this showed the government was weak.⁹¹ The Portuguese Colonial War has already caused many deaths, unsettled much of Southern Africa, and led to long UN debates about Portugal's right to rule its colonies. The fighting in Angola and growing rebellions in Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau show that Portugal can no longer keep its empire.

Liberation of Goa (December 1961)

In December 1961, India began Operation Vijay. Its goal was to end Portuguese rule in the Indian areas of Goa, Daman, and Diu. At midnight on December 17-18, about 30,000 Indian soldiers crossed into Goa. They quickly defeated the small Portuguese forces.⁹² After two days of fighting, the Portuguese surrendered in all three places by December 19.⁹³ This ended over 400 years of Portuguese rule in the area. Portugal had held

Goa since the early 1500s. Indian leaders called this the "liberation" of Indian land. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru said it removed "the last visible presence of colonialism" in India.⁹⁴

Portugal saw India's invasion as a clear act of aggression. It said Goa and the other areas were parts of Portugal, not colonies to give up. Portuguese leader António Salazar refused to accept India's claim. Portugal's UN representative called the attack "cold-blooded" and a "clear violation" of Portugal's rights.⁹⁵ India's quick takeover caused a crisis at the United Nations. On December 18, Portugal asked the Security Council to meet about India's actions.⁹⁶

Western countries mostly supported Portugal. They said India's use of force was wrong. The US, UK, France, and others said problems should be solved peacefully.⁹⁷ Because of this, the US Ambassador, Adlai Stevenson, said India's attack was against its own belief in non-violence. The US, United Kingdom, France, and Turkey asked the UN for a cease-fire and India to remove troops.⁹⁸ However, the resolution did not pass. The Soviet Union vetoed it on December 18.⁹⁹ The Soviets supported India and said it was an

91 "The War That Tears Estado Novo Down."

92 United States Department of State, "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XIX, South Asia," Historical Documents - Office of the Historian, accessed September 11, 2025, history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v19/d76.

93 United States Department of State, "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XIX, South Asia."

94 Philip Bravo, "The Case of Goa: History, Rhetoric and Nationalism," *Crossing Boundaries* 7 (February 21, 2008): 149, doi: [org/10.21971/p72p4b](https://doi.org/10.21971/p72p4b).

95 Keesing's Worldwide, "International Reactions to Indian Attack on Goa," *Keesing's Record of World Events*, vol. 8, February 1962, web.stanford.edu/group/tomzgroup/pmwiki/uploads/1074-1962-03-KS-b-RCW.pdf.

96 United States Department of State, "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XIX, South Asia."

97 Keesing's Worldwide, "International Reactions to Indian Attack on Goa."

98 United States Department of State, "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XIX, South Asia."

99 United States Department of State, "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XIX, South Asia."

internal issue about ending colonial rule. The veto stopped the UN from acting.¹⁰⁰

The world was divided along the Cold War line. On one hand, Western countries, friendly to Portugal, condemned India. Official statements in London, Washington, Ottawa, Canberra and other capitals expressed regret or disappointment at India's military intervention.¹⁰¹ The United Kingdom said it "deeply deplored" India's use of force. The US warned India privately and condemned the action publicly as violation of the UN Charter.¹⁰² These countries said change should come by talks and negotiation, not war. For example, New Zealand's leader was shocked that India fought, since India was traditionally against violence.¹⁰³

In contrast, many countries in Asia, Africa, and the Communist bloc praised India. Soviet leader Khrushchev congratulated India. He said ending colonial outposts was right, lawful and justified.¹⁰⁴ The Eastern Bloc and many non-aligned countries backed India. Many new African and Asian states also agreed. For example, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Indonesia praised India's fight against colonialism.¹⁰⁵

Arab states also supported India. Egypt called India's efforts "legitimate." Morocco said India had been patient but was forced to fight by Portugal. Similarly, Tunisia hoped Goa's freedom would help bring faster the end of Portuguese rule in Africa.¹⁰⁶

Indian leaders told the UN that Portugal's refusal to give up its colonies peacefully left India no choice but to act. They said getting rid of colonialism in India was more important than following general Charter rules.¹⁰⁷ This brought concerns to some Western countries. They were worried that accepting India's actions might encourage other countries to fight over land. In early 1962, some Europeans feared India's win could inspire places like Indonesia to try taking West New Guinea by force, which was already a possible conflict.¹⁰⁸

India's win in Goa showed that even the strongest European colonies could be broken free, inspiring anti-colonial movements everywhere. The event was an important moment in the fight against colonialism, though it also raised questions about using force. For India and many other new

countries, ending Portuguese rule in Goa was fixing a long-standing wrong and supporting the UN's anti-colonial goals.

