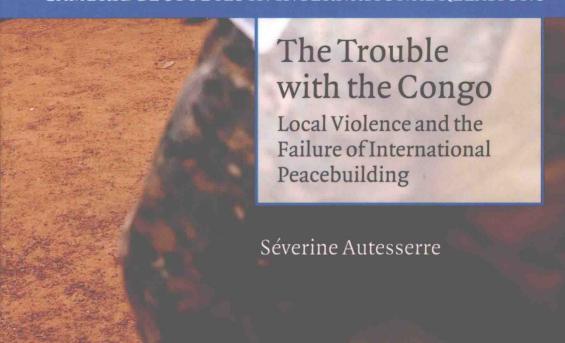


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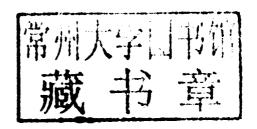


The Trouble with the Congo

Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding

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The Trouble with the Congo

The Trouble with the Congo suggests a new explanation for international peacebuilding failures in civil wars. Drawing from more than 330 interviews and a year and a half of field research, it develops a case study of the international intervention during the Democratic Republic of the Congo's unsuccessful transition from war to peace and democracy (2003-2006). Grassroots rivalries over land, resources, and political power motivated widespread violence. However, a dominant peacebuilding culture shaped the intervention strategy in a way that precluded action on local conflicts. ultimately dooming the international efforts to end the deadliest conflict since World War II. Most international actors interpreted continued fighting as the consequence of national and regional tensions alone. Diplomats and United Nations staff viewed intervention at the macro levels as their only legitimate responsibility. The dominant culture constructed local peacebuilding as such an unimportant, unfamiliar, and unmanageable task that neither shocking events nor resistance from certain individuals could convince international actors to reevaluate their understanding of violence and intervention. Through this in-depth analysis, The Trouble with the Congo proposes innovative ways to address civil wars in Africa and beyond.

SÉVERINE AUTESSERRE is an Assistant Professor of political science, specializing in international relations and African studies, at Barnard College, Columbia University. Her research focuses on civil wars, peacebuilding and peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, and African politics, and her findings have appeared in scholarly and policy journals including Foreign Affairs, International Organization, the African Studies Review, the Review of African Political Economy, the Journal of Humanitarian Affairs, and Birikim. Over the past twelve years, Professor Autesserre has worked periodically for humanitarian and development agencies in Afghanistan, the Congo, India, Kosovo, and Nicaragua. She has conducted extensive fieldwork in the eastern Congo since 2001.

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Glossary of Acronyms, Names, and Ethnic Terms

Throughout the book, I use the shorthand "the Congo" to refer to the book's subject, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, not to be confused with the neighboring Republic of Congo.

"Regional" in the book refers to the African Great Lakes region: Burundi, the Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda. "Local" refers to the level of the individual, the family, the clan, the municipality, the community, the district, and, occasionally, the ethnic group.

Following Congolese practice and the reference book on the topic (Willame 1997), I use the term Banyarwanda to refer to Congolese with Rwandan ancestry living in North Kivu, and Banyamulenge to refer to Congolese with Rwandan ancestry living in South Kivu. I use "Congolese of Rwandan descent," "Congolese with Rwandan ancestry," and "Kinyarwanda-speaking Congolese" interchangeably to refer to both the Banyarwanda and the Banyamulenge communities together.

In accordance with Anglophone academic texts, newspaper articles, and policy documents, I use the French acronyms for Congospecific terms.

