Re-evaluating Peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A case study in Dongo

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Re-evaluating Peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A case study in Dongo

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Re-evaluating Peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A case study in Dongo

University of San Francisco

Re-evaluating Peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A case study in Dongo

A Research Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences
Master’s Program in International Studies

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts in International Studies

By
Wilita Dennis-Park Sanguma

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgement.................................................................................................6

Abstract.................................................................................................................7

Chapter I: Introduction............................................................................................8
  Background...........................................................................................................10
  Problem..............................................................................................................11
  Thesis Case Study...............................................................................................12
  Research Thesis Question...................................................................................13
  Purpose of Study.................................................................................................13
  Limitations.........................................................................................................14
  Significance........................................................................................................14

Chapter II: Literature Review................................................................................17
  Introduction.......................................................................................................17
  Theoretical Framework.......................................................................................19
  The Interconnectedness of Discourse, Identity, and Human Needs.................20
    Discourse.......................................................................................................20
    Identity..........................................................................................................22
    Human Needs.................................................................................................23
  The Impacts of Discourse, Identity, and Human Needs on Local Struggles in Congo.........................................................................................................................24
    Local Disputes, Crisis of Belonging...............................................................24
    Identity and Conflict......................................................................................25
    The Importance of Local Struggles...............................................................28
  Failure to Recognize Local Struggles...............................................................29
Conclusion……………………………………………………………………….30

Contribution of this Thesis……………………………………………………31

Chapter III: Methodology……………………………………………………33

Introduction……………………………………………………………………33

Setting/Sample Participants………………………………………………33

Measurement Instrument/ Data Collection……………………………35

Literature Research…………………………………………………………35

Oral Interviews……………………………………………………………35

Extended Case Method…………………………………………………38

Data Analysis………………………………………………………………39

Sources Covering the Dongo Conflict………………………………….39

Chapter IV: Context……………………………………………………………41

History of Violence…………………………………………………………41

The Impact on Dongo…………………………………………………44

The Congo Wars…………………………………………………………47

First Congo War, 1996-1998………………………………………………47

Second Congo War, 1998-2003…………………………………………….48

Impacts of the Wars on Dongo Conflict………………………………....49

Peacebuilding Process…………………………………………………52

Failure to Promote a Lasting Peace……………………………………54

The Importance of Dongo to the Peacebuilding Efforts………………55

Conclusion……………………………………………………………………56

Chapter V: Research Case Study…………………………………………57
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Abstract

The Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo) is a country rich with natural resources centered in the heart of Africa. Since the colonial era, the country has seen more bloodshed than peace and development. From 1996 to 2003, Congo experienced the worst conflict since World War II, with over six million people dead. Despite having the largest United Nations peacekeeping troops present; Congo continues to be plagued by violence. This research thesis argues that the international community failed to promote a lasting peace in Congo because the international community’s peacebuilding method ignored local struggles. Local struggles have been one of the main factors perpetuating violence and instability within Congo. In 2009, a local dispute over land escalated in Dongo, a small city in the Equateur province of Congo. Starting as a small scale conflict, the local dispute erupted into a large scale conflict, threatening national security. The conflict resulted in over 2,000 civilian deaths and over 150,000 displaced persons. Using Dongo as a case study, the research thesis illustrates the importance of local struggles and how small scale conflicts can evolve to a large scale conflict. This research aims to expand the understanding of local struggles and their negative impacts on peace in Congo.

Key words: discourse, identity, human needs, ethnic conflict, structural violence, corruption, top-down, bottom-up, peacebuilding, cycle of violence, indigenousness, dichotomy of privilege and oppression, land dispute, reconciliation
Chapter I: Introduction

Gnatola ma no kpon sia, eyenabe adelan to kpo mi sena. (Until the lion has his or her own storyteller, the hunter will always have the best part of the story.)

By: Ewe-mina

From 1996 to 2003, the Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo) experienced one of the worst conflicts in the 21st century. Despite the international community’s peacebuilding effort, the peacebuilding process was ineffective because it failed to promote a lasting peace in Congo. The reason is that the peacebuilding endeavor ignored small scale conflicts, not realizing that proxy conflicts and local struggles were one of the main factors stimulating violence in Congo. Until today, small scale conflicts continue to perpetuate violence and instability within Congo.

Vigorous fighting erupted in the small city of Dongo in October 2009 causing hundreds of deaths and displacing almost the entire population. Dongo is an important trade route on the Ubangi River located in Northwestern Congo. According to Refugee International (2010, March 31), the governance of Dongo historically belonged to the Lobala ethnic group, but over the years, the Boba ethnic group increasingly began to control the city economically and politically. The Lobala’s decline in socio-economic power was due to their inability to generate new, or maintain old, economic activities (IRIN Global, 2010, February 2). Refugee International claims that the increased marginalization of the Lobala led to Odjani’s armed rebellion against the Boba (2010, March 31). Odjani is a son of a witchdoctor from the Lobala ethnic group that led the rebellion in Dongo. Despite the socio-economic struggles, it was the dispute over land and fishing rights between the people of the Enyele village and the Munzaya village that originally intensified the conflict between the Lobala and the Boba (Refugee International, 2010, March 31). In 2009, About 2,700 people were killed and 150,000 additional civilians were displaced

from Dongo and its surrounding villages as a result of the Dongo conflict (Autesserre, 2010, p. 278).²

The city of Dongo is located in the Kungu territory of the Sud-Ubangi district of the Equateur Province of Congo. Dongo is situated by the Ubangi River, which is a natural boundary between Congo and the Republic of Congo. Dongo’s strategic setting by the Ubangi River makes it an important trade route between Bangi (Republic of Congo), Gemena, and Mbandaka; making Dongo a channel for trade and commerce. As a result, Dongo’s economic activities heavily rely on trade. The market center in Dongo brings members from the surrounding villages together to trade and do business. The current dynamic of the city has changed due to the influx migration of people from the surrounding villages and cities after the 2009 conflict. This phenomenon is greatly due to the placement of non-government organizations (NGOs) in Dongo. Commerce within Dongo has shifted from primarily focusing on trading produce to primarily trading material goods and services.

With a population of over 100,000 people and due to its strategic setting, Dongo is a central cosmopolitan city in the Kungu territory.³ Dongo’s ethnic diversity is greatly due to the creation of the Comule Mokusi Plantation (a palm tree plantation established during colonialism) and the recent influx of migrants after the Dongo conflict. The small city is comprised of different ethnic groups such as the Bomboli, Lobala, Bomboma, Munzombo, Ngbaka, Ngbandi, Baka, and more. Given the region’s tropical forest surrounding and the abundance of water, most surrounding villages heavily rely on agriculture production and fishery. Despite the region’s rich abundance in forestry, and water, Dongo is situated in an underdeveloped province of one of the poorest countries in the world, making it one of the poorest regions in the world.

² Please see Appendix B for the Dongo map.
³ This number is an estimate gained from comparing the number of fled refugees and the influx of people in Dongo after the Dongo Conflict.
Background:

Much of Congo’s problem, in terms of violence, relates back to the colonial era. “At the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, the European powers recognized the claim of King Leopold II over the central African territory” (Benson et al., 2001, p. 79). Leopold ruled Congo Free State as his own kingdom. In fact, Leopold used forced labor on the Congolese natives to extract resources such as ivory and rubber in order to produce values to benefit his personal interest and the economic development of Belgium.

Shortly after independence in 1960, Patrice Lumumba, the first Prime Minister of Congo was assassinated by Belgian and American agents since Lumumba did not follow the interests of the Western powers (Hochschild, 1999). Lumumba’s political beliefs threatened the Western economic domination of the central African territory. General Joseph Désiré Mobutu, with the help of Belgium and United States, seized control and obtained power of Congo; declaring himself president. During Mobutu’s thirty-two year reign, he deprived the Congolese people of development while using foreign aid to support his and his elite’s interests. However, “[…after] the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the end of the Cold War, the United States was much less tolerant of Mobutu’s repressive and corrupt activities and largely withdrew U.S. support for his government” (Benson et al., 2001, p. 79). This left Mobutu’s regime weak and vulnerable to its geopolitical surroundings.

The instability caused by the influx of refugees into the eastern regions of Zaire (former name of Congo) in hopes of escaping the Rwandan genocide, led to the invasion of Zaire by Rwanda and Uganda in the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-
Zaire (AFDL) alliance and the campaign to overthrow Mobutu in 1996.\(^4\) Major weapons were shipped by United States to Rwanda as well as military officials in order to train the invading army (The Filmmakers, 2010). Control of natural capital has been a priority for internal and external actors in armed conflict in Congo. In addition, the conflict, or as some scholars call it, “Africa’s War,” created opportunities for the involvements of numerous militia groups that have caused much instability and strife. These proxy conflicts and local struggles, such as the conflict in Dongo, have continued to perpetuate violence and instability within Congo.

**Problem:**

The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, which created the necessary framework to develop further peacebuilding efforts in Congo, was overwhelmed by many challenges. In large, the challenge facing the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement was the disobedience by different militia groups to the mandates of the agreement. Instead of using the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement to establish and tackle the different dynamics fueling the conflicts in Congo, the international community relied primarily on a top-down peacebuilding approach. A top-down approach looks “for the causes of violence at the regional and national levels, and not in the realm of the local” (Autesserre, 2010, p. 35). In reality, violence was perpetuated through local struggles. Nevertheless, the top-down method of building peace was most advocated by international actors because it created a diplomatic discourse that changed the stage of conflict to post-conflict, and thus allowed them to declare the peace process complete (Autesserre, 2010). Tools for a top-down approach include peace agreements and democratic elections. Once a nation in conflict progresses to a post-conflict stage, international actors are able to invest in development, aid, and loans.

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\(^4\) The current Democratic Republic of Congo was called the Kongo Kingdom before the colonial era. During Leopold’s occupation, it was named Congo Free State. Mobutu, after taking power, changed the name to Zaire. The name Zaire was then changed to the Democratic Republic of Congo when Laurent Kabila overthrew Mobutu.
the overall peacekeeping expenditure (2001-2010) totaled 8.73 billion dollars (United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2012). Despite the financial support and the presence of the largest peacekeeping force in Congo, little has been accomplished in promoting and maintaining peace in Congo.

The top-down approach, which primarily focused on creating a democratic government through election in Congo, did little to promote a lasting peace. The first transition comprised of installing leaders of rebellion movements as leaders of the government. Instead of uniting the nation, this divided the nation and caused civil unrest which included fighting in the capital city as well as cities throughout the eastern province of Congo. The second national election, which was held in November 2011, was perceived as illegitimate and fraudulent by most Congolese. Despite the ceasefire agreement and the ‘democratic’ elections, indirect means of fighting and local struggles continue to produce instability in Congo.

**Thesis Case Study:**

The top-down approach has not been successful in promoting stability and peace in Congo. As Autesserre (2010) has convincingly argued in *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding*; one of the main reasons is that the top-down approach did not take into account local dynamics, such as ethnic conflict, that contributed and continue to contribute to violence in Congo. This research thesis agrees with Autesserre (2010) that the international community’s peacebuilding effort in Congo was a failure because the process neglected key dynamics, such as local struggles, that fueled and continues to fuel violence and instability in Congo. The research then uses the conflict in Dongo in 2009 to illustrate how local struggles contribute to instability and violence. As a result, this research thesis highlights the importance of understanding the dynamics of a conflict.
**Research Thesis Question:**

Using the conflict in Dongo as a case study, the research thesis aims to understand the cause of the conflict, the development of the conflict, the effects of the conflict to the overall stability of Congo, and how the conflict was resolved. Hence, the main aim for the research study is to show why understanding different dynamics of conflict is imperative to the peacebuilding process. In sum the research aims to answer the question, Why did the peacebuilding effort in Congo fail, and how do local struggles contribute to violence and instability in Congo?

**Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of the study is to gather narratives from the Congolese people about conflict and violence in order to ameliorate the understanding of violence in Congo and thus improve the peacebuilding efforts in Congo. As previously mentioned, the voice of the locals has been greatly ignored by the international community. When talking about locals, this thesis focuses on civilians and refers to the level of the individual, family, ethnic group, village, community, and municipality. Peacebuilding efforts strongly favored building peace on a national and regional level; ignoring local and communal level. This top-down approach in peacebuilding has hindered Congo’s ability to obtain peace within its borders. Prioritizing a certain vision of peacebuilding and neglecting the different dynamics of conflict have obstructed the Congolese people’s ability to attain a sense of lasting peace. Neglecting to accept the realities of local struggles by the international community and the Congolese government has left the Congolese people vulnerable to the violent nature of conflict.
Limitations:

Due to the current condition of Congo, this research thesis was characterized by obstacles and limitations. Given the complexity of the Congo wars and the numerous proxy conflicts within the country, I was unable to examine every aspect of the numerous conflicts taking place in Congo. Because of the limited timeframe of the research, particularly ground work research in the Equateur province from June to July, I decided to focus on one case study and relate it to my overall argument.

Transportation and the lack of technology limited my ability to efficiently and abundantly obtain access to information. The underdevelopment of the nation, particularly in the Equateur province, made access to different areas of the region very difficult, and thus constrained my time and space; limiting my ability to get more information. Because of security reasons and limited access to the area due to no road access, I was not able to go to the Munzaya village, which is a key village in regards to the Dongo conflict. As a result, I interviewed members of the Munzaya village in Dongo. Although the research process was characterized by obstacles and limitations, I was able to get information and a number of continuous in-depth interviews with locals during my two months conducting on-ground research in the Equateur province and Kinshasa.

Significance:

Looking at human history, the study of peace as a distinct academic discipline is a new phenomenon. The establishment and the institutionalization of peace research did not begin until the year following the end of World War II (Ramsbotham et al., 2005). After the Cold War, peace studies have had a tremendous transformation in conceptual and methodological expansion. This is due to the changing nature of global violence and its causes, diversity of
themes, and techniques relevant to peace. The study of peace is multidisciplinary in that peace studies include the concepts, methods, and finding of diverse disciplines while putting emphasis on three general fields of studies: cause and influence of violent conflict; methods of resolving conflict; and ways for building peace (Timothy et al., 2009). This research thesis does not focus on the strategies of building peace but rather looks at how conflict and its different dynamics should be approached. Thus, it ultimately looks at the initial process of building peace; understanding conflict.

In *The Moral Imagination*, Lederach (2005) posits that peacebuilding is a learned skill and an art. In peacebuilding, the learned skill is the process of understanding conflict. Art on the other hand, represents the process of working to overcome conflict, such as building peace strategies. Despite similarities that might be found in all conflicts, every conflict is unique. Understanding the uniqueness of a particular conflict is a learned skill. This requires research, understanding, and the knowledge of developing different methods for acquiring information from different perspectives. The learned skill in peacebuilding creates the necessary tools for the enablement of art to take form. Art demonstrates the creativity, innovation, and ingenuity in developing strategies to resolve conflict. In order for a painter to create a master piece, a painter must acquire the tools necessary to create the painting. In addition, the painter must understand the different dynamics involved in the overall process, such as how different colors interact with each other and the effects of light composition.

The framework of this research thesis does not suggest solutions, but rather posits the importance of understanding local conflicts in Congo. In alignment with Lederach’s work, *Building Peace*, the process of building peace must be connected to the specific context of the
overall conflict (1997). The theoretical framework of my study aims at examining the practical process of understanding conflict.

The significance of the thesis is multifaceted. Throughout the paper, I argue the importance of the local peace process and how ignoring local motives is and has been detrimental in the peacebuilding efforts in Congo. In alignment with Autesserre (2010), I argue that the peacebuilding effort in Congo failed because the international community ignored the realities of local struggles and their ability to perpetuate violence and instability within Congo. The research thesis then provides a case study that illustrates and defends the argument. Therefore, this research thesis provides evidence that justifies the importance of the local peace process.

Furthermore, the research thesis demonstrates the importance of understanding conflict, particularly the contextual setting and influences surrounding a particular conflict. Conflict can be seen as a broken car. In order to fix the car, one must have an understanding of the car. The person must understand how different parts of the car work, together as a whole and individually as a part. If one does not understand how a car works, then it is difficult to fix the car. One can patch pieces together and the car might run for a little, but most likely the car will breakdown and be in a worse condition than before. So too is conflict. In order to resolve conflict, the overall conflict and the many factors attributing to the conflict must be understood.
Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction:

Resolving conflict is a complex and arduous task that requires an in-depth analysis. Therefore, understanding conflict and the different dynamics that fuel it, is essential for overcoming the challenges of building peace. The international peacebuilding effort in Congo was a failure because the international community did not fully understand, and therefore ignored the different dynamics of local struggles during and after the Congo wars. Ignoring local motives during the peacebuilding process in Congo proved to be detrimental to the overall success of the peace effort. As a result, the peacebuilding process did not bring a lasting peace to the Congolese people and indirect means of fighting between different militia groups and local collectivities continued; causing more deaths and instability within Congo. In regards to conflict in Congo, ethnicity is often used as a rallying point. Since the international community ignored key dynamics such as ethnicity during the peacebuilding process, local struggles continued to fuel violence in Congo.

The conflict in Dongo was a direct result of the international community and the Congolese government’s peacebuilding failures. Although the government was aware of the ethnic conflict that was taking place in Dongo between the Munzaya and the Enyele, the conflict was ignored because government officials supposed that the situation did not threaten national security. Instead of impartially resolving the conflict, politicians and government officials manipulated the conflict for their personal gain. What was not realized was that the Enyele people and the Munzaya people were on the verge of a violent war.