The United Nations and International Push for Decolonization

After the Second World War, the United Nations was founded in 1945 in San Francisco, California.¹⁰⁹ It was meant to replace the League of Nations, which had formed after World War I and the Treaty of Versailles.¹¹⁰ The UN aimed to improve on the work of the League. It was centered around the Allied Powers, had a broader mandate, and promised to give all states, even colonies, a voice.¹¹¹

The United Nations was organized into several main bodies. The International Court of Justice acted as the leading legal body. A key institution was the Security Council, which handled security and peace. Five permanent members sat on the Council: France, the Republic of China, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the United Kingdom, and the United States.¹¹²

100 Keesing's Worldwide, "International Reactions to Indian Attack on Goa."

101 Keesing's Worldwide, "International Reactions to Indian Attack on Goa."

102 United States Department of State, "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XIX, South Asia."

103 Keesing's Worldwide, "International Reactions to Indian Attack on Goa."

104 Keesing's Worldwide, "International Reactions to Indian Attack on Goa."

105 Keesing's Worldwide, "International Reactions to Indian Attack on Goa."

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107 Keesing's Worldwide, "International Reactions to Indian Attack on Goa."

108 Keesing's Worldwide, "International Reactions to Indian Attack on Goa."

109 "About Us," United Nations, accessed July 20, 2025, www.un.org/en/about-us.

110 Palace of Versailles, "The Treaty of Versailles, 1919."

111 Leland M Goodrich, "From League of Nations to United Nations," *International Organization* 1, no. 1 (1947): 3–21. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2703515>.

112 "Interactive Handbook | Security Council," United Nations, accessed July 20, 2025, main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/interactive-handbook.

The UN soon began adding members and responding to conflicts. Among the early disputes were those related to India and Pakistan, and to Palestine. The UN also started addressing colonial issues in Africa. One example was a General Assembly resolution on the Algerian conflict, which recognized Algerian casualties in their War of Independence. It expressed hope for a peaceful and fair solution in line with the UN Charter.¹¹³

Although this resolution did not mention Portugal directly, it laid the groundwork for future colonial debates. A key moment came with Resolution A/RES/12/1514. It declared that foreign domination denied human rights and that all peoples had the right to self-determination. It called for immediate steps to transfer power to the people of the colonies.¹¹⁴ The language clearly applied to all colonial powers. The resolution passed strongly in the General Assembly with 81 votes in favor, none against, and nine abstentions.

More resolutions followed. A/RES/15/1541 and A/RES/15/1542 set out principles under Chapter XI of the UN Charter (Articles

73–74). These resolutions identified Portuguese territories such as Cape Verde, Portuguese Guinea, São Tomé and Príncipe, São João Batista de Ajudá, Angola, Mozambique, Goa, Macau, and Timor as “non-self-governing territories.”¹¹⁵ In addition, Resolution A/RES/15/1573 again called for Algerian independence, citing Article 1, Paragraph 2 of the UN Charter, which promoted equal rights and self-determination as the basis for peace.¹¹⁶

While these resolutions did not force Portugal to change its policies, they made the UN’s position on decolonization clear. In April 1961, the General Assembly passed Resolution A/RES/15/1603. This resolution requested Portugal to comply with their stated position and created a subcommittee to study reports on Angola.¹¹⁷ Only a month later, fighting broke out in Luanda, Angola, leading to heavy loss of life. The passage of Resolutions 1514, 1541, and 1542 had therefore coincided with major violence in Portuguese Africa.¹¹⁸

On June 9, 1961, the Security Council passed Resolution S/RES/163 on Angola. Unlike

General Assembly resolutions, this one was binding. It reaffirmed earlier demands and called on Portugal to act in line with the Charter. It also extended the mandate of the Angola subcommittee created under Resolution 1603. While softer in tone, the resolution still pressed Portugal to change.¹¹⁹ More resolutions kept the pressure on Portugal. In December 1961, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution condemning Portugal’s non-compliance. This resolution openly condemned Portugal’s refusal to comply. It asked all member states to use their influence to push Portugal to fulfill its obligations. It also urged members to deny Portugal any support or assistance that could be used to oppress the people of its colonies.