AFDL	Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour
	la Libération du Congo-Zaïre / Alliance of
	Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the
	Congo-Zaire. Main rebel group during the
	1996 war; put Kabila in power
Banyamulenge	Congolese with Rwandan ancestry living in
	South Kivu (literally "people from Mulenge")
Banyarwanda	Congolese with Rwandan ancestry living in
	North Kivu (literally "people from Rwanda")
Bemba, Jean-Pierre	President of the Congo Liberation Movement;
	vice president of the Congo during the
	transition

xiv	Glossary of Acronyms, Names, and Ethnic Terms
DDRRR	Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration and Resettlement. Program for foreign armed groups
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EU	European Union
FDLR	Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda / Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda. Rwandan rebel group composed mostly of ethnic Hutus and based in the eastern Congo
Indigenous	Term used by ethnic groups that are native to the eastern Congo to differen- tiate themselves from "foreign" ethnic groups, in particular the Congolese with Rwandan ancestry
Kabila, Laurent-Dési	ré President of the Congo from 1997 to his assasination in 2001
Kabila, Joseph	Son of late president Laurent-Désiré Kabila; president of the Congo since 2001
Mai Mai	Local militias formed on ethnic bases throughout the eastern Congo
MLC	Mouvement de Libération du Congo / Congo Liberation Movement. Second

Congo Liberation Movement. Second main rebel movement during the 1998 war; allied with Uganda; transformed into political party during the transition

Mobutu, Joseph President of the Congo from 1965 to

1997

MONUC Mission de l'Organisation des Nations

Unies au Congo / United Nations Mission in the Congo. Deployed from 1999 to the

present

Nkunda, Laurent Military officer, rebelled against the tran-

sitional authorities in May 2004 and took over Bukavu. Former colonel of the

RCD-G's armed wing

ONUC	Opération des Nations Unies au Congo / United Nations Operation in the Congo. Deployed from 1960 to 1964
RCD	Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie / Congolese Rally for Democracy. Initial rebel movement during the 1998 war
RCD-G	Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie-Goma / Congolese Rally for Democracy-Goma. Main rebel group during the 1998 war; allied with Rwanda; controlled most of the eastern Congo; transformed into political party during the transition
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States



Figure 1 Map of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Its Neighbors. This figure is based on the United Nations' map entitled *Democratic Republic of the Congo* (no. 4007 Rev. 8, January 2004).

Preface and Acknowledgments

This book grew out of the bewilderment I felt during my first visit to the Congo. I arrived in February 2001, a young humanitarian aid worker sent by Medicos Sin Fronteras (the Spanish section of Médecins Sans Frontières) to open its mission and projects in the country. I spent six months trying to understand the Congolese context so that Medicos Sin Fronteras could best respond to the humanitarian crisis, but felt I failed to reach beneath the surface. Whenever it seemed I was beginning to grasp the dynamics of violence, I found that my brand new framework of analysis would invariably collapse the next day. Congolese friends and humanitarian colleagues usually explained the conflict through a relatively simple macro framework, as a combination of two wars: an international confrontation between the Congo and Rwanda, and an ethnic conflict that pitted indigenous Congolese against ethnic Hutus and Tutsis with Rwandan ancestry living in the Congo. Yet this analysis not only failed to explain many aspects of violence, it also rendered certain dynamics even more puzzling. For example, why did indigenous Congolese ally with Rwandan Hutu armed groups? Why did some ethnic Tutsis ally with President Kabila, the indigenous Congolese's patron, to fight other ethnic Tutsis?

From 2002 to 2004, I progressively left the humanitarian world and turned to political science, which only drew me back to the Congo. I was struck by how underanalyzed the conflict was and, after returning to the country for two months with Medicos Sin Fronteras in 2003, I decided to dedicate my research to the Congolese wars. The issues were so complex that they unceasingly sparked my interest, as they continue to do today. As my understanding of the patterns of violence on the ground increased, new puzzles appeared, centered on the international response to the conflict. It became clear to me that local agendas drove a large part of the continuing violence. Why then did diplomats, United Nations officials, and nongovernmental organization staff members continually fail to consider the local dynamics?

More broadly, why did international peacebuilders succeed in imposing peace only at the national and international levels and not at the subnational level? These questions shaped the extensive field research I conducted from 2004 to 2007. They also informed the analysis that, after years of study, several publications in policy and academic journals, and numerous briefings and invited talks, has culminated in this book.