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5 The dispute between the Munzaya and the Enyele eventually led to the Dongo conflict and Odjani’s quest for power. There is no document, that I found, that reveals the population size of the Munzaya and the Enyele village. From what I saw in the Enyele village, it looks like the population is bigger than 200 people and less than 500 people. In regards to the Munzaya village, most of my informants said that the Munzaya village is smaller than the Enyele village.
Corruption within the judicial system led the two groups to take matters into their own hands. With the perception of no viable solution, the two groups made the decision to use physical violence to obtain their goals. The increased violent interaction between the two groups eventually led to an all-out war. The Enyele people prevailed by chasing the Munzaya people from their village and by destroying over one hundred of their homes. The conflict between the Munzaya and the Enyele eventually led to the power accumulation of Odjani and his campaign to regain the glories of the Lobala people.\textsuperscript{6} Since the Enyele people are part of the Lobala ethnic group, and since the Boba ethnic group supported the Munzaya people during their socio-economic endeavors, tension between the Lobala and the Boba further threaten the stability of Dongo.\textsuperscript{7}

The hostile relationship between the Lobala and the Boba, previous to the current situation, began when a member of the Boba ethnic group decided to run for the Chef de Secteur (mayor) position in Dongo in the 1982 local election and was denied.\textsuperscript{8} ‘Indigenous’ to the land, the Lobala have always had political and economic control of Dongo. The decline of the socio-economic and political power of the Lobala, and the increasing socio-economic and political power of the Boba made the Lobalas in Dongo feel marginalized. Consequently the conflict between the Enyele and the Munzaya allowed the Lobalas to use the Bobas as a scapegoat in order to ultimately reclaim their socio-economic and political power.

The attack against the Boba by the Lobala was a systematic and well planned attack. “The night before the attack, the [Chef de Secteur] received a list of names of people who would be targeted – this included Boba politicians who were planning to run for the Sector Chief post in the next local elections” (Stearns, 2010, March 27). Thousands of civilians were killed and

\textsuperscript{6} Odjani is the witch doctor that led the Enyele to victory over the Munzaya people.
\textsuperscript{7} For more information on major ethnic groups involved in the Dongo conflict, see appendix C.
\textsuperscript{8} Not yet has a non-Lobala member won the Chef de Secteur position in Dongo.
Re-evaluating Peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A case study in Dongo

displaced during the conflict. Despite the diversity within the community, the attack only targeted a particular identity: ethnicity.

When examining a particular local conflict, one has to understand the contextual framework of the conflict as well as the environment that creates different dynamics that fuel, perpetuate, and manipulate the conflict. The situation in Dongo, along with different local conflicts in Congo in general, exemplifies the importance of local struggles and their effects on the overall instability of Congo. This section examines several pieces of literatures from multidisciplinary fields that contribute to the understanding of identity and its influence on local struggles; particularly conflicts that arise from threatened human needs.

This literature review will illustrate how discourse is linked to identity, in what way identity is linked to group association, the creation of privilege and oppression, and how these phenomena are linked to conflicts that eventually lead to violence. This section will first look at theories and then shift to a more practical examination of identity and its influence on local struggles.

**Theoretical Framework:**

When analyzing local conflicts, it is clear to see that different groups “have different perspectives on life and its problems” (Fishers et al., 2000, p. 3). As a result, differences lead to conflict; conflict “is a relationship between two or more parties (individuals or groups) who have, or think they have, incompatible goals” (Fishers et al., 2000, p. 4). To help consider ways of understanding difference, of the six major theories about conflicts in *Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action* (Fishers et al., 2000), this study puts emphasis on two overarching theories that best illustrate local struggles in Congo: human needs theory, which assumes that deep-rooted conflicts arise from basic human needs such as security and belonging;
and identity theory, which posits that conflict is caused by a threatened identity (Fishers et al., 2000, p. 8). The concepts of human needs and identity are interlinked in that they reinforce each other and stands at the center of local struggles in Congo, particularly the local struggle in Dongo. Therefore, human needs theory and identity theory forms the necessary theoretical framework of this thesis. The two theories will be explained in further detail in the following section.

**The Interconnectedness of Discourse, Identity, and Human Needs:**

The interconnectedness of discourse, identity, and human needs is essential in local struggles in Congo. The fighting in Dongo and other local struggles in eastern Congo illustrate the horrible realities of the potential violent consequences of what the power of identity can construct, and how the discourse of identity can shape the outcome of violence once a particular human need is threatened. The following segment explores the theoretical construction of discourse, identity, and human needs.

**Discourse:**

Discourse is the way institutions, societies, and behaviors are shaped by information. Discourse, according to Foucault in *The Archeology of Knowledge*, is the elusive power that shapes the way people are and how people associate with other (1972). In *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault’s “aim is to uncover the principles and consequence of autochthonous transformation that is taking place in the field of historical knowledge” (1972, p. 15). In order to understand how people come to be and know things, Foucault concentrates on the power of discourse.

The power of discourse is most effective during a time of crisis. The critical point where most people reshape their thinking and way of being is usually through a time of crisis or
disjuncture. We are constantly exposed to this form of transformation. For example, United States of America was united after the terrorist attack of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. People across the nation grieved for their lost fellow citizens. In a larger scale, this process of transformation is structure within a community as a whole. Wedeen’s (2003) study in Yemen about citizenship and unity revealed substantial findings. Her work concludes that a dramatic event or national crisis leads to state unity (Wedeen, 2003). The Munzaya-Enyele conflict was the necessary crisis that allowed Odjani to create and lead a rebellion. The information that was provided to the people, by Odjani and his followers, shaped the perceptions of the people to accept Odjani as a prominent leader. Understanding the realities of crisis is imperative for understanding how power, discourse, and people function. Crisis within history allows the possibilities of power accumulation. Nevertheless, it is discourse that ultimately creates and develops the function of power and the manipulation of people.

Discourse is fundamental to the structure of society and thus discourse is crucially linked to power. It enables and constrains the way humans see the world in a different way and thus produces humans as different beings. Through discourse, people come to know themselves and thus, discourse shapes the way people are as human beings. For example, a child’s knowledge is dependent on the family and the community that the child is raised in. The identity of the child is created by these two groups because the child’s knowledge is limited to what is communicated by them. In effect, society shapes one’s identity because that identity comes through the “[interactions] between who one is (based upon one’s social groupings) and the views [of] oneself and one’s group that are reflected back by others in the broader society” (Adams, 2000, p. 2). Ultimately, discourse is linked to the formation of identity, whether in the individual level,
the communal level, or the national level. As a result, the belonging and association of people is
determined by discourse.

*Identity:*

Identity is the product of how individuals or groups, through discourse, characterize
themselves and how they are characterized by others. The realities of identity are not as simple
as the concept of black and white. Sen (2006) in *Identity and Violence* claims that every
individual has multiple identities and it is the individual’s presuppose awareness to emphasize
some more than others, given the context surrounding the individual. Sen further argues that
“[the] descriptive weakness of choiceless singularity has the effect of momentously
impoverishing the power and reach of our social and political reasoning. The illusion of destiny
exacts a remarkably heavy price” (2006, p. 17).

Sen strongly criticizes the understanding and mindset with which scholars approach the
pluralistic world and its differences, as well as the singularity approach that focuses on one or a
few significant components of identity. Sen urges scholars to transcend illusions of destiny and
identity by looking at different factors that attribute to the overall framework of an individual’s
identity. Nevertheless, Sen does not address why rational people submit to the irrational violence
caused by identity or a sense of belonging such as the notion of ‘us versus them.’ Why did
German citizens contribute to the genocide of the Jews in World War II? According to Chow
(2009), over 1.5 million victims of the Holocaust in World War II died at the hands of ‘ordinary
men.’ Chow (2009) further argues that ingrained adherence to authority, coercive ideology, and
ideological anti-Semitism led ‘ordinary men’ to participate in the killings. Nevertheless Sen is
reluctant to accept the hegemonic influence of society in the development of identity and its
impact on violence.
In order to understand the concept of identity-based violence, one has to recognize four interrelated conceptual frameworks presented in *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*: social group identities such as race and gender have been used in history to justify and continue the advantage of some groups in expense of marginalized groups; these social identities have been socially constructed within historical conditions as though the construction is rationalized as deriving from facts of nature; understanding the historical construction of inequality requires a theory of oppression that examines the levels of advantage and disadvantage in human society; and a theory of oppression requires a framework of empowerment (Adams, 2000, p. 1).

The construction of identity and the classification of privilege and oppression are created to maintain the establishment of social order by the dominant group. Privilege exists when one group has something of value that is denied to another group, not because of an action, but simply because of a group’s belonging. Conversely, oppression is the opposite of privilege, and thus oppression denies things of value to a particular group. The dichotomy of privilege and oppression eventually leads to the infringement of human needs. As a result, deep-rooted conflicts arise.

*Human Needs:*

Understanding one’s needs and the needs of others is essential to overcoming deep-rooted conflict and violence. Redekop (2002) presents five categories found in the ‘human needs’ theory and how these five principles are inherent in every individual; however, the importance of the five basic needs differentiate depending on the individual, culture, value, and experience. The five primary needs: (1) meaning, our sense of reality (the most important of the needs); (2) connectedness, belonging and community; (3) security, whether physical, emotional, natural, spiritual, political, or economic; (4) action, the control of environment and autonomy; and (5)
recognition, understanding one’s significance through acknowledgement (Redekop, 2002). As a result, deep-rooted conflicts arise when a particular human need, such as security, is threatened. When a particular human need is threatened, the threatened community uses identity to create the necessary explanatory framework to differentiate ‘us versus them,’ and therefore justifies their actions. Through legislations, conversations, and interactions, groups use identity to deny opportunities to others in order to maintain their well-being. As a result, the issue of oppression or the fear of marginalization, through threatened human needs, leads to conflict.

The Impacts of Discourse, Identity and Human Needs on Local Struggles in Congo:

The interconnectedness of discourse, identity, and human needs has a fundamental influence on local struggles in Congo. These three factors form, perpetuate, and justify the use of violence. Connecting the local struggles in eastern Congo to that in Dongo, this section illustrates the reality of the three factors and their impact on local conflicts in Congo.

Local Disputes, Crisis of Belonging:

The debated idea of belonging and indigenousness is at the root of many local conflicts in Congo. Not only is this circumstance found in the Equateur province with the political tension between the Lobala and the Boba, but the same ethnic tension can be seen in eastern Congo. The question of belonging and identity, and its ability to create an advantage for some groups and deny opportunities to other groups continues to affect ethnic dynamics within Congo. After Belgium granted Congo its independence in 1960, residents who had belonged to an ethnic group officially recognized by Belgium became Congolese (Fofana, 2009). This law allowed certain groups to politically and economically benefit more than others; further establishing the dichotomy of privilege and oppression.
For example, the first widespread ethnic conflict in eastern Congo was established by Mobutu’s tactic of accumulating power through ethnic manipulation, particularly in regards to questions over ethnic identity and land ownership (Clark, 2008). A deal between Mobutu and Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana in 1972 gave the Banyarwanda the control of the Walikale and Masisi territory in eastern Congo (Clark, 2008). This political move threatened the human needs, specifically, the security need, of local ethnic groups that claimed to be ‘indigenous’ to the land. Local chiefs and non-Banyarwanda formed local militias for fear of marginalization and encroachment. The clash between the Banyarwanda and the local militias in 1993 resulted in over 6,000 deaths and displaced over 250,000 civilians (Clark, 2008).

In connection to the Dongo conflict, the Lobalas felt threatened when they began to lose their socio-economic power and the Boba began to control much of the socio-economic activities in Dongo in the 1980s. As a result, the Lobala’s perception of the circumstance made them feel marginalized; and through propaganda, politicians and Lobala leaders manipulated the Munzaya-Enyele conflict in order to chase the Bobas out of Dongo. The clash in 1993 and the conflict between the Boba and the Lobala reveal an important revelation to the understanding of local conflicts in Congo. Violence and conflict arise when one group threatens the human needs of another group. The human needs, such as security, are threatened when one group is given or claims more power, leaving other groups to feel marginalized.

Identity and Conflict:

Given the importance of land in Congo, much of the ethnic conflict derives from land disputes and the struggle to obtain or maintain control over land and particularly, its resources. Before Belgian colonization, Congo was largely organized by chiefdoms where geographical

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9 Banyarwanda refers to Rwandans who migrated to Congo from the late 1800s to 1959 and acquired Congolese citizenship during independence in 1960.
space was controlled by an authority ruling over people occupying that particular space (Eastern DRC: Local Efforts to Solve Land and Identity Conflicts, 2011). The administrative system of Belgium disturbed the organizations of chiefdoms in Congo. “The Belgian colonial administration gradually modified its form of rule from assimilation to an indirect approach of association” (Eastern DRC: Local Efforts to Solve Land and Identity Conflicts, 2011, p. 17). This resulted in two regimes based on two authorities, customary and civil. Land occupied by a certain ethnic group was managed by local chiefs and ‘vacant’ land became state property (Eastern DRC: Local Efforts to Solve Land and Identity Conflicts, 2011). Through the discourse of identity, the method of administrative control by Belgium, allowed customary authority to dictate the access of land and political power, while allowing a certain identity the power to monopolize administrative, judicial, and executive power (Eastern DRC: Local Efforts to Solve Land and Identity Conflicts, 2011). This method of governance allowed for inequality and identity discrimination within Congo.

The article Eastern DRC: Local Efforts to Solve Land and Identity Conflicts illustrates how identity was used to give certain groups advantages while disadvantaging others during the colonial era.

Without a native authority and its encompassing ethnicity, an inhabitant was not privy to economic and social rights such as the access to customary land. In the same vein, those deprived of civic citizenship would presumably be at risk of lacking political representation, dispossession of their property, and repatriation. (2011, p. 18)

In short, the power of identity determined the advantage of certain groups and denied access to basic human needs such as security to others. Security in this term refers to the access of land and its resources. Although the ethnic tensions in Dongo best illustrate these concepts, the same
problems and identity based violence could be seen throughout Congo, such as the 1993 conflict between the Banyarwanda and the local militias in eastern Congo.

In Dongo, the Lobala enjoyed their political and socio-economic power during the colonial era. Yet their decreasing socio-economic status and population within Dongo caused a sense of insecurity within the ethnic group. The increasing socio-economic and political standing of the Boba greatly threatened the well-being and human needs of the Lobala ethnic group. This reality further frustrated the Lobalas since the Bobas were perceived as immigrants. This dominant narrative allowed the Lobala to deny political power to the Boba ethnic group. In hopes of maintaining the control of Dongo, the Lobala denied any member outside the Lobala ethnic group the opportunity to run for the Chef de Secteur position.

The process of migration during and after the colonial era continues to be a point of contention in regards to economic and political rights. The question of ‘indigenousness’ continues to influence the conceptual framework of local struggles in Congo. The perception of ‘indigenousness’ and ‘non-indigenousness’ by local communities demonstrates how division based on identity is paramount in the production of local conflicts, especially land disputes and political struggles. “Fundamental to this equation is the ‘structural link between claims to land ownership by ethnic communities, and claims to political autonomy and power’”; for example, the perception of ‘I own the land therefore I should have the power’ (Eastern DRC: Local Efforts to Solve Land and Identity Conflicts, 2011, p. 18).

Not only do we see the realities of identity and its effects on local struggles in Dongo, but when looking at local struggles throughout Congo, the situation in eastern Congo between different ethnic communities illustrates this complex dynamic. For example, the Banyamulenge community in the Fizi and Uvira regions was never granted customary authority during
independence in 1960” (Eastern DRC: Local Efforts to Solve Land and Identity Conflicts, 2011, p. 18). The nationality of the Banyamulenge was questioned by ‘indigenous’ communities after Mobutu granted the Banyamulenge citizenship in 1971 (Eastern DRC: Local Efforts to Solve Land and Identity Conflicts, 2011, p. 18). As a result, the Banyamulenge felt disenfranchised and alienated. When the Banyamulenge decided to create their own territory, the ‘indigenous’ communities opposed the establishment of the Banyamulenge claiming that the “move usurped their customary power and stole their natural resources” (Eastern DRC: Local Efforts to Solve Land and Identity Conflicts, 2011, p. 18). As a result, communities created militia groups to defend their human needs, land and political power, and fight against what they perceived to be foreign aggression. The discourse of identity, thus, created the formation of ‘us versus them’ and established the explanatory framework of the enemy.

The Importance of Local struggles:

Most people forget that local struggles was one of the leading factors that established the necessary instability within Zaire (Congo) that led to the creation of the AFDL rebel group and opened the door for the Rwandan and Ugandan invasion. Granted the success of different militia groups was and is largely due to external backing, yet one cannot forget that much of the current instability and atrocities within Congo was performed by local struggles that evolved to large scale fighting. Despite this reality, the international community was unwilling to consider local struggles in the overall peacebuilding process. The following segment examines the reasons behind the failure of the international community’s peacebuilding efforts in Congo.

10 Banyamulenge people are part of the Tutsi ethnic group residing in eastern Congo (primarily the South Kivu province).
Failure to Recognize Local Struggles:

The international community’s poor peacebuilding performance was largely due to their inability to understand and take into consideration the different factors that were fueling the overall conflict in Congo. Granted, the international community did play an important role in ending the war between different state actors that were involved in the wars. Nevertheless, neglecting local struggle hindered the international community’s ability to maintain and promote a lasting peace in Congo. Conflicts within Congo continued to take place, “about 20 % still lapsed back into large-scale violence within a few years, usually during the phase of peace agreement implementation” (Autesserre, 2010, p. 5).

Autesserre (2009) demonstrates in Hobbes and the Congo: Frames, Local Violence, and International Intervention that a post-conflict peacebuilding frame shaped the ideology of the international community’s peace process in Congo. The ideology shaped the understanding of violence in the Congo making local conflict resolution irrelevant. The international community labeled Congo a post-conflict condition because they saw the continued violence as innate even during peacetime (Autesserre, 2009). The international intervention exclusively focused on the national and the international sphere because the international community saw holding elections as a workable solution for state building and peacekeeping; neglecting the importance of local conflict resolution (Autesserre, 2009). The first two factors shaped the international community’s understanding of violence and the last two factors shaped the understanding of the international community in a post-conflict setting (Autesserre, 2009).