113 United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 1012, Question of Algeria, A/RES/1012, (Feb. 15, 1957), docs.un.org/en/A/RES/1013(XI).

114 United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 1514, Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples, A/RES/1514, (Dec. 14, 1960), docs.un.org/en/A/RES/1514(XV).

115 United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 1 UNTS XVI, Article 73 (Jun. 26, 1945), treaties.un.org/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf; United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 1541, Principles which should guide Members in determining whether or not an obligation exists to transmit the information called for under Article 73e of the Charter, A/RES/1541, (Dec. 15, 1960), docs.un.org/en/A/RES/1541(XV); United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 1542, Transmission of information under Article 73e of the Charter, A/RES/1542, (Dec. 14, 1960), docs.un.org/en/A/RES/1542(XV).

116 United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 1 UNTS XVI, Article 1 (Jun. 26, 1945), treaties.un.org/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf; United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 1573, Question of Algeria, A/RES/1573, (Dec. 19, 1960), docs.un.org/en/A/RES/1573(XV).

117 United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 1603, The situation in Angola, A/RES/1603, (Apr. 20, 1961), docs.un.org/en/A/RES/1573(XV).

118 Carl A. Anderson, “The Case of Goa: History, Rhetoric and Nationalism,” *Denver Journal of International Policy and Law* 4, no. 1 (January 1974), 133–151.

119 United Nations Security Council, Resolution 163, Question Relating to Angola, S/RES/163, (Jun. 9, 1961), docs.un.org/en/S/RES/163(1961)

BLOC ANALYSIS

Points of Division

For the purposes of this Model UN simulation, certain Security Council members in this committee [Belgium, Greece, Turkey, and the Republic of the Congo (Léopoldville)] will serve as non-voting participants.

These delegations can vote on procedural matters and make motions but will not vote on resolutions.

The main points of division in these blocs come from their government and belief system. Socialist and communist countries, based on Marxist ideas, see colonialism as a form of exploitation. They want quick and full decolonization. They often call the Portuguese empire a base of capitalist power backed by NATO.

Socialist and communist states, following Marxist ideas, see colonialism as a form of economic exploitation that helps wealthy countries at the expense of poorer ones. They demand immediate and complete decolonization, arguing that Portugal's empire is a base of Western capitalist power backed by NATO and defended by other colonial powers. Many newly independent states, especially in Africa and Asia, share this goal of freedom for colonies but they

disagree on how to achieve it. Some call for United Nations pressure, sanctions, or peacekeeping, while others believe only armed struggle can end Portuguese rule.

On the other side, Western European colonial powers and their allies, many of whom had taken part in the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, argue for a slow, controlled transition. They fear that a sudden Portuguese withdrawal could lead to chaos or Soviet expansion in Africa. Portugal's NATO membership complicates the debate. Many Western countries are reluctant to publicly condemn a close ally, even while recognizing that its colonial system goes against the UN Charter. Meanwhile, Afro-Asian and socialist countries push hard for quick and decisive decolonization, turning the issue into a flashpoint of Cold War politics.

Parties to the Berlin Conference

The countries in this group were once the imperial powers of Europe. At the Berlin Conference, they divided Africa into colonial territories to avoid conflicts among themselves.¹²⁰ These countries later

joined the 'Scramble for Africa' in the late 1800s. Countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and France colonized most of Africa. Between 1870 and 1914, the amount of African land controlled by Europeans rose from 10 percent to 90 percent. These countries often supported colonial powers and had past relationships with Portugal.¹²¹

These countries likely align with colonizing powers and also share past relationships with Portugal. Some of these states were all Allied Powers during World War II. They fought against fascist governments. Also, many in this bloc had conflicts with Portugal over land control. These countries generally favor a step-by-step approach to decolonization.¹²² They often argue that colonies are not yet "ready" for full independence and that a careful transition is necessary to prevent instability or communist influence. They cite the Truman Doctrine and Cold War containment policies, which warned that sudden power vacuums could let the Soviet Union spread its influence.¹²³

They may also be cautious about pushing for decolonization because they have military interests in the region. For instance, NATO bases in the Portuguese Azores are vital for Western defense. Because

120 Shola Lawal, "Berlin Conference: How Europe Carved up Africa 140 Years Ago," Al Jazeera, February 27, 2025, www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/2/26/colonising-africa-what-happened-at-the-berlin-conference-of-1884-1885.