From the first draft paper I wrote on this topic, I hoped that my scholarly inquiry could be useful to the friends, colleagues, and Congolese citizens that I had reluctantly left behind to work in New York. From the outset, I thus dedicated my research to the victims of the Congolese conflict: those killed, tortured, raped, and displaced; those forced to witness atrocities committed against their loved ones; and all of those whose lives were otherwise disrupted by the conflict. It is my aspiration to contribute to the scholarly literature on civil wars and international interventions; yet my broader wish is that this book assists all those who strive for peace in the Congo, so that eventually no woman, man, or child will suffer further from the horrific violence that has recently plagued the region.

The heart of my research, and the basis of The Trouble with the Congo, is the qualitative data I collected from more than 330 in-depth interviews. These interviews offer an unparalleled set of information on perceptions of violence, peace, and intervention in the Congo. My most heartfelt thanks therefore go to all of the people who took time from their busy schedules to meet with an unknown researcher. I am deeply grateful to the victims of violence for sharing their stories with me, international peacebuilders for introducing me to the inner working of their organizations, Congolese leaders for patiently answering my endless questions, and all of my other interviewees for sharing their insights and concerns about the war and peace process. I did not expect to encounter such willingness to help, such readiness to disclose potentially sensitive information, such openness regarding delicate subjects, and such interest in my work. Several Congolese and international interviewees went out of their way after our meetings to introduce me to their contacts, send articles and documents that they thought might interest me, and provide feedback on my preliminary findings. I wish I could acknowledge all of my interviewees by name, but as I promised to keep our interactions confidential, I can extend only a broad thanks; I want them to know that their kindness and

the gratitude I felt for all their help was often what kept me moving forward.

Fieldwork in the midst of continuing violence is challenging. In this regard, I am greatly indebted to the Congolese and foreign teams who worked for Action Against Hunger | ACF International in the Kivus, Kinshasa, and New York from 2004 to 2007. I cannot thank them enough for leading me out of trouble the numerous times things went awry: when my fieldwork plans regularly fell apart or when the administrative, security, and logistical challenges proved too difficult to maneuver alone. I also wish to thank the staff of Medicos Sin Fronteras and Médecins Sans Frontières-Belgium for providing me with logistic, security, and administrative backup during my 2004 research in the Kivus, North Katanga, and Kinshasa. Additionally, I am much obliged to the teams of Oxfam, the Norwegian Refugee Council, and the United Nations Mission in the Congo (MONUC). for occasionally welcoming me to their homes in Goma and Bunia so that I could pursue my research in safe conditions. I owe a special thanks to the Action Against Hunger and MONUC teams stationed in Bukavu in May and June 2004, and in particular to David Blanc, for ensuring that I remained unharmed in the midst of heavy fighting.

Colleagues in North America and Europe also provided wonderful support. I am deeply indebted to Elisabeth Jean Wood and Timothy Mitchell for their guidance throughout this project. They helped me develop many ideas and navigate the research and writing process, and their advice bolstered most of the book. Jean-Claude Willame and René Lemarchand similarly acted as considerable resources. Their expertise on the Congo, in particular on the microlevel dynamics of violence in the Kivus and on international interventions in Central Africa, helped me develop a much stronger analysis. Michael Barnett, Kevin Dunn, Shepard Forman, Meghan Lynch, Stephen John Stedman, and two anonymous reviewers read the entire manuscript at different stages of the project. Their advice saved me from countless errors and helped sharpen large parts of the argument. Susanna Campbell, Christine Cheng, Alexander Cooley, Page Fortna, Joshua Goldstein, Stephen Jackson, Robert Jervis, Bruce Jones, Stathis Kalyvas, Peter Katzenstein, Zachariah Mampilly, Roland Marchal, Kimberley Marten, Michael Nest, Iver Brynild Neumann, Brett O'Bannon, William Reno, Hans Romkema, Ingrid Samset, Ole Jacob Sending, Jack Snyder, Jessica Stanton, Alex Veit, Thierry Vircoulon,

Koen Vlassenroot, and Susan Woodward also took the time to read draft texts and contributed crucial suggestions.