The study shows that most negotiated peace agreements fail during the implementation stage and although third party intervention is critical for peace process, about 70 percent of peace processes benefiting from an international third party actor still fail to build a lasting peace
According to Autesserre (2009), the literature of Congo’s civil war portrayed the violence as being motivated by regional and national causes. In reality, violence was perpetuated by longstanding local agendas and motives, such as the Banymulenge conflict in eastern Congo as well as the conflict between the Lobala and the Boba. The instability within Congo was the necessary spark that ignited the motives of local agendas that caused further instability and violence within Congo. These agendas were motivated and instigated by villages, chiefs, ethnic leaders, political leaders, and historical disputes between ethnic groups.

**Conclusion:**

Identity-based violence and all its atrocity is best emblematized in the Dongo conflict. The fighting in Dongo presents the realities of identity and violence; more viably, how violence is perpetuated through the discourse of identity established by society. The conflict in Dongo directly demonstrates the themes presented in the literature. In Dongo, the particular construction of identity created inequality between the Boba and the Lobala. The Lobala controlled much of the political and economic power of the community. The creation of inequality between the oppressed and the privileged was created in order to uphold the interests of the Lobala community. By privileging ethnic identity over other possible identities, power was given to the identity. That power was then used to advantage the Lobala community.

The existence and/or the perception of incompatible goals created conflict. Identity was then used to fuel and justify the violence. The dispute between the Enyele and Munzaya was manipulated by members of the Lobala ethnic group to inflict violence on the Boba in order to regain their power within Dongo. The majority of the population that was attacked did not have the power to separate themselves from the identity that was imposed upon them by their perpetrators. During the course of attacks, diversity in identity such as race, religion, gender, and
age were neglected and reduced to that of a particular ethnic affiliation. People were killed and chased out of their homes because they were Boba or Munzaya; choosing to not be identified primarily as Boba or Munzaya did not matter since the perpetrators had a definition, legitimized by the dominant discourse, of who was Boba or Munzaya. As a result, the conflict in Dongo demonstrates the power of discourse and its ability to shape and construct society; and thus shape individuals. The control of discourse is so powerful that it is difficult for individuals to escape the consequences it produces.

**Contribution of this Thesis:**

In order to better present the argument that the international peacebuilding efforts in Congo was a failure, I performed conflict analysis on the conflict in Dongo in order to connect the significance of understanding how the larger conflict in Congo is perpetuated by local struggles. Through the theoretical framework of identity and human needs, I demonstrate the importance of understanding different dynamics of local struggles and their effects on Congo’s instability. When analyzing the conflict in Dongo, the case study illustrates the creation, development, outcome, and the effects of the conflict. The significance of the analysis is that it provides the necessary tools needed for understanding the current crisis facing Congo; that is instability due to local struggles and proxy fighting, whether ethnic, political, economic, or religious.

The study specifically aims to illustrate that the most viable solution to building peace is a multifaceted process of understanding conflict and its different dynamics. The research thesis not only argues and advocates the importance of local conflicts in Congo and their impact on national stability, but illustrates the realities and complexity of local conflicts and the importance
of understanding them. Thus the study illustrates how a local struggle can evolve from a small scale conflict to a large scale conflict, if the conflict is not approached properly.
Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction:

Using the conflict in Dongo as a case study, the research thesis aims at understanding the conflict that took place in Dongo in 2009 and its relation to the overall crisis in Congo. The research was done in a span of eight months, with two months specifically dedicated to on-ground field research. This section examines and explains how the research was conducted.

Setting/Sample Participants:

The research examined the overall population of Dongo, and the people that have experienced or have seen the conflict. The study also focused on the population of the surrounding villages and cities since the conflict effected many communities living near Dongo. The age group of the sample participants ranged from teenagers (13 years of age and up) to senior citizens (65 years and up). The subjects participating in the research were both male and female. In particular, my research aimed at interviewing the members of the diverse ethnic groups found in Dongo and its surrounding villages.

The study did not target any special characteristics of the subject population. Children, prisoners, dependent adults, and critically ill individuals (whether physically, mentally, or emotionally) were not involved in the research. Nevertheless, the study included a random sample (every individual in the sample population had an equal chance of being selected), a convenience sample (selecting participants that were readily available at the time of the interview), and a purposive sample (selected representatives because they fit a certain criteria within the study).

Throughout the research, I was able to obtain access to the subject population by attending secondary schools, colleges, church services and church gatherings, bars, market
gatherings, and sports activities. Given the difficulty due to the nonexistence of the mailing system and the lack of internet access in the Equateur province, especially in the rural city of Dongo, I had to go in person and get written approvals from schools and churches before conducting the interviews on the subject population being provided by those institutions.

The on-ground research greatly relied on face to face request and networking. Since there is no phone directory, internet connection, or functional mailing system, subjects were contacted by a face to face encounter. The subjects were recruited through a person to person request. With that in mind, all the subjects were asked whether they would like to participate in the interview. Before requesting permission, all the subjects were clearly informed about the research and its aim. The subjects were also asked about other willing potential subjects that could possibly contribute to the overall research. The purpose of this strategy was to enhance my networking in order to interview more people and collect more data.

Furthermore, the on-ground research solely relied on qualitative research. Therefore, the research is heavily dependent on narratives and truth that has been constructed through communal held perceptions of Dongo. Nevertheless, I was able to get different perspectives from different parties involved in the conflict. Given the cultural context of different communities within the Equateur province, I was unable to get many interviews within the female population. Most of the time when a person (a stranger) wants to converse to a female family member, the person must speak with the father or the first born male son first, or the father/son must be present during the conversation. This reality made it harder to reach out to many women.
Measurement Instrument/Data Collection:

The research thesis relied on qualitative analyses. Given the time and purpose of the study, I did not rely so much on quantitative analyses. Therefore, secondary sources were used for the quantitative research.

Literature Research:

In order to get a solid context on the history of Congo, I collected information from scholarly journals, books, and films that focused on the history of Congo. Literature research focused on events that have shaped the current condition of Congo, particularly the areas of the Equateur province. Therefore, I looked at colonialism, the dictatorship of Mobutu, the Congo wars, the peacebuilding process in Congo, and the failure of the peacebuilding efforts by the Congolese and international community. This literature research was important for understanding the context of Congo, particularly the events shaping the conditions of Dongo.

Oral Interviews:

The twenty-nine oral interviews were conducted formally and informally in the Equateur province and Kinshasa. In Kinshasa, I was able to interview governmental officials and party representatives. In the Equateur province, I had continuous conversation with the two main ethnic groups that were in conflict as well as local members and other ethnic groups that were affected by the conflict. The information collected from the interviews is essential to the overall understanding of the research study. Therefore, having an efficient means of collecting the data was critical. Through consent, I was able to tape record most of the participants. This was important because it allowed me to get more access to information with less time and less interruption. After an introduction and an explanation of my research study, followed by the signing of the consent form, the interview questions were as follows:
1. Before the conflict, how did people within the community interact?
   a. What was the dynamic of Dongo before the conflict (calm, friendly, hostile...etc.)?
   b. What was the history of the place?

2. How was the law regarding the fishing pond between the Enyele and Munzaya created?
   a. Who implemented the law?
   b. How was the law enforced?
   c. Was or is the fishing pond only designated to the Lobala group?

3. How did the conflict come about?
   a. Who was involved in the conflict (individuals, groups, government, foreigners...etc.)?
   b. Did individuals choose what side or a group(s) to fight for, if yes how and why did they choose a particular side or a group(s)?
   c. Was their peaceful negotiation before, and if yes or no, why was violence used in the conflict?

4. How was the conflict resolved?
   a. What was the decision, who made the decision, and how was the decision made?
   b. Have those that have been in the conflict been able to reconcile, and if not how could they reconcile?
   c. What is the current dynamic of Dongo and people interactions?
In regards to the interviews, there were some significant response patterns to the interview questions depending on the person’s ethnic background and/or association. The questions pertaining to the cause of the conflict in Dongo, particularly between the Munzaya and the Enyele people, had different responses. Interestingly, every person interviewed that was not a member of the Munzaya village claimed the land that caused the dispute between the Munzaya and the Enyele originally belonged to the Enyele. Members of the Munzaya on the other hand, continued to claim that the land and the forest that is about nine kilometers from the Enyele village is the land of the Munzaya people. With no written legal document justifying the actual ownership of the land, the claiming of the land continues to be constructed by communal truths.

When reflecting on my research and the interview process, the most fascinating patterns within the research regarded the description of Odjani. Odjani is the son of a Lobala witchdoctor who led the fighting in Dongo against the Boba and eventually against the Congolese government. Despite the diverse demographic of the interviewees, everyone interviewed had a similar understanding of Odjani. This understanding was established through a belief that made Odjani a powerful mythical character. Whether I was talking to a local government official, a civilian in Dongo, a national government official, or a religious leader; Odjani was said to have supernatural powers that allowed him to defeat his enemies.

According to the interviewees’ truth, they claimed that Odjani could walk on water, turn papayas into grenades, throw several machetes at an enemy without moving a finger, etc. This understanding of Odjani is essential to the understanding of the conflict in Dongo because the discourse that shaped Odjani’s perception by others, ultimately allowed Odjani to accumulate power. This phenomenon will later be examined in the following sections.
In short, the overall research greatly relied on the information that was provided by the interviewees. Their abilities to share invaluable information greatly contributed to the overall understanding of the Dongo conflict. Further information about my interviewees can be found in the appendices section.

Extended Case Method:

My experience as a researcher was different than that of most academic researchers conducting research in the Equateur province. As an American citizen by birth, being an outsider did not greatly affect my connection to the area where I was conducting the research. Although I was born in Chicago, my entire family is from the Equator province of Congo. At the age of six months, my family and I left Chicago and moved back to Gemena, Congo. Being born in the Ngbaka ethnic group, I learned to speak the Ngbaka language at a young age. In addition, since schools were taught primarily in French and the rest of the area spoke Lingala, I was able to adopt the French and Lingala languages during my childhood. As a family, we lived in Gemena for nine years until the second Congo war reached our area in 1998 and forced us, along with thousands of other families, to flee our home. In 2003, my father Mossai Sanguma, returned to Gemena and became the president of the Covenant Church of Congo (CEUM) for eight years while I stayed pursuing my education in California.

During my research in Congo, my relation to the area as well as my father’s connection allowed me to connect differently with the people there. I was seen as ‘mwana ya mboka’ (son of the land). I did not need a translator or a cultural educator to translate the information that was provided in a cultural context for me to understand. Most importantly because of my background, I understood the culture to a higher degree.
Data Analysis:

The methods used to analyze the collected data relied on a qualitative data analysis. The collected information from my participants was examined and gathered together to make the core of the thesis argument. Given the sensitivity of the project, I do not use the name of the participants in my research. I was given information throughout my research endeavor by key officials involved in the conflict. Therefore, a coding method was used in order to organize and label interview answers to the respective research questions. Coding and categorization helped better construct the result of the study and the relations between the existing literatures on local conflict and my research case study. When quotations are used, they are used to fully present the true voice of the participant.

Sources Covering the Dongo Conflict:

During my preparatory research, I found that there were several sources that covered the Dongo conflict. Although there has been much coverage on the conflict in Dongo, I was surprised to see that most sources did not explain how the conflict came to be. Many of the articles I read before going to Dongo, heavily relied on the refugee crisis and the displacement of people as a result of the conflict. This makes sense since most of the articles written about the conflict in Dongo are by humanitarian agencies. These articles provided good quantitative analysis of the refugee and displaced population, but did a poor job qualitatively presenting the conflict. For instance, the articles provide reliable statistics on the number of civilians affected by the conflict, yet little was said about how the conflict came about and factors that caused the violence. When the conflict in Dongo was discussed in the articles, confusion and inaccuracy overwhelms the articles’ ability to present the realities of the conflict. During my preparatory research, the only source that had an in-depth analysis that aimed at unraveling the realities of

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11 Articles covering the Dongo conflict can be found in the reference list.
the conflict was a series of blogs posted by Jason Stearns, an independent Congo analyst. These postings helped me create a foundation of knowledge before going to Dongo. Nevertheless, the conflict remained a mystery. In reality, little is known and understood about the conflict in Dongo. That is why the mystery of the conflict grabbed my attention and inspired me to uncover the realities behind it.

As I journeyed to Dongo, the conflict that displaced thousands of people still remained a mystery. With no, to the best of my knowledge, academic research on the Dongo conflict, I had to rely on first-hand accounts in order to unravel the mystery. The information that was provided by the interviewees was essentially helpful in uncovering the realities behind the conflict as well as shed light on the factors affecting the different dynamics within the conflict. Given the diversity within the population that was interviewed, I was able to obtain crucial information. This was due to the fact that I was able to interview not only local members of the community, but government officials, United Nations officials, NGO representatives, and members of different ethnic groups within the communities surrounding Dongo.

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Chapter IV: Context

The history of Congo from King Leopold II to Mobutu is less of a history of people and more of a history of violence and exploitation. Given the complexity and broad setting of the history, I am unable to give an in-depth analysis of the broader history. Fortunately there are several literatures that sufficiently highlight the history of the Congo. Nevertheless, this section specifically analyzes the impact of the Congolese history on the development and current condition of the Equateur province. Thus, the historical background that is presented in this section is to provide the necessary context to the understanding of Dongo.

History of Violence:

In short, the history of Congo is characterized by violence. The period of long exploration and the colonization of the “savage” have led to one of the greatest mass killings of human history. The exploration of the “savage” has been the “vilest scramble for lot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience” (Hochschild, 1999, p. 6). The exploitation of the African continent was justified through the discourse of ‘civilizing the savage’. This justification led King Leopold II to the greatest treasure in Africa.

Forced labor was believed by Leopold II to be “the only way to civilize and uplift these indolent and corrupt people” (Hochschild, 1999, p. 37). The concept of violence from force labor was established in 1891 when by law the Congolese were required to supply labor, ivory and rubber to Belgian agents (Hochschild, 1999). The Congolese people were taken from their villages in mass and were forced to work for seven years (Leslie, 1993). The natives were tortured, their limbs were amputated, and they were beaten and killed if they did not meet the

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quota of production set by the plantation owners. The worst of the killing and bloodshed in the Congo took place between 1890 and 1910 (Hochschild, 1999, p. 5). According to Hochschild (1999), King Leopold’s inhumane activities resulted in the deaths of about ten million Congolese due to murder, starvation, exposure to disease, and exhaustion.

Stung by the human rights abuse performed by Leopold in Congo, the international community forced Leopold to turn over the colonial power to Belgium in 1908. Nevertheless, this did not stop the cycle of violence. The Belgians did little to ‘civilize’ Congo and instead continued to exploit the land and the people. The Belgian colonization was characterized by three methods: economic exploitation, political oppression, and cultural oppression. The economic exploitation plundered Congo and made Congo a center for the extraction of natural resources. The political repression focused primarily on eliminating the numerous kingdoms in the Congo territory to the control of Belgium (Hochschild, 1999). In so doing, the Belgians began to partner with traditional chiefs, using the chiefs’ influence to control the local collectivity. The Belgians would choose the most influential and powerful traditional chief of a particularly region and give the chief authority over the region with a small army for protection (Thomas, personal communication, 2012).

Under the supervision of the Belgian state agents, the chiefs’ major task was, “to ensure that their administrative units adequately met what was known in colonial discourse as their ‘collective obligations to the state’” (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002, p. 38). Meaning the chiefs were obligated to enforce taxation, the cultivation of certain export crops, the management of forced labor on public projects, labor recruitment, and more. According to Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002, p. 38), “cultural oppression is the negation and, where possible, the destruction of the cultural values and institutions of an enslaved or politically dominated people.” The Belgian system
perfected its economic exploitation, political repression, and cultural oppression; all in aim of maintaining control and hegemony of the Congo.

Despite Belgium granting Congo her independence on June 30, 1960, the cycle of violence in the Congo continued with the dictatorship of Joseph Désiré Mobutu in 1965. Mobutu adopted the same method of territorial administration that the Belgians used during colonization. Like in the Belgian Congo, Zaire (Congo) consisted of regions, sub-regions, and zones. The state was then divided into eight regions. The regional commissioners were political appointees and the sub-region and zone commissioners were prefectorial representatives. The territorial officials became an instrument of control and extraction, with Kinshasa as the central governing body. In hopes of having a better control of the local population, in 1974 all chiefs, whether traditional or elected, were integrated into the territorial administration and the Mobutu regime decided to transfer chiefs outside their place of origin (Leslie, 1993). It meant that politicians could not draw on ethnic base for political support. It was the reversal of this later that heightened ‘ethnic’ conflict – once communities, politicians, and administrators could use ethnicity as a basis of support.

Zaire’s economic crisis and the deterioration of infrastructure, education, and health system were internal rather than externally induced. Corruption and government overspending hindered the development of the nation. From 1985 to 1988, Mobutu spent over three times the amount of budget used for education, agriculture, rural development, public health, and women’s affairs on defense and the presidency (Leslie, 1993, p. 116). In 1988, the presidency and defense accounted for 57 (28.6 on presidency and 28.4 on defense) percent of the nation’s total budget while education, agriculture, rural development, public health, and women’s affairs accounted for only 13.3 percent (Leslie, 1993, p. 116). These activities fettered the development of
infrastructure, industry, and people. Within Mobutu’s thirty-two year reign, corruption and debt overwhelmed Zaire.

The Impact on Dongo:

The examination of the colonial process and the dictatorship of Mobutu are necessary to understand some of the hidden causes of the development of the Equateur province, but most importantly the creation of the situation in Dongo. By examining Congolese history, this section demonstrates circumstances that lead to structural violence in Congo: poverty, lack of infrastructure, and corruption. Direct violence performed under Leopold, Belgium, and Mobutu led to structural violence. “Structural violence refers to systematic ways in which social structures harm or otherwise disadvantage individuals. Structural violence is subtle, often invisible, and usually has no one specific person who can (or will) be held responsible” (Structural Violence, 2012). The situation in Congo, from 1996 until the writing of this thesis, is a result of the consequence of circumstances created by policies during the colonial and Mobutu era.