121 G. Macharia Munene, "THE UNITED STATES AND THE BERLIN CONFERENCE ON THE PARTITION OF AFRICA, 1884–1885," *Transafrican Journal of History* 19 (1990): 73–79. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24328676>.

122 "Milestones in the History of US Foreign Relations: The Truman Doctrine, 1947," US Department of State, accessed July 20, 2025, history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/truman-doctrine

123 "Milestones in the History of US Foreign Relations: Decolonization of Asia and Africa, 1945–1960," US Department of State, accessed July 20, 2025, history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/asia-and-africa.

of this, these countries avoid pressuring Portugal too much, preferring quiet diplomacy and economic cooperation over public confrontation.¹²⁴

Formerly Colonized States

Countries in this group were colonized in the past. Most come from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. They have recently become independent. They see Portuguese colonialism as the old system they left behind. They want to stop colonization now and in the future. Some countries in this group include Ireland, Ghana, India, and Egypt. These were once ruled by the United Kingdom. Others in this bloc are Chile and Venezuela who were ruled by Spain.

These countries support immediate decolonization and the right of all peoples to self-determination. They reject the idea that modernization or gradual

reform can justify keeping colonies. Instead, they follow the dependency theory, which argues that rich countries stay rich by exploiting poorer ones through colonialism and global trade.¹²⁵

Members of this bloc have repeatedly called on the UN to condemn Portugal's refusal to give up its colonies. Some, like India and Ghana, push for UN investigations, economic sanctions, or suspension of Portugal from international bodies. Others prefer negotiation through the UN, but all agree that Portugal's claim that its colonies are "overseas provinces" is outdated and false.

States Leaning Toward Socialist/Communist Ideals

This bloc is led by the Soviet Union and includes Eastern European countries such as Romania, as well as China. The

countries of this bloc see Portuguese colonies as symbols of Western imperialism and military footholds for NATO in Africa and Asia.

In their view, the fight against colonialism is part of the global struggle between capitalism and socialism. They argue that Portugal's empire serves Western profit and military control, and they offer political, financial, and military support to African liberation movements, including the MPLA in Angola and FRELIMO in Mozambique.

These states consistently push for stronger UN resolutions, sanctions on Portugal, and recognition of African liberation groups as legitimate representatives of their people. They reject gradual change, calling it a trick to delay independence. For them, the conflict over Portugal's colonies is not only about freedom—it is about which system will shape the post-colonial world.

COMMITTEE MISSION

Chapter V of the United Nations Charter outlines the composition, powers and responsibilities, and mandate for the United Nations Security Council. Article 23 dictates that the Security Council

"shall consist of eleven Members of the United Nations."¹²⁶ These 11 countries have the "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security"

as prescribed by Article 24 of the United Nations Charter.¹²⁷

Chapter VI describes how the Security Council can respond to conflicts, beginning with a

¹²⁴ Luís Nuno Rodrigues, "The United States and Portuguese Decolonization," *Portuguese Studies* 29, no. 2 (2013): 164, doi.org/10.5699/portstudies.29.2.0164.

¹²⁵ Anna Da Silva, "Modernization Theory: EBSCO," EBSCO Information Services, Inc. | www.ebsco.com, accessed July 20, 2025, www.ebsco.com/research-starters/social-sciences-and-humanities/modernization-theory.

¹²⁶ United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 1 UNTS XVI, Article 23 (Jun. 26, 1945), treaties.un.org/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf.