The audiences and participants of the numerous seminars, workshops, panels, conferences, and graduate classes at which I presented my research offered beneficial comments on versions of various chapters. Notably, the extensive feedback I received from policy makers and practitioners who worked in the Congo was invaluable, as it helped validate that I had adequately captured the international peacebuilders' views of their own situations. Anonymous reviewers for International Organization, the African Studies Review, and the Review of African Political Economy, as well as conversations with the editors of these various journals and of Foreign Affairs also provided useful guidance on articles that I later incorporated in the book. Finally, thank you to David Prout for compiling the index and to the editorial and production teams at Cambridge University Press - especially Lew Bateman, Eric Crahan, Jason Przybylski, and Joe Marwein at Newgen - for their work in transforming the raw manuscript into a real book.

I began research at New York University; conceptualized the book when in residence at the Yale University Program on Order, Conflict, and Violence; and wrote and finalized the manuscript at Barnard College, Columbia University. The three places provided wonderful intellectual environments in which to pursue this project. I am especially grateful to my Yale, Barnard, and Columbia colleagues and students for their warmth and support. Barnard and Columbia also served as an ideal place to recruit a team of superb research assistants. Sara Arrow, Danielle Boyda, Emily Crossin, Skye Tian Gao, Daniel Greenberg, Eliana Horn, Emma Impick, and Sarah Marion Shore worked tirelessly on the book during the final stretch. They edited the manuscript, ensured that it was accessible to nonspecialists, and rid it of factual errors and English infelicities.

I was fortunate to receive funding from a number of institutions, to which I am forever appreciative. They include New York University; the United States Institute of Peace; the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (through the Inter-University Consortium on Security and Humanitarian Aid); the Yale University Program on Order, Conflict, and Violence; and Barnard College, Columbia University. I gratefully acknowledge permission to reproduce sections of the articles in which I tested preliminary versions of my argument, notably "Local

Violence, National Peace? Post-War 'Settlement' in the Eastern D.R. Congo (2003-2006)" (African Studies Review 49 (3): 1-29, 2006, reproduced with permission of the African Studies Association via Copyright Clearance Center); "Explaining Peace Building Failures: A Study of the Eastern D.R. Congo (2003-2006)" (Review of African Political Economy 34 (113): 423-42, 2006, reprinted by permission of Taylor & Francis Group, http://www.informaworld.com); "The Trouble with Congo" (Foreign Affairs 87 (3): 94-110, 2008; title used and portions of the article reprinted by permission of FOREIGN AFFAIRS, (87, 3); copyright 2008 by the Council on Foreign Relations, Inc); and "Hobbes and the Congo. Frames, Local Violence, and International Intervention" (International Organization 63: 249-80. Cambridge University Press, 2009). I also wish to thank the readers of these journals, as their feedback helped me revise and refine large parts of my analysis in preparation for this book. Of course, any errors in the book are mine alone, and the views I express do not necessarily reflect the views of any of my donors, supporting organizations, colleagues, readers, or interviewees.

Above all, I extend my great appreciation to my friends and family for providing care, humor, and much-welcomed opportunities to remember that there is a life beyond my research and a world beyond the Congo. In particular, my husband Philippe Rosen has been a constant source of support and inspiration, from when the Congo was simply the place of our next humanitarian mission to the scrutiny of this book's proofs nine years later. I thank him deeply for his insightful feedback on countless versions of my argument, for his patience when my fieldwork kept us apart for months, and for his never-faltering belief in me and my project. This book would not have existed without him.

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