The establishment of plantations and the use of forced labor in the Equateur province generated a mass movement of people to different areas within the region. The movement of people did not respect ethnic boundaries, and this phenomenon created tension between different ethnic groups. “Ethnic boundaries […] are best understood as cognitive or mental boundaries situated in the minds of people and are the result of collective efforts of construction and maintenance. Ethnic boundaries dichotomize insiders from outsiders—‘us’ from ‘them’” (Jorgenson, 1997, p. 2). This is an essential factor in the Dongo conflict. It was not until the creation of the Comule Mokusi plantation that ethnic tension began to arise in Dongo and its surrounding villages. The ethnic tensions were caused by the establishment of the plantation,
which led way to a mass movement of people to the areas surrounding Dongo. The mass movement of people later created competition between different ethnic groups. This competition further frustrated the livelihood of the Lobala ethnic group. The frustration was due to that fact that the Lobala claimed to be ‘indigenous’ to the land, and therefore did not want to share their land, resources, and political power of the region with different ethnic groups. As a result, the concept of ‘our land’ was a powerful tool used by the discourse of Odjani when recruiting members of the Lobala community.

In addition to the creation of plantations, certain ethnic groups, such as the Lobalas, were given authority and the supervision of certain functions of a plantation, and later, certain districts. This method of control, which was used by Leopold, Belgium, and Mobutu, created the dichotomy of oppression and privilege. It also created a system where the oppressors (Leopold, Belgium, and Mobutu) used certain members of the oppressed groups by giving them authority to do the dirty works of the oppressors; thus shielding themselves from the threat of rebellion. This system of control was cleverly created in that the oppressors controlled the supervision of the country, while the major responsibilities, such as taxation, forced labor, and management of trade posts was managed by local chiefs.

During and after the creation of the Dongo sector in 1949, the Lobala ethnic group dominated the socio-economic and political power of Dongo and its surrounding villages. When looking back at history, members of the Lobala ethnic group enjoyed the power that was granted to them by Belgium. As mentioned earlier, the granting of authority created the dichotomy of privilege and oppression. The shift in conflict from a dispute to a violent conflict between the Enyele and the Munzaya can best illustrate this phenomenon and how it has created further tension and violence between different ethnic groups within Dongo and its surrounding villages.
The perpetuation of the conflict between the Munzaya and the Enyele, from 1945 to 2007, in fact was due to the governing sector’s inability to find an impartial solution. During the colonial era, every time there was a land dispute between the Munzaya and the Enyele that was brought to court, the court ruling favored the Enyele. This was mainly due to the fact that the Lobala controlled the governing body of Dongo and its surrounding villages. The injustice felt by the Munzaya resulted in a series of violent actions between the Munzaya and the Enyele. This phenomenon will later be examined in-depth in the later chapter.

The corruption of Mobutu’s thirty-two year reign proved to be detrimental to Dongo. Corruption did not disappear with Mobutu. It played an important role in spreading and aggravating violence in Dongo. In fact, it was one of the main reasons why the conflict between the Munzaya and the Enyele evolved to the Dongo conflict. Political leaders and government officials manipulated the conflict in order to further their political and economic interests. Instead of impartially handling the court case between members of the Munzaya and the Enyele village, judicial deputies manipulated the conflict in order to take bribes. This action led the Enyele and the Munzaya to take the situation in their hands, and this eventually led to violent turmoil.

The events of the colonial era and Mobutu era left Congo weak and crippled the development of Congo. Congo is one of the poorest countries in the world, due to numerous factors, with the Equateur being one of the poorest provinces in Congo. The importance of Congo’s history of violence is simple. It is to provide the necessary tool for understanding the events that took place in Dongo and its surrounding villages. The factors influencing the conflict in Dongo were not unfounded but rather through the historical context that set the necessary cycle of violence. The violence created and maintained from the colonial era and Mobutu era proved to be detrimental to the development of the Dongo region.
The Congo Wars:

Leopold, Belgium, and Mobutu’s role in the present conflict and instability in Congo is the decay of the state, due to corruption, oppression, structural violence, and the inability to develop the nation (Nzongola-Ntajala, 2002). In the preceding years, from 1996 to 2003, Congo, formerly known as Zaire, experienced one of the worst conflicts in the 21st century. An estimate of six million people died “making it the world's most lethal conflict since World War II” (Simon, 2006, May 2008). The increasing demands for natural resources for various reasons and local motives have been the powerful tools perpetuating war and proxy wars in Congo. Given the complexity of the conflict, I am unable to give an in-depth analysis of all the specifics of the conflict. An in-depth analysis of the conflict can be examined through the works of Turner (2007), Reyntjens (2009), and Prunier (2011).

The conflict along with other complex factors has greatly crippled the current development of the Congolese government and the advancement of the living conditions of the Congolese people, further perpetuating the cycle of violence that was created during the colonial and Mobutu era. Understanding the Congo war and its effects on the Equateur province is essential to understanding key factors that allowed the conflict in Dongo and its ability to evolve into a national security threat.

First Congo War, 1996-1998:

The instabilities caused by the influx of refugees, after the Rwandan genocide, led to the down fall of Mobutu’s regime and the takeover by the Kabila regime. Large scale violence did not start until 1995 when the Mobutu regime announced the expulsion of the Rwandan refugees (Reyntjens, 2009). This resulted in the resettlement of many communities from the refugee camps throughout the eastern border of Zaire (Congo), which caused turmoil between the
refugees and ‘natives.’ “Massacres by the Hutu militias against the Tutsi and the Hunde and by the Hunde militias against the Tutsi and the Hutu progressively created ethnically homogenous spaces” (Reyntjens, 2009, p. 17). The conflict then was extended to different regions within the eastern Zaire region.

The ethnic tensions further created instability and violence in eastern Zaire. Ethnic strife helped shadow the creation of the AFDL and their campaign to overthrow Mobutu. Rwanda and Uganda used the AFDL as a Trojan horse in order to infiltrate the Zairian border and launch attacks in the refugee camps against the Hutu extremists and their backers. The war against Mobutu only lasted seven months and “[by] April 1997, Kabila and his backers had taken the mineral rich provinces of Katanga and the two Kasais” (Turner, 2007, p. 5). On May 17th of that year, Kinshasa fell and Mobutu was forced to flee the Country. Laurent Kabila took power and named the country the Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo).

**Second Congo War, 1998-2003:**

The geopolitical surroundings of Congo have greatly affected the instability within the nation. After ousting Mobutu and taking power, Kabila, in 1998, monopolized power and removed his foreign officers and sent them home. This action by Kabila angered the members of the coalition and in “August 1998, Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia foiled an attempt to overthrow Kabila” (Turner, 2007, p.5). According to Turner (2007), the war against Kabila began with the creation of the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD).

The continuation of the Congo war, or as some scholars call it ‘Africa’s War’, was greatly influenced by the interventions of Uganda and Rwanda. Unsatisfied with the new leadership by Kabila, the Rwandan and Ugandan regimes desired a new competent leader that would support their interest. With the backing from the United States, “Rwanda and Uganda
initiated the war that erupted on August 2, 1998” (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002, p.228). Uganda and Rwanda used rebel militias to do their dirty works in the fight against Kabila. For instance, the RCD was a proxy rebel group directed from Kigali (Reyntjens, 2009). Like the first war, the alliance between the rebel groups and the Rwandan and Ugandan regimes was used in the logic of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” (Reyntjens, 2009, p. 201). Members of the coalition that sponsored the AFDL to oust Mobutu were now segregated during the war against Kabila and complicated the rebellion against the Kabila regime.

During ‘Africa’s War,’ Congo was divided into three major sections. Kabila, using Kinshasa as his primary base with help from Angola and Zimbabwe, controlled the Southern third of the territory and used natural resources found in this territory such as oil, diamond, cobalt, and other minerals to support his war efforts (Turner, 2007). According to Turner (2007), a portion of the north, particularly the Equateur province, was controlled and exploited by the Ugandan backed Mouvement de Liberation Congo (MLC) under the leadership of Jean-Pierre Bemba and the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie – Mouvement de Libération (RCD-ML). The final section of Congo was controlled and exploited by the RCD-Goma and Rwandan troops; the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, Maniema, parts of Katanga, the Kasais, and Orientale (Turner, 2007).

**Impacts of the Wars on Dongo Conflict:**

The refugee crisis in the east after the Rwandan genocide and the Ugandan and Rwandan invasion of the Congo for security reasons was the catalyst many of the oppressed communities needed to take up arms and fight for the interests of their communities. Thus, many locals took up arms and created or were recruited into rebel groups. In the most notorious, Uganda and Rwanda saw the opportunity and used rebel groups as a tool for their interests.
Taking into account the above explanation of the war, rebel groups and local militia groups, with backing from foreign and domestic actors fueled the war in Congo. Congo became a free for all, and militia groups were used to destabilize the nation through indirect means of fighting. The instability within Congo allowed actors involved to economically and politically benefit from the conflict. These movements and struggles for local interests were possible due to the fact that numerous ex-combatants kept their firearms after the wars and firearms were sent from external or internal actors backing a particular group.

The wars in Congo proved to be detrimental to the overall stability of the country. Despite the proxy fighting in the eastern regions of the nation, the wars greatly affected the Equateur province, particularly the development of Odjani’s movement. Despite the destruction of infrastructure and the economy, which have hindered the development of Congo, the most devastating result from the two wars was the abundance of military weapons that remained in the hands of ex-combatants. Many of the local struggles or the indirect means of fighting would not be effective without the remaining weapons, and the shipment of weapons from external backers.

After the two wars in Congo, many combatants that did not reintegrate into the Congolese national army kept their military weapons. Given the economic crisis after the wars, many ex-combatants remained unemployed (Thomas, personal communication, 2012). Respectively, many soldiers from AFDL and MLC kept their weapons in accordance to a mission that was established in Kinshasa; ‘Une arme contre 100 dollars’ (Thomas, personal communication). One hundred dollars was to be given for every weapon. The purpose of the initiative was to bring stability and support the peace process of the entire nation. With no financial support from the government, many ex-combatants kept their weapons in hopes of one day trading in their firearms for one hundred dollars. Given the abundance of firearms in the
Equateur province, Odjani was able to advance his movement to a military insurgency by acquiring firearms and recruiting ex-combatants from the Lobala ethnic group to fight for his movement and the restoration of the Lobala “glory.”

The firearms used by Odjani’s militia group came from different sources: those seized from the police as they tried to intervene; those that the Lobala FARDC (Force Armée de République Démocratique du Congo) officers brought with them to support Odjani’s movement; and those that were collected by sector chief Edo from the MLC arms caches around the Dongo sector (Stearns, 2010, March 27). Throughout the Dongo sector, there were already numerous soldiers in the MLC rebel group that never participated in the reintegration process implemented by the National Demobilization Program, CONADER (Stearns, 2010, March 27). As a result, “upwards of 400 of these ex-MLC began to enroll in Odjani’s service, many of them receiving payments” (Stearns, 2010, March 27). As a result, Odjani’s movement could have not been as successful without the collections of firearms and the use of ex-combatants from the Congo wars. Although the Odjani movement started as a small local conflict, the movement evolved to a national security threat when former Mobutu officers and members of the MLC from the Lobala ethnic group joined the movement, taking advantage of the weapons left in the area after the Congo wars (Stearns, 2010, January 6).

The significance of the Dongo conflict is important in understanding the international community’s peacebuilding efforts in Congo. Granted the scale of conflict in Dongo does not precisely match those in eastern Congo, nevertheless, they have similar factors. One of the most significant factors contributing to the perpetuation of indirect means of fighting and local struggles is the abundance of firearms left after the war, as well as ex-combatants that have not been reintegrated within the Congolese national army and society. These factors greatly
contributed to Odjani’s movement in the Equater province. In the following section, the failure of the international community will be examined.

**Peacebuilding Process:**

According to a United Nations report, about 60 percent of peace missions have a chance of success after warring parties have signed peace agreements; in Africa the percentage falls to 40 percent, showing that conflict is more likely to relapse despite the signing of peace agreements (Rathje, 2007). The failure of the international community’s peacebuilding process was greatly due to their inability to stop proxy fighting and local struggles within Congo. The numerous and widespread fighting was fueled by local conflicts and large militia groups.

The first phase began with the ‘Four Peace Plan’ and ended with the Pretoria accord on the formation of a democratically elected government of a national unity in late 2002. This phase primarily focused on sending United Nations observers and military personnel to monitor the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. Following the withdrawal agreements between Congo and Rwanda and Uganda, Mission de l’Organisation de Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo (MONUC) played an important role in assisting and monitoring the withdrawal process. Lastly, MONUC supported the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, resettlement and repatriation (DDRRR) of foreign armed groups and militias within Congo (Tull, 2009). Despite MONUC’s limited role in Congo, it was effective in monitoring the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement as well as the withdrawal of Rwandan and Ugandan troops in Congo. The first phase was undermined by the inability to stop rebel fighting and the killing of innocent civilians. In 1999, fighting broke out in Kisangani between two rival rebel factions, with one side supported by Ugandan troops and the other side supported by Rwandan troops. Tensions due to conflicting
interests between Uganda and Rwanda were exacerbated by local disputes and conflict over the control of natural resources in the region of Kisangani (Laakso et al., n.d).

The second phase of the international community’s peacebuilding efforts began with the Pretoria accord in 2002 (Tull, 2009). The mission now focused on supporting the transition of the national government of unity in Kinshasa. The transitional government was now the most important piece in implementing the peace agreements concluded in Lusaka and Pretoria. Nevertheless, conflicts in eastern Congo undermined peacebuilding efforts and the international community’s ability to provide protection and peace. The first major crisis that weakened the international community’s peacebuilding process occurred in Bunia, located in Itury district, in May 2003 (Tull, 2009). Different ethnic groups began fighting over the control of Bunia after the withdrawal of Ugandan troops (Tull, 2009). The blue helmets neglected their obligation to protect civilians under immediate threat. “Barely a year later, another crisis erupted in Bukavu, when forces led by renegade commander Laurent Nkunda, a former RCD general, occupied the provincial capital of South Kivu” (Tull, 2009, p. 215-230). Again MONUC failed to protect civilians under immediate threat and to prevent human rights abuses.

The third phase of the peacebuilding agenda involved the preparation of the national election. The primary mission was to organize the presidential, parliamentary, and provincial elections. According to the United Nations mission in the Congo, the election was “a key element in the transition from a post-conflict to a truly democratic, unified and stable State” (Tull, 2009, p. 215-230). During this peacebuilding phase, rebel fighting in South Kivu intensified and a military coup attempt in Kinshasa by the presidential guards took place. At the same time, nationwide riots began in protest of the United Nations’ peacebuilding failures in Congo.
Re-evaluating Peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A case study in Dongo

The last phase began with the 2006 election. According to the international community, a democratic election was the necessary final step in promoting peace, stability, and the development of the nation’s economic affairs. However, the election was characterized by instability and further violence. During the election, fighting erupted between Kabila’s soldiers and Jean-Pierre Bemba’s militia men in Kinshasa. Despite the election, the elected Congolese government and the international community have been unsuccessful in promoting peace and stability within Congo. Local conflicts, such as the 2009 conflict in Dongo, continued to undermine the peacebuilding efforts in Congo. Until today, instability, conflict, and violence are nothing new to the Congolese people.

Since the Beginning of May 2012, the Congolese army has been fighting the M23 militia group in the Rutshuru territory near Goma. The mutiny that led to the creation of the M23 militia group began on April of the same year. Since the fighting between the Congolese army and the M23 militia group, “Over 260,000 people have fled the violence since the mutiny began, and an additional 60,000 have fled over the borders into Rwanda and Uganda” (Associate Press, 2012, September 27). In November 2012, at the time of writing, the M23 rebel group took control of Goma, an important city for mineral export in eastern Congo. The overall peacebuilding effort by the international community and Congolese government was a failure in that it did not promote a stable or lasting peace in Congo. Instability was and is greatly influenced by local struggles.

**Failure to Promote a Lasting Peace:**

The failure of the international community’s peacebuilding process was characterized by many factors; political interests, geopolitical surroundings, rebel and militia groups, economic interests and more. Despite the difficulties within the peace process, a degree of peace and stability was brought to Congo as a result of the peace building efforts. Overall, the majority of
the western part of the country, despite high poverty levels and the Dongo conflict, has witnessed some sort of stability. The government currently has been trying to develop the nation by partaking in activities in hopes of modernizing the nation. Nevertheless, the main obstacle facing the current government and the international community is local struggles. With scattered violence within Congo, the weak Congolese government is unable to establish peace and a stable ground for its economy to flourish.

It is true that local, regional, and national levels of violence are all interlinked and interconnected. During the Congo war and after the Congo war, local militias continued to ally with regional and national actors (Autesserre, 2010). “Local agendas provided national and regional actors with local allies, who were crucial in maintaining military control, continuing resource exploitation, and persecuting political or ethnic enemies” (Autesserre, 2010, p.38). However, innocent civilians were killed and human rights violations were committed and continued to be performed mostly by local militias. In order to prevent the deaths of innocent civilians, the United Nations sent peacekeeping troops and left the process of local peace in the hands of the civil society, religious leaders, and nongovernmental organizations (Autesserre, 2010).

The Importance of Dongo to the Peacebuilding Efforts:

When looking at the complex conflict situation in Congo, we see that there are many factors involved in the blueprint of the overall conflict as well as factors prolonging the calamity. This thesis, due to many factors, is not capable of examining all the different causes involved in the Congo conflict. Nevertheless, the following case study demonstrates how local struggles can evolve into a large scale conflict. As previously mentioned, local struggles and proxy fighting have hindered the Congolese government and international community’s peacebuilding efforts.
Despite ending large scale fighting between international and domestic actors, local struggles continue to bring instability within Congo. Although much of the conflict and fighting have been happening in the eastern regions of Congo, the Dongo case study is unique and important to the overall peacebuilding effort in Congo in that it illustrates how small local conflicts can evolve to a large scale conflict, affecting thousands of civilians. Therefore, if peacebuilding processes continue to ignore local struggles, whether small or large, small scale conflicts could lead to a national security crisis, causing more damage and costing more money than if it was handled properly.