¹²⁷ United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 1 UNTS XVI, Article 24 (Jun. 26, 1945), treaties.un.org/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf.

peaceful solution, and how any member can raise the concern to the Security Council. Article 33 states, “The parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice.”¹²⁸ The second approach the Security Council may take is described in Chapter VII, outlines a militaristic approach if a peaceful approach or peaceful intervention were proven “inadequate.”¹²⁹

Chapter VII authorizes enforcement measures; peacekeeping developed by practice rather than explicit Charter text. By 1962, the UN had fielded missions such as UNTSO, UNMOGIP, UNEF, and ONUC—establishing peacekeeping practice despite no explicit Charter basis.¹³⁰

While the Security Council has no active mission in any Portuguese-held territory, ONUC has been engaged in the Congo to prevent anarchy following Katanga’s secession.¹³¹ The force peaked at roughly 20,000. This

sets a precedent for future UN involvement in Africa. Although no peacekeeping force has been established for Portuguese territories, the General Assembly adopted A/RES/1603 (XV) (1961) urging Portugal to comply with earlier decolonization resolutions and establishing a subcommittee on Angola; the Security Council, in S/RES/163 (1961), called on Portugal to act in accordance with the Charter and took note of that GA subcommittee’s work.¹³²

128 United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 1 UNTS XVI, Article 33 (Jun. 26, 1945), treaties.un.org/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf.

129 United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 1 UNTS XVI, Article 33 (Jun. 26, 1945), treaties.un.org/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf.

130 “United Nations Commission for Indonesia (UNCI) 1949 - 1950,” Australian War Memorial, accessed July 28, 2025, www.awm.gov.au/collection/CN500116; “United Nations Observation Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL),” United Nations, accessed July 28, 2025, peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/past/unogil.htm; “ONUC,” United Nations, accessed July 28, 2025, peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/past/onuc.htm; “First United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I),” United Nations, accessed July 28, 2025, peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/past/unefi.htm; “UNTSO Peacekeeping,” United Nations, accessed July 28, 2025, peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/untso; “UNMOGIP Peacekeeping,” United Nations, accessed July 28, 2025, peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unmogip.

131 “ONUC,” United Nations, accessed July 28, 2025, peacekeeping.un.org/mission/past/onucB.htm.

132 United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 1541, Principles which should guide Members in determining whether or not an obligation exists to transmit the information called for under Article 73e of the Charter, A/RES/1541, (Dec. 15, 1960), [docs.un.org/en/A/RES/1541\(XV\)](https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/1541(XV)); United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 1542, Transmission of information under Article 73e of the Charter, A/RES/1542, (Dec. 14, 1960), [docs.un.org/en/A/RES/1542\(XV\)](https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/1542(XV)); United Nations Security Council, Resolution 163, Question Relating to Angola, S/RES/163, (Jun. 9, 1961), [docs.un.org/en/S/RES/163\(1961\)](https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/163(1961))

RESEARCH AND PREPARATION QUESTIONS

The following research and preparation questions are meant to help you begin your research on your country's policy. These questions should be carefully considered, as they embody some of the main critical thought and learning objectives surrounding your topic.

Topic A

1. How can the Security Council attempt to stabilize the political situation in the Congo without violating its sovereignty as an independent state?
2. Consider the shortcomings of the ONUC peacekeeping mission in the Congo. What place do peacekeepers have in resolving this conflict (if at all) and how can the failures of the ONUC be rectified?
3. What interests does your country have in the Congo? How might these interests affect their stance on Katangese independence?
4. Where does your country fall during the Cold War, and how might this affect their bloc position when writing resolutions?
5. Suppose the region of Katanga succeeds in its bid for independence. What sort of precedent would this set for other African countries undergoing decolonization movements?
6. What risks does Katanga's refusal to follow the UN reconciliation plan pose to the stability of the Congo?
7. Does the involvement of ONUC and Belgium help or hinder efforts to resolve the Katanga crisis through external intervention? Would the use of force and political action by ONUC be helpful in ending Katanga's secession?

Topic B

1. What measures can the Security Council take to respect Portuguese sovereignty while preventing violence within colonized territory? To what extent does the principle of self-determination apply to the colonies, and how can this principle be balanced with Portuguese sovereignty?
2. Is Portugal's continued administration of its colonies consistent with international law, and if not, what new frameworks or amendments might be necessary to govern the extent of states' overseas dominions?
3. To what extent could immediate independence from Portuguese administration be more harmful for the civilian population?
4. Does your country have claims to any overseas territories? How might this affect your stance on Portugal's colonial rule?
5. How might the Security Council use its authority to prevent conflict or destabilization?

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Topic A

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Topic B

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