**Conclusion:**

In regards to peacebuilding, the importance of the Dongo conflict is that it illustrates how local struggles can evolve to a large violent conflict such as the numerous fighting in eastern Congo. Like many of the rebel leaders in eastern Congo, Odjani was an opportunist. He saw an opportunity and he capitalized on it. Nonetheless, his successful campaign was short lived due to his inability to prove his credibility as a force that should not be taken for granted. This was mainly due to the fact that his rebellion was quelled before receiving support from outside actors that did not support Joseph Kabila. Odjani’s ambition for power, as we will see later, was fueled by little victories that filled him with hubris, thinking he had the power to take control of the Equateur province. However, Odjani was not the only person hoping for a successful rebellion. Again, the conflict in Dongo was not unfounded; there were many factors that attributed to its creation. By looking at Congo’s history of violence and the impacts of the wars on the Equateur province, it is clear to see how the conflict in Dongo came to be.
Chapter V: Research Case Study

Land is the most valuable commodity in human history. Competition over the domination and the control of land has led humanity to perform numerous atrocities. As a result, wars have been fought, people have been exploited, and societies have been divided. These acts have led perpetrators to justify their actions by using rhetoric that highly praised their involvements. From colonialism to imperialism, we see justifications claiming colonization of the uncivilized to job creation and improvement of living conditions. Nevertheless, the struggle for land has created a cyclical system of violence. The following section explains the results of my research in the Equateur province of Congo.

Odjani’s Quest for Power:

On the morning of October 23, 2009, Odjani, a son of a Lobala witchdoctor, and his militia group attacks the Dongo center, killing about 250 to 500 civilians and chasing members of the Boba ethnic group out of Dongo (Stearns, 2010, March 27). Originally targeting Bobas, Odjani and his militia group begin to kill and chase all non-Lobalas out of Dongo. The situation in Dongo leaves thousands displaced and hundreds dead. On November 13, 2009, a rapid reaction police and a small United Nations Ghanaian peacekeeping force are sent to quell Odjani’s armed movement (Stearns, 2010, March 27). About two weeks after the deployment, Odjani and his militia group defeat the small rapid reaction police and the peacekeeping force and take their weapons.

In the hopes of creating an armed movement platform as strong as that of the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP) to force political concessions in Kinshasa; the victory gives Odjani the hope that he can lead a rebellion as successful and large as that of General Luarent Nkunda’s CNDP rebel group during the Congo wars in eastern Congo (Stearns,
Re-evaluating Peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A case study in Dongo

2010, March 27). Seeing Odjani’s success in Dongo, members of the Mobutu’s FAZ (Force Armée Zairiose) and Jean-Pierre Bemba’s MLC (Mouvement Libération du Congo) wait patiently to see if Odjani’s armed movement is worth supporting (Stearns, 2010, January 6). Filled with hubris and inspired to be a change agent such as general Nkunda in the east, Odajni and his militia group head towards the town of Gemena and Mbandanka; two important cities in the Equateur province. Odjani’s quest for power soon becomes an opportunistic dream with no viable solution of becoming a reality. In the town of Bobito, about sixty kilometers from Gemena, Odjani’s militia group encounters the Congolese national army and is pushed back all the way to the jungles surrounding the Enyele village. Odjani is defeated and his militia group flees to the neighboring Republic of Congo. Despite Odjani’s unsuccessful rebellion, thousands of innocent civilians are killed and displaced, with sixty percent being children (IRIN Global, 2012, October 31). The overall conflict in Dongo results in over 200,000 displaced persons and over 2,000 dead civilians (Autesserre, 2010). Furthermore, the conflict forces thousands of individuals and families to seek refuge in villages surrounding Dongo, with the majority in the Republic of Congo. Over 115,000 refugees crossed the Ubangi River and entered the Republic of Congo (Agence France Presse, 2009, December 9).

The following case study illustrates how local struggles can evolve into large scale conflicts, eventually threatening national security and causing instability within the nation. The previous section provided the necessary tools for understanding the different factors that impacted the overall formation of Dongo’s local struggle and Odjani’s quest for power. Among these factors are structural violence, corruption, and oppression. This section puts focus on the conflict analysis of Dongo, and thus observes different dynamics that fueled and transformed the conflict from a local struggle to a national security crisis. Therefore, this section examines the
realities and events that led Odjani to accumulate power and start a rebellion that threatened national security and created instability within the Equateur province of Congo. By performing conflict analysis on the situation that took place in Dongo, this case study signifies the importance of local struggles and their effects on the overall instability of Congo.

Introduction:

Through the collection of interviews, I was able to uncover the dominant narratives surrounding the Dongo conflict. Adams (2000), in Readings for Diversity and Social Justice, makes it clear that truth equals dominant narrative since society shapes who we are and the perception of those we see as others. What was gained was a communal truth. Communal truth is crucial to understanding the conflict in Dongo.

For the following information about the Dongo conflict, I relied heavily on oral sources. The demographic of my informants varied yet, for the most part, they were able to provide overlapping information regarding the situation that took place in Dongo. They presented what has become the dominant narrative of what happened in Dongo. Here is the story as recounted by the informants.14

Context of Ethnic Groups within the Dongo Region:

The conflict between the Enyele and the Munzaya dates back before 1946, but the relation between the two ethnic groups precedes colonialism. In reality, the problem is internal between the Lobala, the Bomboli, and the Boba, as we will later see. In order to better grasp the conflict that took place in Dongo in 2009, it is best to fully understand the historical context and the dynamics of major ethnic groups of the region. In this segment, the ethnic history of Dongo will be examined in order to give a better contextual framework for understanding the conflict.

14 Information about the informants/interviewees can be found in appendix C
Major Ethnic Groups in Dongo before Colonization:

Identity and land are fundamental building blocks for the survival of individuals and the survival of communities. The region of Dongo historically contained three major ethnic groups.\(^\text{15}\) Before the colonization of Congo, Dongo was occupied by the Lobala, the Munzombo, and the Bomboli ethnic groups (Manybo, personal communication, 2012).\(^\text{16}\) According to Manybo (2012), the Lobala tribe consists of four subgroups: Lobala-Tanda, Lobala-Sud, Lobala-Poko, and Lobala-Tandacome. Within these subgroups, Lobala-Tanda and Lobala-Tandacome were known as fishers, and Lobala-Sud and Lobala-Poko were known as agronomists (Manybo, 2012).

According to Malaka (2012), the Enyele people originated from the Lobala-Tandacome. The name Enyele is given to the Lobala-Tandacome people that reside in the Enyele Village (Malaka, 2012). Given the number of subgroups within the Lobala, the Lobala ethnic group has dominated the region of Dongo (Joe, personal communication, 2012). The Munzombo people were always seen as minorities since they were not indigenous to Dongo (Manybo, 2012). The Munzombo people originated from what is now called South Sudan and migrated south to Dongo during the early 19th century (Manybo, 2012). The Munzombo people were known as fishers because their sole method of living was through fishing. The final major group residing in Dongo was the Bomboli people. The Bomboli people were known as fishers and solely worked on fishing as a method of living. The Munzaya people originated from the Bomboli, and unlike the

\(^{15}\) The main sources for this section are: Manybo, Malaka, May and Maji. Manybo served as Chef de Secteur of Dongo and was heavily involved in getting the different communities to reconcile. According to members of the Enyele village, Malaka is the historian of the village. Malaka was one of the key officials representing the Enyele people during the peace process. May is one of the lead officials from La Société Civil that facilitated the reconciliation process in Dongo. According to members of the Munzaya village, Maji is the historian of the village. Maji was one of the key officials that provided information and represented the Munzaya village during the peace process.

\(^{16}\) From now on in this chapter instead of putting the full reference of my interviewees, after the first introduction of the informant, I will put the name of the informant followed by the year of the interview.
Bomboli, the Munzaya have solely relied on agriculture as their means of survival. Within the three major groups, the Bomboli and Lobala originated from Congo and are perceived by all in the region to be indigenous to the region of Dongo (Joe, 2012).

Four years after a Belgian administrator named Devalck gave the Lobala people the autonomy of the Dongo sector during the Belgian colonization, the Dongo sector and its region was created in 1949 (Manybo, 2012). The Dongo region consists of Dongo and the small villages surrounding it. Prior to Belgian colonization, the three major ethnic groups lived together and occupied the same space (Loko, personal communication, 2012). Despite living on the same land, the Lobala-Poko and the Lobala-Sud did not have a conflict of interest with the Munzombo, given their different styles of living (Manybo, 2012). According to Manybo (2012), the Lobala-Poko and Lobala-Sud formed a peace agreement with the Munzombo that enabled the groups to intermarry and trade. On the other hand, the Lobala-Tandacome and the Loba-Tanda did not see eye to eye with the Bomboli tribe since they all relied on fishing to survive (Manybo, 2012). Their conflict of interest allowed the Lobala-Tandacome and the Lobala-Tanda to become enemies with the Bomboli people (Manybo, 2012).

In regards to the three major ethnic groups residing in Dongo, the association of a particular group was formed through the discourse of identity. Association was not based on individuality but rather through the community. As a result, the basic human needs of different ethnic groups were perceived to be dependent on their association. When a particular group is associated with a single method of living such as fishing, deep-rooted conflict could easily arise. Denying individuals within a community the ability to diversify their methods of living, and

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17 Unfortunately, my informants did not remember the full names of people or their status from the colonial era. In the Equateur province, particularly in the areas I visited, individuals are usually not called by their full name. They are always referred by their given or referred as the son or daughter of a person; for example, Wilita the son of Mossai.
Reducing their diversity to that of a single association, leaves a community vulnerable to deep-rooted conflict. It is much easier for the human needs of a particular group to be threatened by external actors when the group has a single association rather than a diverse set of associations.

**Creation of Ethnic Tension:**

The ethnic tension and conflict within Dongo began with the creation of the Comule Mokusi Plantation in 1955 (Manybo, 2012). The Comule Mokusi Planation is found right outside of Dongo in the town of Mokusi. Once used for the production of palm oil, the planation is no longer active. According to an interview with Makima and later Malama, the Belgians recruited different communities throughout what is now called the Equateur province to work on various plantations such as the rubber, palm, coffee, and cotton plantations in order to advance the economic development of Belgium (2012). With the creation of the Comule Mokusi plantation in Dongo, came a migration of different ethnic groups to the Dongo region (Manybo, 2012). Of these were the Boba people who originated from the Bomboma ethnic group. The Boba people were investors and merchants and were seen as more sophisticated than others (Yaka, personal communication, 2012). The socio-economic activities and influence of the Boba within the region threaten the dominance and influence of the Lobala ethnic group (Yaka, 2012). These incidents created the power struggle between the Lobala and the Boba for the control of Dongo and its surrounding villages.

With mass movement of people to the regions of Dongo came instability for the three major ethnic groups (Lobala, Bomboli, and Munzombo) originally residing in Dongo. The first political conflict in the region of Dongo took place in 1982 during the local elections (Manybo, 2012). Since the creation of the local and regional elections by the Belgians, a member of the Lobala ethnic group has always won the Chef de Secteur (mayor) position in Dongo (Manybo,
2012). In the 1982 elections, the Boba decided to elect one of their members to run for the mayor position in Dongo (Manybo, 2012). Since the Lobala dominated the region and were the majority, they denied the candidacy of the Boba member. Since the Boba people migrated to Dongo in the 1950s, they were considered immigrants by the Lobala people. According to Manybo (2012), the Lobala community claimed that “the Boba people were immigrants and had no right to run for office or let alone have political voice in Dongo.” The dispute between the Boba and the Lobala was pushed to the side by the Mobutu regime and the Lobala community continued to dominate the Dongo region (Yaka, 2012).

Despite the movement of people to Dongo and the crowding of space, the second ethnic conflict was an internal conflict between two of the three major ethnic groups originally residing in Dongo prior to the mass movement of people after the creation of the Comule Mokusi Plantation. In 2002, the Lobala-Poko and Munzombo community began to argue over the right to land (Manybo, 2012). Although the Lobala-Poko people were known for being agronomists, they claimed that their ancestors originally gave them the land which the Munzombo were occupying for agriculture and fishing, and accused them for occupying their land. Subsequently, the Munzombo denied the accusation and claimed that their ancestors were the ones that gave their people the land and allowed them to fish and work on agriculture (Manybo, 2012). The conflict got worse in 2006. Dongo was on a verge of being divided into different sectors according to different ethnic groups occupying different areas within the region (Manybo, 2012). Despite the severity of the conflict, the current Congolese government pushed the dispute to the side and never resolved it.

Land disputes influenced by identity have been the leading cause for much of Dongo’s ethnic instabilities and strife. For these communities, land is one of the primary human needs;
given their style of living, such as fishing or agronomy, the land with which they live on is vital to their survival. Therefore, communities will use identity as leverage against others and uphold their well-being in order to establish a social order according to their interests. Through the discourse of identity, communities are able to set the necessary explanatory framework that differentiates different groups and thus justify the advantage and disadvantage of certain groups. For example, by creating the discourse of who is ‘indigenous’ and who is ‘not indigenous’, certain groups can benefit from the oppression of other groups. As a result, this phenomenon creates tension and conflict.

Exploring the contextual framework of different major ethnic groups residing in the Dongo region and their relationship provides the proper tools necessary for examining the third and most violent conflict within the region. Violence was made possible through the interconnectedness of discourse, identity, and human needs. In the following section, an in-depth account of the conflict between the Munzaya and the Enleye will be given. Therefore, the reasons and events that led to Odjani’s quest for power will be illustrated.

**Context of the Enyele and the Munzaya Conflict:**

The relationship between the Enyele and the Munzaya, at first, was never characterized by conflict. These are two communities that considered themselves brothers and sisters and peacefully lived side by side for many generations. As the two groups increased in size, tension which eventually developed into conflict and then violence began to form. How the Enyele and Munzaya came to be will be discussed along with how each settlement was established. This will lead into examination of the formation and evolution of their conflict which will provide tools for understanding the relationship between the two groups and how the relationship went from being peaceful to hostile.
The Settlement:

The Enyele people derive from Lobala-Tandacome, which is a subgroup of the overall Lobala ethnic group. The region of Dongo was by in large occupied by the Lobala ethnic group. Through time, the increase in population forced many families within the Lobala community to expand to different regions of Dongo. This resulted in the creation of different subgroups within Lobala: Lobala-Poko, Lobala-Sud, Lobala-Tanda, and Lobala-Tandacome (Malaka, personal communication, 2012). As the subgroups branched out, each group developed its own methods of living. The Lobala were originally known for being agronomists, but as different subgroups expanded in hopes of finding new land, their methods of living changed depending on the characteristic of the land on which they settled. With the continued increase in population, the need for expansion, for the Lobala especially, seemed to be never ending. Families within the Lobala subgroups began to branch out in hopes of finding a new land suitable for the development and growth of their family lines. This phenomenon resulted in the creation of villages, such as Enyele. Furthermore, there have been different families within the Enyele village that have expanded to different areas within Dongo and the Republic of Congo (Yolanda, personal communication, 2012). The families settling in the Enyele Village are known as the Enyele people but are part of Lobala-Tandacome, which is part of the overall Lobala ethnic group.

The development of the Munzaya village is quite similar to that of the Enyele. The Munzaya are part of the larger Bomboli tribe (Maji, personal communication, 2012). Alongside the Lobala, the Bomboli people originally settled in the regions of Dongo. Nevertheless, the Bomboli ethnic group was not as large as the Lobala tribe. Originally known as hunters and gatherers, the Bomboli were later became fishers (Maji, 2012). With an exponential increase in
population, many families within the Bomboli community expanded in hopes of finding a suitable land to develop their family line. In relation to the Enyele, they Munzaya village was created in response to the need of expansion and family development. The need for expansion and development formed the genealogy of the two groups.

According to Lalama (2012), during the pre-colonial era, land was won or taken by force in what is now called the Equateur province of Congo. Land disputes were resolved through force. The most powerful community had the advantage of claiming the most viable land (Lalama, 2012). In the regions of Dongo in particular, power and the authority to lead a community was given to the most powerful man within the tribe (Malaka, 2012). Chiefs were considered the most powerful and wise, in regards to security and protection (Malaka, 2012). A chief was supported by a council, principally, elders of the community. Of these members were historians, philosophers, witchdoctors, and other members that represented key positions that fulfilled the needs of the community (Malaka, 2012). An important need was alliance with different groups in order to ensure security and tranquility.

*Fear, Respect, and Peace Agreement:*

The first encounter between the Enyele and the Munzaya was characterized by fear and respect. The Enyele people moved to more than ten different locations within the region of Dongo before finally settling in the Enyele village (Malaka, 2012). Here they began to work on agriculture and fishery. Shortly after the settlement and the development of the Enyele village, a friendship was developed (Malaka, 2012). One day a man by the name of Gomi Dobula from the village of Godumu, which is part of the Bomboli ethnic group, was looking for land near the Enyele village (Maji, 2012). Dobula encountered Kpoluku, who was the chief of the Enyele people, at a field not too far from the Enyele settlement (Malaka, 2012). Dobula told Kpoluku
that he was looking for a suitable land for his family to develop. Given the physical appearance
of Dobula, Kpoluku did not want to challenge Dobula to a duel (Maji, 2012). The duel would
determine who had authority over the land. After careful considerations and thoughts, Kpoluku
allowed Dobula to create his settlement near the Enyele village (Malaka, 2012).

The friendship between Dobula and Kpoluku was formed through a peace agreement of
protection and respect (Blood Pact, or Pacte de Sang). Before finalizing the agreement, Kpoluku
gathered his council members to discuss the possibility of the peace agreement. All were in favor
of the peace agreement except Isanka, who was the philosopher of the village (Malaka, 2012).
Given the physical strength of Dobula’s group, Isanka feared and warned the Enyele people that
if Dobula was allowed to live near the Enyele village, the Enyele people would suffer and their
grandchildren would continue to suffer (Malaka, 2012). This statement angered Kpoluku and led
him to kill Isanka and his family (Malaka, 2012). The peace agreement was finally made
between Kpoluku and Dobula in the early 19th century (Malaka, 2012). Under the peace
agreement, Dobula and his clan were given authority over the forest for agriculture while
Kpoluku and his clan were given authority over different fishing areas (Malaka, 2012). If one
group wanted to use their neighbor’s resources, they had to be given permission. With the peace
agreement, came free trade between the two groups and mixed marriage (Malaka, 2012). Within
the peace agreement, both groups swore an oath to protect each other from outsiders and danger
(Maji, 2012). With the peace agreement finalized, the land Dobula occupied evolved and became
the Munzaya village (Maji, 2012).

The Munzaya and the Enyele lived peacefully until the two groups began to expand in
size. The increase in population from both groups made it harder for individuals to abide by the
peace agreement. As the population increased, so did the disconformity of the individuals, which
led them to disobey the terms of the peace agreement. This phenomenon is the pivotal shifting point in the Munzaya and the Enyele relationship. The once peaceful bond now became hostile. The antagonistic link was established when both group began to infringe upon each other’s human needs. This deep-rooted conflict, which will be further discussed in the following section, formed the necessary platform for the Dongo conflict.

**The Enyele and Munzaya Conflict:**

According to history, it appears that the conflicting dispute over land between the Munzaya and the Enyele date long before 1946. The creation and development of the conflict between the Munzaya and the Enyele has been greatly influenced by the discourse of identity, political manipulation, corruption, and disparity which in part is due to structural violence. Structural violence has hindered Dongo’s ability to establish social order and minimize conflict.

**The Origin of the Conflict:**

As the Munzaya and the Enyele population grew, the need to expand and acquire more resources increased. This scarcity forced both groups to disobey the peace agreement; particularly the respect of space and resources. Both groups began to utilize each other’s resources and space without permission, further infringing on each other’s human needs. As the years advanced, so did the progression and severity of the conflict between the Munzaya and the Enyele.

It was not until 1946, during colonialism, that the conflict over land, particularly the Misibo fishing pond that is located in the Munzaya forest, was brought to court (Malaka, 2012). The 1946 court hearing was sent to ‘Mr. Peters’, a Belgian administrator (Malaka, 2012). Peters ruled in favor of the Enyele. Unsatisfied with a feeling of injustice, in 1948 the Munzaya

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18 Due to the lack of written record from villages, I was unable to get the full name and true position of leaders from colonialism.
took the same case to ‘Mr. Bierlon’ (Malaka, 2012). The ruling of the case in 1946 never changed, despite the Munzayas perseverance. This could have been due to the fact that the Lobala, given their majority, controlled the customary authority of Dongo, and thus had a good relationship with the Belgians. In reality, land occupied by a certain ethnic group, through the Belgian administrative system, was managed by local chiefs and ‘vacant’ land became state property (Eastern DRC: Local Efforts to Solve Land and Identity Conflicts, 2011). This fact, suggests that the Lobalas, in accordance with Belgium, had political power and influence of Dongo and its surrounding villages. As a result, the Munzaya did not have a level playing field with the Enyele during their legal dispute over land and resources, since the Enyele belonged to the Lobala ethnic group. Angered by what they believed to be injustice, little by little, the Munzaya began to take matters in their own hands.

The Development of the Conflict:

In 1956, the then Chef de Secteur of Dongo saw that the increasing dispute between the Enyele and the Munzaya was beginning to cause much turmoil (Manybo, 2012). The claim to the right of land became more apparent from both groups. Through discourse, both groups created communal truths that justified their perception of ownership. Furthermore, identity was used to set the necessary framework of exception and oppression. This phenomenon further fueled the conflict between the two communities. According to the Enyele, it was their ancestors that allowed the Munzaya to settle near the Enyele village (Malaka, 2012). As for the Munzaya, it was their ancestors that found the land near the Enyele, which led to the signing of the peace agreement. With no written record of legal document pertaining to the land, the dispute continues to be fueled by communal truths.

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19 The village historian that I interviewed did not have a written record of the name of Belgian administrators. Therefore the name of Mr. Bierlon might be spelled differently since I spelled it on how it sounds.
Within the same year in 1956, angered by injustice, a member of the Munzaya village shot and killed Nyamowala, an Enyele judge who was sent to investigate the conflict between the two groups (Malaka, 2012). The Munzaya man was arrested and taken to jail where he eventually died (Malaka, 2012). The event of the shooting was the first physical violent action that established the necessary catalyst for continuous violence between the Enyele and the Munzaya. The conflict continued, and as the years progressed and the population grew, so did the intensity of the conflict.\textsuperscript{20}

In 1973, people from the Motombi and the Enyele village attacked the Munzaya village and set several houses on fire without much reaction from the government or people within the Dongo region (Maji, 2012). According to Malaka (2012), in 1984, the Munzaya stopped Nyaingbala (who is the father of the current Dongo Mayor, Desire Manyale), tied him down, tortured him, and had a woman urinate in his mouth. Nyaingbala was then held hostage in the Munzaya village for ten days (Malaka, 2012). When the case was brought to the Court in Gemena, it was dropped (Manybo, 2012). Despite the long conflicting interests over land, it was not until 1985 that the conflict over fishing rights began. This is important because the dispute over fishing rights, which will be addressed later, not only involved the Munzaya and the Enyele, but sparked further tensions between the Lobala and the Boba. The exchange of small violent actions between the groups continued to grow throughout the late 80s, 90s, and the early 2000s.

Overwhelmed with attacks from the Enyele and the inability of the government to find a viable solution, the Munzaya created a land boundary that separated their land from that of the Enyele people (Maji, 2012). After the making of the land boundary in 2006, the Munzaya prohibited the Enyele access to their forest (Maji, 2012). The land boundary angered the Enyele

\textsuperscript{20} Besides the 1973 incident, my informants skipped over the years between 1956 and 1984. This is probably due to the fact that, according to their perception of the conflict, nothing important took place during that time span.
people because it did not respect their territorial space due to the fact that within the Munzaya forest laid several Enyele fishing ponds (Malaka, 2012). Therefore, the boundary completely denied the Enyele people the ability to access their fishing ponds. Infuriated by the new boundary line, the Enyele community decided to enter the forest to access their ponds. When the Enyele people entered the forest, members of the Munzaya village followed them and destroyed their fishing nets (Malaka, 2012). The case was brought to the superior courts of the Dongo region, but the case was never resolved.

At the same time, members of the Boba ethnic group began to support the Munzaya to initiate a lucrative business. The members of the Boba ethnic group invested in the Munzaya by providing them with a water pump (Malaka, 2012). The pump allowed the Munzaya to quickly transfer water from a pond to an empty reservoir so a large amount of fish could be collected in a short amount of time. After the fish are done being collected, the water is transferred back into to the original pond. Fishing now became a productive business for the Munzaya. The success of the partnership between the Boba and the Munzaya infuriated the Enyele and the overall Lobala community (Makima, 2012). The support of the Munzaya by the Boba further aggravated and fueled the competition between the Boba and the Lobala.

Most fascinating is the conception of enemy. The power of identity through discourse was able to justify violence. Since the killing of the Enyele judge in 1956, both groups began to perform small attacks on each other. The attacks and atrocities performed were justified because through the discourse of identity, the ‘other’ was considered the enemy. Discourse, through conversation and interaction between the Munzaya and the Enyele, was able to provide the necessary framework that established the enemy and therefore justified the means of violence. As time progressed, so did the severity of violence. Through time, the ability to inflict violence
on the enemy simply became a norm. Neither community punished or brought to justice their members when they inflicted violence on the members of the other community. Furthermore, the discourse of identity established the reasoning of ‘the friend of my enemy is my enemy.’ Since the Boba ethnic group had economic ties with the Munzaya, they too became an enemy within the Lobala’s discourse.

Inability to Reach Peace, Corruption:

In 2007, the Enyele Chief accompanied by some of his men captured Makuma, a member of the Munzaya village, and his wife when they were in the forest working at one of the ponds (Manybo, 2012). Makuma was tortured and his wife was raped, unfortunately she became pregnant but decided to abort the child (Theo, personal communication, 2102). The chief and his men then took Makuma and his wife to the Enyele village to see Ikpaka, the registrar of the Enyele village (Theo, 2012). The then mayor Edo Bokoto had them arrested (Manybo, 2012). Since Makuma and his wife were from the Bomboli tribe and Bokoto was from the Lobala-Tanda tribe, Bokoto referred the case to a new area manager who had jurisdiction over both aforementioned groups. The hearing was then brought to the regional court. The court heard the two groups and imposed a “damage and interest” fine on the Enyele, since they were found guilty (Manybo, 2012). The fine obliged the Enyele village to provide 50 smoked fish to Makuma (Manybo, 2012). The village chief and the Enyele people accepted the sentencing and waited to pay the fine during the dry season (Manybo, 2012).

Unsatisfied with the regional tribunal court ruling, Makuma’s father-in-law, Boni Mozangi decided to take the case to the superior courts of Gemena (May, personal communication, 2012). Thus, Mozangi took Makuma on his motorcycle and went to Gemena to contest the ruling at the Superior Court in Gemena called “Parquet de Grand Instance de
Re-evaluating Peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A case study in Dongo

According to the interview with May, Mozangi wanted the “damage and interest” fine to be raised to 500 smoked fish instead of the previous ruled 50 (May, 2012). The Superior Court of Gemena, through its own procedure, re-condemned the Enyele chief. The court ordered the chief and the Enyele village to pay an additional transitional fee to the court regardless of the 500 smoked fish from the “damage and interest” fine that Mozangi wished for (May, 2012). According Makima (2012), the transitional fee was nothing more than a bribe. As a result, instead of resolving the conflict and impartially bringing justice to the perpetrators, the case was exploited and interfered by several provincial deputies in Gemena hoping to make profit out of the conflict (Makima, 2012).

While the conflict between the Munzaya and the Enyele was being exploited by court officials in Gemena, the two villages were on the brink of war. In September 2007, an Enyele man stopped a Munzaya woman and her children, destroyed her canoe, and made her walk naked back to her village (May, 2012). In reaction, members of the Munzaya village found and injured the Enyele man that violated that woman’s rights. That day, the Munzaya community decided to ban the Enyele from ever using the forest and the ponds within the forest. When Mozangi and Makuma returned from their journey to Gemena, the whole Munzaya village blocked the Enyele fishing ponds and prevented the Enyele village from ever setting foot on their fishing ponds for two years (May, 2012).

Dongo’s Chef de Secteur at the time, Botoko Nyabotake, decided to gather representatives from each village to resolve the conflict (Manybo, 2012). Nyabotake and the representatives from both villages went to Ngona, a neutral location about 23 kilometers from Dongo, to resolve the conflict and reconcile (May, 2012). The peace dialogue focused primarily on returning the use and management of the fishing ponds to the period prior to the 2007
Re-evaluating Peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A case study in Dongo

conflicts (May, 2012). Nevertheless, the Munzaya chief and his representatives, after being influenced by Makuma, refused to sign the reconciliation act (Manybo, 2012). 21

Furious by the decision made by the Munzaya delegates, Mayor Nyabotake authorized the Enyele people to use the fishing pond, which he claimed belonged to the Enyele authority, until the dry season (Manybo, 2012). Since the Enyele community has always feared the Munzaya, they did not want to take any action against their feared enemy. The Enyele decided to call on their brother Mangbama from the village Liranga (Congo-Brazzaville), who had been exiled from the Enyele village in the late 1990s for performing witchcraft, and to ask for his assistance to support their efforts, through supernatural ways, in order to fight their neighboring Munzaya who had been constantly threatening them (Manybo, 2012). In response, Mangbama sent his son, Odjani, to fight for the Enyele as they saw fit against the Munzaya.

This segment fundamentally illustrates how a local dispute, if not handled properly, can evolve into a large conflict. The escalation of the conflict was mainly due to corruption within the national government. Instead of impartially resolving the conflict, government officials and political leaders manipulated the conflict for their personal gain. As a result, both groups turned to violence in hopes of obtaining their goals. The violent conflict between the Munzaya and the Enyele could have been prevented if the government officials had taken the dispute seriously and resolved it ethically.

The government officials’ inability to resolve the Munzaya and Enyele conflict made the two groups take matters in their own hands. Not only did corruption prevent peace, but corruption further fueled the conflict between the Enyele and Munzaya. Violence, from the perspective of the two communities, now became the only method available to resolve the dispute. The following segment examines Odjani’s quest for power.

21 Makuma is considered, by members of the Munzaya village, one of the leaders of the community.
The Dongo Conflict:

Odjani’s quest for power resulted in victories that fueled his ego. According to Malaka (2012), on February 2009, Odajni accompanied by members of the Enyele village went to their fishing pond to work, but instead was attacked by members of the Munzaya village. With his mystical powers, Odjani was able to overtake the Munzaya’s traditional and military weapons and chase the members of Munzaya village away (Malaka, 2012). Additionally, according to an interview with Manybo (2012), the fighting resulted in multiple deaths from both sides. Furthermore, when the Enyele went for the second time to work on their fishing pond, Odjani and his members, this time, attacked the members of the Munzaya village that were near the pond and chased them to their village (Maji, 2012). The Munzaya decided to rebel and take action. That night on March 31, 2009, the Munzaya infiltrated the Enyele village, killed a man and his wife, and kidnapped their daughter that was about 13 years old (May, 2012). In retaliation, Odjani’s group along with their ally, people of the Motombi village, followed the Munzaya to their village, proceeded to engage in a severe physical fight with the Munzaya and eventually chased the Munzaya out of their village, and completely pillaged and burned down the Munzaya village (May, 2012).

Discourse and Odjani’s Power Accumulation:

Since the Munzaya had a reputation of being fierce warriors and yet were soundly defeated; Odjani, filled with hubris, proclaimed himself the paramount master where all other forces did not exist, and authorized himself as the sole maker of law (May, 2012). All the negotiations and all the reconciliations that were made earlier were now doomed to fail. Hence, Odjani began recruiting people from the surrounding Lobala villages: Mombambo, Ngona,

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22 The explanation of how Odjani went about using his mystical powers was not given. The story Malaka reported has become an accepted version of the event.
Likpangbala, Ngbanza, Kombe, and Mokusi (Walama, personal communication, 2012). Odjani’s recruitment methods were a mixture of inspiration, witchcraft, and fear.

Odjani recruited elders of communities in order to have a greater influence on the overall population (Yaka, 2012). His success in recruiting elders of villages was due to his ability to inspire others and bring hope to each community; a hope for a better tomorrow and the restoration of the glories of the past. According to an interview with a Lobala student, Odjani’s recruitment process was filled with promises of a better future through the rebuilding of what was once lost: “nzumbele” (Mark, personal communication, 2012). The word ‘nzumbele’ has similar meanings to the English word nostalgia; a sentimental yearning for the joy and the better days of the past. Odjani’s speech greatly focused on rebuilding what was lost from the past and recreating it anew. The recruitment of the elders eventually led to the recruitment of young men ready to claim the glories of their ancestors. After recruitment, Odjani vaccinated his warriors through rituals and promised that no bullet or blade could ever reach them (May, 2012). The recruitment was a movement where Lobalas were greatly influenced to join due to factors such as fear, disparity, and the hope of one day reclaiming the glory of what was lost from the past (May, 2012). The recruited Lobalas were ordered to execute all orders that were made by Odjani, if not, they were killed as a way of punishment (May, 2012). Odjani’s movement began to gain momentum as news about his movement began spreading.

Through the discourse of information, Odjani was able to accumulate tremendous power. As an opportunist, Odjani, by using the Enyele-Munzaya conflict, was able to establish a discourse that allowed him to accumulate power and manipulate the Lobala population to fight for his cause. The manipulation of language was used during Odjani’s recruitment of the Lobala people. By claiming himself to be a Godlike being, he convinced many to fear and obey him. My
interviewees referred to Odjani as a God. Most individuals that were interviewed in Dongo claimed that Odjani had magical powers that allowed him to walk on water and turn papayas into grenades. This belief, to most people in Dongo, is truth.

Impact of the Congo Wars:

When hearing about the clash between the Enyele and the Munzaya and Odjani’s movement, government authorities came to Dongo looking for a solution to the conflict (May 2012). Mayor Nyabotake, a Lobala, joined Odjani’s movement (May, 2012). Biased in favor of the movement, Nyabotake never told the authorities the truth regarding the factual matters of the conflict or the purpose of Odjani’s movement. Furthermore, the Assistant District Commissioner Willy Isenkusu Itela and the Provincial Minister of the Interior Guy Inenge declared that the rebellion was a problem within the Dongo region; the conflict was nothing more than an ethnic dispute (May, 2012). Shortly after the arrival of the Congolese Chief of Staff of the ground forces, representatives in Dongo convinced the Chief of Staff that nothing major was happening in Dongo, and therefore he was encouraged to return to his post (May, 2012).

Terrible killings between the village of Enyele and Munzaya resulted from both groups obtaining military arms. After interviewing the Bonkonzi population, the District Commissioner of Dongo informed the surrounding population that after the two wars of liberation, many combatants had kept their arms (May, 2012). Nevertheless, the ex-combatants were not supposed to use their kept arms to shoot civilians, and if they did, they were given draconian forms of punishment. Odjani’s movement began to gain momentum and strength. Nyamokala Emeka, the captain of the Naval Force, during his vacation, came to his Enyele village and began to train Odjani’s militia group, while hiding the facts of his activities from the government (May, 2012). Odjani’s small movement now evolved into a military movement. The inability of government
officials to truly access the seriousness and factual factors of the Odjani movement undermined the government’s ability to prevent the massacre in Dongo. This was due to factors such as political influence and the incompetence of properly accessing the conflict.

*Manipulation, Perpetuation of Conflict:*

The once small conflict between two relatively small villages began to take the form of a catastrophe, due to manipulation by political leaders. The conflict between the Enyele and the Munzaya was greatly influenced by political leaders hoping to gain political power through the conflict (Makima, 2012). They saw the Munzaya-Enyele conflict as an opportunity to gain constituents. Political leaders from both, the Boba and Lobala communities, were sending false messages throughout their villages manipulating the conflict in order to get members of their communities involved in the conflict (Makima, 2012). The political dispute between the Boba and the Lobala in the 1980s, regarding who had the right to run for the Chef de Secteur position, retook shape. The conflict between the Enyele and the Munzaya began to fuel political disputes between the Boba and the Lobala. Since the creation of the Dongo region by Belgium, the Lobala have always won the mayoral position. According to Manybo (2012), the Boba currently hold sixty percent of Dongo’s population and the Lobala hold less than one percent. Yet, the Boba have always been denied the possibility of having their representative become the Chef de Secteur of Dongo. Political leaders from the Boba ethnic group manipulated the conflict between the Munzaya and the Enyele by blaming the Lobalas for the conflict and accusing them of being the true perpetrators (Waya, personal communication, 2012). Furthermore, the Boba political leaders blamed the massacre of the Munzaya village on the biased judgment of the Lobala leaders and their inability to resolve the conflict (Yaka, 2012).
While community leaders and political leaders of the Lobala community were being accused by Boba political leaders, they too began their propaganda. The propaganda aligned with Odajni’s movement; the Lobala political leaders wanted to claim what was once theirs. The Lobala political leaders blamed and accused members of the Boba community for fueling the conflict between the Enyele and the Munzaya by supporting the Munzayas by providing them with a water pump in order to increase their economic interests (May, 2012). Furthermore, Lobala political leaders blamed the Boba for all their misfortunes and suffering (May, 2012). Although the Lobala have always won the mayoral position in Dongo, they have been threatened by the increasing socio-political and economic power of the Boba (May, 2012). The decline of the Lobala’s economic and political power has been due to the increasing economic and political power of the Boba. This has left the Lobala in Dongo feeling marginalized. As a result, the Lobala’s hatred towards the Boba began to increase exponentially.

According to an interview with a local journalist, the Lobalas began to mischievously recruit the Baka population within the Dongo forests (Samba, personal communication, 2012). The ‘Pygmy’ population that is found in the Northwest region of Congo derives from the Baka ethnic group (Joshua Project, 1999). The Baka pygmies are known as forest dwellers and greatly rely on hunting and gathering for survival (Joshua Project, 1999). As the years progressed, the Baka population was forced to share the forest which they occupied with their neighboring ethnic groups, since different ethnic groups began infiltrating the forest and establishing their village (Samba, 2012). The Lobala manipulated the Baka people in order to get them involved in the conflict. The Lobala warned the Baka that the Bobas were trying to take their forest (Samba, 2012). In warning the Baka people, the Lobala accused the Boba of attempting to steal their land
and if the Bobas were not stopped, they would not rest until they took the pigmy forest as well. In fear of losing their forest, the pigmy population joined the Lobala movement (Samba, 2012).²³

*The Dongo Massacre:*

On October 22, 2009, Odjani and his armed militia group passed through Dongo on their way to Kombe (May, 2012). The passage of Odjani’s militia group through Dongo created a general scare. The Dongo police force informed Gemena about the situation. The following morning, Gemena ordered the arrest of Odjani (May, 2012). At 1:00am, government officials informed the mayor of Dongo that the Lobala were going to commit a terrible massacre in Dongo (May, 2012). Later that same morning, the Commander of the Naval Force evacuated all the government officials from Dongo. About ten minutes after the evacuation of the government officials, the massacre began (May, 2012).

The attack against the Boba by the Lobala was a systematic and well planned attack. The attack specifically was meant for political leaders within the Boba community as well as other individuals that threatened the well-being of the Lobala community (Stearns, 2010, March 27). All of the local population, nonetheless, was targeted by Odjani’s insurgents as they fled to the neighboring areas, with the majority of the refugees crossing the Ubangi River and entering the Republic of Congo. Thousands of civilians were killed and displaced during the conflict. Given the diversity within the Dongo community, the attack targeted a diverse range of ethnic identities: all those that were not Lobala.

The massacre in Dongo illustrates the power of identity and its effect on violence. The Odjani led 2009 Dongo massacre was a well-planned systemic attack that ignored the diverse identities of individuals and focused primarily on ethnicity, targeting individuals that were non-Lobalas. Through the discourse of identity, perpetrators used the power of identity to create the

²³ It remains unclear why the Baka people were susceptible to the manipulation of the Lobala community.
explanatory framework that allowed them to differentiate individuals. Despite the diverse identity of individuals in Dongo, identity was reduced to that of a person’s ethnic background. It did not matter if a person was a father, religious leader, mother, child, farmer, or student; individuals were attacked because they were not identified as members of the Lobala ethnic group. As a result, individuals did not have the power to escape from the consequence of discourse and identity.

*The Rebellion against the State:*

During the massacre, the Congolese government sent a small police force to calm the conflict in Dongo. Their order was to eliminate the problem (Makima, 2012). After arriving in Dongo, the police began to attack individuals they saw as members of the Odjani movement (Joe, 2012). Realistically, the police force was ordered to fire at anyone who had a weapon, whether civilian or military (Joe, 2012). Because the police force was not well trained, it was easily overwhelmed and quickly defeated by Odjani’s militia group.

After defeating the police force, Odjani and his militia group took the police firearms and headed toward Gemena, Mbandanka, and Kinshasa. A once small ethnic conflict now became a national security crisis threatening the stability of the Equateur province and the national government. Odjani’s militia group advanced all the way to Bobito, a town about sixty kilometers from Gemena. In fear of losing the Equateur province, the president sent the Congolese national army to defeat Odjani and his movement. The national army eventually defeated Odjani and chased him back to the region of Dongo where many members of his militia group fled to the neighboring Republic of Congo. There, the militia group disarmed themselves and took on civilian lives as refugees (Tonton, personal communication, 2012). According to

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24 It is interesting to distinguish who was an enemy or civilians because when I was traveling throughout the Dongo region, almost everyone had machetes on their hands for work purposes.
several locals in Dongo, members of Odjani’s militia group are hesitant to return to Dongo in fear of being recognized and captured by the police. The whereabouts of Odjani, however, remains a mystery.\footnote{Depending on my various interviews, each person said something different about the current whereabouts of Odjani.} For some, he is thought to have been captured by the Republic of Congo national army, for others, he was prisoned in Kinshasa, and for most of the locals, Odjani is in hiding. Nevertheless, most mainstream sources, such articles written by humanitarian agencies, say Odjani was arrested.

The Dongo conflict did not occur due to one conflict or argument. There were series of events that led to the Dongo massacre. As an opportunist, Odjani was able to capitalize on the events, which eventually allowed him to accumulate power and start a rebellion. The Dongo conflict illustrates how a small local dispute can evolve to a large conflict, if the dispute is not properly and ethically handled.

**The Peacebuilding Process in Dongo:**

Understanding one’s needs and the needs of others is essential for overcoming deep-rooted conflict that eventually leads to violence. Deep-rooted conflicts are about emotions and it is dependent on the internal perception or interpretation of the individual. Therefore, peaceful dialogue is important in understanding the needs of others and vice versa. In this section, the reconciliation process that was conducted between all the major ethnic groups within Dongo as well as the reconciliation process between the Munzaya and the Enyele will be analyzed. The following analysis of the peace process is gathered from important documents that were given by ‘La Société Civil’.\footnote{All that is presented on this section is found in three of the four documents that were provided to me by a member of ‘La Société Civile’ who acted as one of the mediators and drafted the documented.} La Société Civil is a peacebuilding group that works with local conflicts in the Equateur province. The creation of the organization is a joint collaboration between United
Nations and the Congolese government. The following section is a summary of the reconciliation process that was performed by La Société Civile in Dongo. The reconciliation process was held from June 23 to June 27, 2010 in Dongo. The following is the account of what happened during the reconciliation process.

**Preparation for Reconciliation Ceremony:**

On June 19, 2010, the mediator signalled the preparation for the mediation and transformation of the conflict in accordance with all mandatory rights, “Droit Pour Tous Obligatoire” (DTO). Four days after the preparation, the facilitation group arrived in Dongo and was hosted by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), who provided them with supplies and transportation. OCHA is part of the United Nations headquarters, and the branch assists national governments by coordinating humanitarian actions in order to minimize human suffering. The facilitation group then met with the commander of the Ghanaian battalion of MONUC, to provide security; the mayor of Dongo, for an explanation of conflict; the Congolese intelligence, Agence Nationale de Renseignement (ANR), for more information; and the commander of the second brigade of the Congolese army, FARDC, for military support. After meeting with different agencies, the reconciliation process began with the recruitment of delegates from all the major ethnic communities residing within the Dongo region.

On June 25, 2010, the facilitation group from La Société Civile gathered all the delegates of the different ethnic communities within the Dongo region. The following day, the facilitators met for eight hours with the delegates of the different communities. The following paragraphs summarize the arguments made by the delegates of each ethnic community.
The Peace Dialogue:

The Munzombo delegates claimed that the parties to the conflict still had resentments, and advocated for a neutral party to mediate and sincerely listen to all claims. The delegates further asked for the expansion of the facilitation group to include different branches of government. The reconciliation process would succeed with a neutral mediator and the inclusion of different government officials. What surprised the delegates the most was the quasi ignorance of the true cause of the conflict; they recognized that the two groups (Boba and Lobala) were condemned to live together forever. Therefore, the delegates believed that the reconciliation between the two actors (Boba and Lobala) was only possible when both became aware of the true cause of the conflict.

Led by Bongbende David, the Lobala delegates stipulated that the interactions between people residing in the city of Dongo and its surroundings have always been geared towards the marginalization of the Lobala people. The delegates claimed that the conflict was not between the Boba or the Lobala, but rather the inability of the government to find a lasting solution to the problems between the Enyele and the Munzaya, as well as the Munzombo and the Lobalas of the Ngbanza. They were surprised to see that the government granted them pardon in order to settle accounts with Lobalas that fled the country, particularly to the Republic of Congo, looking for security under the protection of the United Nations. The delegates also believed that the interference of groups they considered ‘immigrant’ ethnic groups, such as the Boba, to the internal affairs of the Lobala heritage (chief leadership, sector, group, community, etc.) was the major cause of conflict in the area, and requested the government to find a lasting solution to the problems that divided the Lobala which lead to conflict with other groups. Furthermore, the delegates complained about the military’s molestation of the general population, especially that
of the Lobala community. Lastly, the delegates claimed that many Lobalas were intimidated to return to the city of Dongo because they feared being stigmatized by the general population.

The Bomboma (Boba) delegates began their claim by stating that the Boba community did not have a problem with the Lobala community. The Boba have always gone to the Enyele to buy fish and the Lobala have always come to the Boba owned Hospital (l’ Hôpital Général de Bokonzi) for treatment. For this reason, they did not understand why many members of the Boba community were killed by the Lobala people. The delegates believed that all the ethnic groups had been living peacefully despite the Lobalas that have not had the courage to return to Dongo. They further focused on the precariousness in which their community currently lived. The delegates stated that the Boba wanted true reconciliation, yet were frustrated because their community was afraid of the Lobalas that have not yet to return. They further stressed what they called the hypocrisy of the Lobalas, particularly the way the Lobala worried and frustrated other communities. The delegates encouraged all the ethnic communities to be truthful and faithful to the reconciliation process, despite tensions they may have with each other. In addition, they claimed that they had no problems with anyone, despite being the victim, and wished for the conflict to never reoccur. Nevertheless, there was a mutual scare between all the ethnic groups and therefore, the government and its partners needed to take the issue seriously. The delegates concluded by stating that stability within the population would depend on others to support the physical and material needs of the victims.

Having lived peacefully with different groups within the Dongo region, the Ngbaka delegates were not convinced that the conflict was solely about ethnic hatred. Rather, they believed that the conflict between the Boba and the Lobala started during the 1997 election when Bonyata Tshamala, a member of the Boba community, ran for office. What further frustrated the
Lobalas besides having a Boba run for office was the fact that Tshamala imported voters from the Bomboma villages to come vote. In addition, Mr. Limbanga of the Boba ethnic group owned a lot of agriculture land and distributed the land to his Boba brothers. The Lobala felt like they were being invaded by the Boba, who behaved like conquerors, and in reaction, the Lobala relied on their indigenousness of the area. According to the Ngbaka delegates, these events are the main reasons why the Lobala never wanted a Boba to win the mayoral position. Since then, both groups have strengthened their amulets in anticipation of possible future conflicts. For the Ngbaka delegates, they claim that there is no need for war and the conflict needs to stop in order for different communities to live peacefully once more. Nevertheless, the Ngbaka delegates accused the Congolese military of extortion, abuse, and sexually harassing their women.

The Ngbandi delegates claimed that they have nothing against the Lobala. They chose to reside alongside the Munzombo community. The delegates claimed that it was the indifference and inability of the authorities to manage and find an appropriate solution to the internal problems of the Lobala that had degenerated into a conflict that victimized the Ngbandi. The delegates believed that a need to find a viable solution to the conflict was necessary; despite differences between communities. The reality of inequality between ‘native’ communities and the ‘immigrants’ needs to be mentioned. Since the Ngbandi ethnic group had been labeled as a community of ‘immigrants’, they had never had the opportunity to compete with the ‘native’ communities. The Ngbandi delegates closed their case by claiming that a viable solution must be made because it does not make sense that so many have to suffer in response to two ambitious groups (Lobala and Boba) fighting for power.

Delegates from the Ngombe ethnic group felt that their tribe was victimized without taking any action of provocation. The living conditions are precarious. Many have taken refuge
in a foreign land in fear of being attacked. The conflict between the Lobala and the Boba had terrorized the Ngombe community. The Ngombe people had always felt unwelcomed by the Lobala. According to the delegates, the Lobala had always asked the Ngombe people to pay a deposit before doing anything. Nevertheless, the government was the main actor to blame for all the conflict. The mismanagement of cases, since the elections in the 1980s, by the government had frustrated many. Therefore, the government was responsible for most of the atrocities. Additionally, reports have been sent to the government since 2002 cautioning the government about a civil unrest instigated by the Lobala. With negligence, the government minimized the seriousness of the conflict by claiming that nothing serious was happening in Dongo.

The ethnic minorities were grouped under one delegation with each group designating one delegate to act as a representative. Given their low demographic standing in the region, the facilitators decided to put the four victimized minority communities together to hear their side of the story. Of these communities were: Bomboli, Bamwe, Bendere, and Bozaba. Despite the willingness to reconcile, the Bamwe delegate wanted to know the true reasons behind the attacks against his people. According to the Bomboli delegate, from 1983 to 1995, the Bomboli people did not understand the seriousness of the Lobala problem. It was not until 1995 that the Bomboli people started to realize the xenophobia the Lobalas had against everyone. In his closing statement, the delegate hoped for all the wrong doers to be punished before the reconciliation took place. Having lost two children to the conflict, the Bozaba delegate was skeptical about the reconciliation process. He did not understand how everyone was supposed to reconcile when the perpetrator (current Chef de Secteur, Manyale whom was arrested) was now running the government. Furthermore, he feared the return of the Lobala, claiming the Lobala do not like the presence of the Bozaba. Unfortunately, the delegate from the Bendere community was never
recorded throughout the reconciliation dialogue. In addition, the Baka community did not have a representative since they all fled to the deep forest and some had taken refuge in the Republic of Congo. Nevertheless, there has been an NGO led by Bongombo Ek-Yedidya providing assistance to the Baka population.

In conclusion, before the gathering, there were a series of interviews conducted separately with each community. These interviews allowed the facilitators to identify the following trends: a neutral mediator was available for the negotiation and reconciliation of each ethnic community; each community had excessive claims on each other; an exacerbated claim of indigenousness led to competition and dominance; the administrative laxity and carelessness of the authorities in the management of people and their property (the state must stop being irresponsible and must complete its mission to better the living conditions of people in order to prevent future human and material damage); victims must be sincerely helped in order for their wounds to be healed; and the government must create and implement development projects with help from its partners. The interviews and discussions were followed by two main reconciliation activities: the discussions on the negotiation table followed by traditional ceremony involving all the group leaders and elders (Chefs Coutumiers); and recreational activities such as traditional dancing, singing, theater, and canoe racing. The overall reconciliation process between the different major communities within Dongo was successful; successful in that all the major groups agreed to reconcile after hearing each other’s case.

**Munzaya and Enyele Reconciliation Process:**

The reconciliation process between the Enyele and the Munzaya was led by La Société Civile with assistance from Search for Common Ground. Search for Common Ground “works to transform the way the world deals with conflict - away from adversarial approaches and towards
collaborative problem solving." During the reconciliation preparation, the facilitators met with the Bokona local chief for an in-depth interview on the conflict between the Enyele and the Munzaya. The reconciliation process began on January 20, 2011 and took place in Enyele, Bokonzi, and finished in Mokusi on March 31, 2011. The following is a summary of the Munzaya and the Enyele reconciliation process from a document that was provided by La Société Civil.

**The Munzaya-Enyele Peace Dialogue:**

According to members of the Enyele village, the territories which the Munzaya occupied belonged to the Enyele people. Referring to history, the delegates accused the Munzaya for not respecting the peace agreement that was made between Dobula and Kpoluku: to obtain permission before utilizing the water and forest; and give the first fruits or ten percent of their harvest to the chief of the Enyele people. The Enyele delegate claimed that they do not particularly have a problem with the Munzaya, beside the fact that they behave like invaders and do not respect boundaries. The Munzaya people occupied the land Mokolo, which the Enyele people now call Munzaya. The Enyele people further regretted the fact that for the past four years their people have not had access to their water or their forest. The Enyele acknowledged that the Munzaya legally purchased some fishing ponds, but the problem aroused in terms of water exploitation. The Munzaya did not respect the regulations that were set by the Enyele; one could only fish by using a fishing line or fishing net. The scooping method (getting rid of the water and scooping the fish from the pond) of fishing was prohibited by the Enyele leaders. Only the extended families of the Enyele could fish using the scooping method. According to the

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27 For more information about Search for Common Ground please visit their website: http://www.sfcg.org
28 Of the four documents provided by La Société Civil, one of the documents exclusively covered the reconciliation process between the Enyele and the Munzaya. This organization was very helpful in providing me with documents as well as explaining their peacebuilding mission in Dongo.
Enyele delegates, the conflict aroused because the Munzaya decided to deliberately disobey the regulations that was set by the Enyele leaders.

The Munzaya village is located approximately nine kilometers from the Enyele village. During the dry season it nearly impossible to travel by canoe. One must walk about two hours in the deep forest to get to the Munzaya village from the Enyele village. There are no accessible roads for vehicles. Due to this unfortunate factor, the facilitators were not able to go to the Munzaya village and instead met with the Munzaya delegates in Dongo. The delegates agreed that the land which they now occupied originally belonged to the Enyele, nevertheless, their ancestors fairly acquired autonomy over the land. Furthermore, the delegates claimed that the government must take a viable action in resolving the conflict so the Munzaya and the Enyele can once more live in peace. In addition, they regretted the clash between them and the Enyele because over 150 of their homes were burned and destroyed by Odjani’s group; and since then, they have not benefited from reparation or assistance from the government.

After talking to the delegates at their respective villages, the Enyele and the Munzaya representatives were then brought to Mokusi where they sat down and discussed the possibilities of reconciliation. The success of the reconciliation was vital to Dongo’s stability. After a series of negotiations and discussions, the two groups came to an agreement to end the conflict and begin to work towards living as brothers and sisters once more. On March 31, 2011, the Munzaya and the Enyele signed a peace agreement that officially ended the conflict. The peace agreement enabled them to reconcile by returning to the old peace agreement that was made by their ancestors, Dobula and Kpoluku.

In addition to the peace agreement, the government installed a police base in Enyele to regulate and supervise the activities of the two communities. Despite the presence of the police
force and the signing of the peace agreement, many claimed that the conflict has not yet been fully resolved. Members of the Enyele community continue to claim that the Munzaya are disobeying the peace agreement after the official signings, and vice versa. According to Malaka (2012), two of their members were captured and tortured by the government in order to coerce their decisions to reconcile with the Munzaya. These incidents are despised by the two communities. The two communities want transformative peace; yet feel the manipulation of government officials constantly suppress their ability to co-exist. In conclusion, an Enyele representative from the reconciliation process stated: “Our leaders are manipulating our dispute. They want us to continue to fight and be against each other. But we are smart, this time we will not fight” (Malaka, 2012). The Munzaya and the Enyele only ask for the government to find a viable and just solution in order to move them both forward. As was seen throughout the examination of the conflict, negligence and corruption must end if peace is to be brokered.

During the negotiation process between the Munzaya and the Enyele, Search for Common Ground was heavily involved in creating ways to reconcile the two communities as well as other communities that were affected by the overall conflict. Members of the organization created a radio broadcasting station in Dongo where they initiated restorative dialogue between all the communities that were involved or affected by the conflict. Also, Search for Common Ground went to the refugee camps and encouraged different communities to reconcile and return to their homes. The organization also organized sporting events and spectacles to bring communities together. Search for Common Ground was effective and successful in reconciling members of the Dongo region in that it was able to reach out to different communities, create a space for dialogue, and engage the community to participate in sporting events and spectacles that brought joy and healing to the people, and created the space
that they could do this together. During the conflict, families were broken and neighbors became enemies. Through the reconciliation process, some families and relationships were rebuilt. Unfortunately, people continue to live in fear due to sporadic incidents of atrocities from ordinary citizens still haunted by revenge.

**Analysis of the Peacebuilding Process:**

The reconciliation process performed by La Société Civile in collaboration with the United Nations was successful in that the ceremony officially marked the end of the Dongo conflict. The reconciliation process allowed leaders of Dongo’s diverse ethnic communities the opportunity to listen and be heard. The peacebuilding process in Dongo primarily focused on resolving tensions between different ethnic groups and bringing communities within Dongo together. Nevertheless, the peacebuilding process did not consider essential factors that caused, fueled, and perpetuated the Dongo conflict. As a result, Dongo continues to be vulnerable to another possible ethnic conflict.

The overall peacebuilding process in Dongo forgot to mention major factors that continue to make Dongo vulnerable to ethnic conflicts. First and for most, the reconciliation process did not address the issue of identity and its relation to violence. Through the power of discourse, identity was used and continues to be used to set the necessary framework for violence. Through ethnicity, the cycle of privilege and oppression continues to be used for the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others; setting the proper framework for structural violence. Not yet has a non-Lobala member won the Chef de Secteur position in Dongo, even though Lobalas hold less than one percent of the Dongo population (Manybo, 2012).  

29 When identity is reduced to that of

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29 Although the Lobalas hold less than one percent of the Dongo population, the majority of Dongo’s surrounding villages consist of members of the Lobala ethnic group.
a particular group, identity is given power. As a result, communities can use the power of identity to oppress other communities by denying access for opportunities.

Conflicts will continue to arise as long as structural violence continues to dominate in Dongo. Corruption and unequal access to resources and power contribute to the systemic ways that individuals are harmed. Factors such as poverty, lack of mobility, weak infrastructure, discrimination, and impunity contribute to conflict. Deep-rooted conflict arises when a particular human need is threatened by others. Where there are limited resources or the perception thereof, conflicts are bound to happen, primarily because competition leads to threatened human needs. In sum, the peacebuilding process fell short of brokering lasting peace in Dongo and its surrounding villages because the peace process did not address the issues of identity and structural violence in Dongo.

In regards to the Congolese government, corruption continues to fuel and manipulate conflicts. Conflicts cannot be resolved if the main source in charge of dealing with conflict is corrupt. Political manipulation was one of the key factors that fueled and perpetuated conflicts within Dongo and its surrounding villages. During the peacebuilding process, the national government installed Désiré Manyale as Chef de Secteur of Dongo. His responsibility was to bring the Lobala and the Boba communities together. Keep in mind that Manyale was one of the political leaders that manipulated the Dongo conflict for political power. In order to minimize conflict in Dongo, the cycle of corruption must be broken. If not, violence will continue to overwhelm locals, further causing instability within Congo.

Lastly, it is important to mention and be aware of the fact that the conflict in Dongo was handled differently depending on the effects of the conflict on national security. Before the burning of the Munzaya village and the Dongo massacre, the national government did not pay
much attention to the conflict. The Munzaya-Enyele disputes were ignored, pushed to the side, and at numerous times, manipulated by political and government officials. It was not until the conflict turned into an all-out war that the government decided to react. Odjani’s involvement in the conflict forced the national government to take the Dongo conflict seriously, mainly because Odjani threatened national security. As a result, the national government deemed a rapid military response necessary to stop the advancement of Odjani’s movement. Force was used rather than dialogue. In reality, if the conflict was handled properly, the government would have not needed to use force to subdue the Dongo conflict. This reveals an important revelation about local struggles. That is to say, despite the difference in scale, local struggles cannot be underestimated because small scale conflicts could lead to large scale conflicts.

Despite its ability to end fighting in Dongo, the peace process failed to bring a lasting peace to Dongo. The peace effort primarily looked at the problem at hand but overlooked factors that caused the problem. As a result, Dongo continues to be vulnerable to ethnic conflict. The following section examines the current dynamic of Dongo, further highlighting the failure of the peacebuilding process.

**Current Dynamic of Dongo:**

Although Dongo and its region are labeled peaceful and stable by government officials, I cannot help but see tension and fear between people. The city of Dongo is characterized by two major factors: xenophobia and corruption, as a result of structural violence. In this section, the aftermath of the conflict and how it has shaped the current dynamic of Dongo will be examined.

*Poverty:*

In sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly in Congo, the living conditions of most people are characterized by illiteracy, high rates of infant mortality, malnutrition, short life expectancy,
inadequate shelter, lack of health care and hygiene, unemployment, hunger and famine (Iyenda, 2005). Again, Congo is one of the poorest countries in the world, mainly due to proxy fighting as a result of local struggles that have been taking place for over fifteen years. Within Congo, the Equateur province is the poorest and the most underdeveloped province. Therefore, Dongo is placed within the poorest and underdeveloped area in the world. The current dynamic of Dongo is largely shaped by impunity caused by corruption and the influx of people coming to Dongo looking for jobs and better living conditions after the Dongo conflict. Life in Dongo is a constant struggle. With rapid urban growth; mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, and loved ones constantly struggle to survive.

The 2009 massacre in Dongo resulted in thousands of displaced persons. The aftermath of the conflict also brought an influx of people from the surrounding districts looking to benefit from the conflict. When NGOs began to arrive in Dongo, people from surrounding villages and cities began migrating to Dongo looking for viable jobs. The flood of migration continues to frustrate Dongo locals. Despite the involvements of numerous NGOs, the Dongo locals feel like they have been neglected. The frustration comes from the fact that they were the victims of the massacre, they were the ones that lost their homes and possessions, yet they are not getting the proper help they need from NGOs or the government (Yawal, personal communication, 2012). Additionally, migrants looking for jobs have lied to NGO officials, claiming they were the victims of the conflict in order to get assistance (Yawal, 2012).

Surprised and amazed, I was struck by how many people knew me in Dongo, given the fact that I have never been to Dongo. Interestingly enough, the majority of the migrants came from Gemena. Since Gemena does not have a viable means of employment, people decided to go to Dongo in hopes of finding jobs or creating their own business given Dongo’s strategic setting.
From government jobs to informal economy to prostitution, all are looking for a practical way of surviving. Given the history of Dongo; migration results in competition which then leads to tension. The inflow of migration to Dongo has crippled the economic development and advancement of the locals. With more people competing for the same positions, jobs become scarce and resource become limited. Unable to diversify their ways of living, mainly due to not having the proper tools or support from the government, individuals are trapped in a vortex of stagnation.

With little to no help, people in Dongo are forced to fend for themselves in order to survive. Most inhabitants survive by growing their own food, selling, buying, and smuggling supplies (Mark, 2012). With little to no help from the government, people in Dongo have taken their means of survival into their own hands by partaking in vending and informal economic activities. “These street enterprises involve the production and trade of goods and services outside of all legal trade and economic regulations (i.e. no license, no insurance, no minimum wage, no health and safety standards) and bureaucratic rules” (Iyenda, 2005, p.58). The informal economic activities, whether fixed or mobile are performed out in the streets, homes, small shops and on different venues. Poverty and the inability or unwillingness of the government to help has made locals contemptuous towards the government.

Poverty and the inability to advance in life currently encompass the main characteristics for many individuals residing in Dongo. It is important to mention that the peace process was able to reconcile major ethnic groups residing within the Dongo regions. Its most significant success was ending the physical violence that have taken and displaced many lives. Ultimately, the most important solution that essentially must be considered is how to end the structural
violence that has fueled the conflict. Corruption and the inability or unwillingness of the government has been pivotal in the shaping of the current Dongo dynamic.

Corruption in Dongo:

A democracy that is by the people and for the people should hold true to its purpose. I was surprised to witness a physical fight between two individuals my first day in Dongo. After six hours of riding on the back of a motorcycle on a horrible, bumpy, sandy, and muddy road; all I wanted to do was to shower and take a nap before my investigation of the 2009 conflict. Yet no more than an hour after we arrived, a fight took place right in front of the house my friend Djoe and I were staying at. The moment the fight broke out, a swarm of people rushed down to the scene in order to witness the fight. As the fighting progressed, it moved closer and closer to where we were staying. Curious, I decided to be a witness myself. As I got closer to the two individuals, I realized that one was bleeding badly from the mouth, and had a cut on both eyebrows. His navy blue tank-top and jean shorts were torn and his body was partially covered with dirt. He was about six feet tall with a slender body and in his mid-twenties. Full of frustration, embarrassment, and anger, the man kept yelling; “tika ye a boma ngai” (let him kill me), as he continued to reach his hand into the other man’s back pocket.

The other man was wearing a red shirt with faded jeans and white running shoes. I was surprised to see that his clothing was not torn nor was covered in dirt or had blood on his face or anywhere on his body. The man with the red shirt was about five feet and five inches tall, athletic body, and in his mid-twenties. After having the man with the torn tank-top reach into his back pocket several times, the man with the red shirt brought his fist back and struck the other man. The blow to the face was so powerful that it knocked the man with the torn tank-top down to the dirt ground. As the man laid down with a stream of bloody saliva coming down his mouth and
crying, ‘just let him kill me,’ the man with the red shirt took of his white running shoes, rose his knee to his stomach, and struck the face of the man laying down on his knees with his bare foot. A few seconds after witnessing the blow to the face by the man’s foot, I saw two police officers on a motorcycle and one military official on foot rushing to the fight scene.

The two police officers and the military official stopped the fight and began dispersing the onlookers. The military official took the man in the red shirt to the side and began talking to him. The two police officers accompanied the man with the torn-tank-top and began questioning him and his surrounding friends. After about five minutes, everyone went their own way and no one was arrested and the fighting was never put on record or brought to court. After talking to witnesses, I found out that the fighting broke out because the man in the red shirt stole money from the man in the torn tank-top. Interestingly enough, the man in the red shirt was a member of the military force and the man in the torn tank-top was a local from the neighborhood. Since the other man was a military member, the man with the torn tank-top did not fight back in fear of being arrested and punished. Nevertheless, the incident was completely ignored and no one was arrested because the perpetrator was a military official.

Corruption is currently shaping the dynamic of Dongo. It is hard for locals to have faith and trust in the government when the government does not abide by the rules they are supposed to enforce. We have seen this with the Enyele and Munzaya conflict and now the same concept of corruption continues to play out in Dongo. Since the Dongo crisis in 2009, the discourse of corruption from the government has greatly shaped the perceptions of the Dongo population. The constant exposure to corruption has led locals to distrust authority and take matters into their own hands. This is important because it is the same theme that influenced and forced the Munzaya and the Enyele to take action and fight.
Lack of Trust in Authority:

The morning after my long and arduous journey back from the Enyele village, Djoe and I witness another fight in Dongo. This time the fight was between two families which happened to be relatives. That morning a motorcycle taxi man, as he was making his rounds looking for clients, hit a child on the road. No serious damage was done to the child. Nonetheless, shocked and in pain, the child ran home crying to her family. Infuriated by the incident, the family of the child went looking for the man who hit their child with the motorcycle. When the man was found, the family requested he pay a fee to compensate for the damage he inflicted on their child. Unable to pay the fee, the taxi man offered to take the child to a hospital and cover all medical expenses for the damages he caused to the child. Unable to come to an agreement, the family of the child went to speak with the family of the taxi man. With conflicting interests, the two families discontinued their dialogue and took on physical violence to resolve the dispute. The fight resulted in two individuals being sent to the hospital; one for a broken neck and the other for a broken arm. Despite the turmoil created by the two families, no one was arrested by the several police officials that witness the conflict.

Corruption has greatly shaped the mistrust of the government by the people. Clearly knowing that the city has a judicial system, the families decided to take the matter into their own hands instead of taking the case to court. Numerous cases of corruption and impunity within the judicial, police, and military system have left the Dongo population unable to trust the authorities.

The current dynamic in Dongo is greatly shaped by and due to structural violence. Poverty and have forced individuals and families to migrate to Dongo in hopes of finding jobs or better living conditions. Despite aid from foreign actors, the government has been unable and/or
unwilling to provide for its citizens. Without much help from the government or NGOs, people in Dongo are forced to fend for themselves. Hence, this movement of people has created tension between locals and migrants, similarly to that of the creation of the Comule Plantation. Impunity fueled by corruption within the government has left Dongo inhabitants unable to trust government authority. This has led individuals to take matters into their own hands. This is troublesome given that the inability of the government to properly handle a case led Enyele and the Munzaya to take action on their own, resulting in a devastating massacre. Therefore, Dongo is characterized by instability and tension. Peace is currently maintained in Dongo because individuals continue to fear an outbreak of another massacre despite current tensions.

**Conclusion:**

The conflict between the two groups has roots, there were many factors contributing to the overall development and climax of the conflict. In properly providing the necessary tools for understanding the conflict, different factors that influenced and fueled the conflict were analyzed. In so doing, the following was examined: the overall history of the major ethnic groups residing in Dongo before the Belgian colonization; the development of the Enyele and Munzaya people, and the establishment of their relationship; the Munzaya-Enyele conflict, in particular how the conflict began and how it progressed to involve Odjani; the reconciliation process between all the major ethnic groups residing in Dongo; the reconciliation process between the Enyele and the Munzaya people; and the current dynamics of the inhabitants of Dongo. As a result, the case study illustrates how local disputes, if not dealt with properly, can evolve to a large conflict with detrimental results.
Chapter VI: Discussion

The conflict in Dongo is a direct result of the Congolese government’s peacebuilding failures. Not putting much emphasis on local and communal disputes and only focusing on national and regional disputes greatly minimized Congo’s ability to maintain peace within its borders after the end of the second Congo war. From the Enyele-Munzaya conflict to Odjani’s quest for power, the analysis of the Dongo conflict clearly illustrates how local struggles can evolve to a national security threat. Throughout the thesis I argued that the international community and the Congolese government’s peacebuilding efforts have failed to promote a lasting peace in Congo because the peacebuilders ignored local struggles, not realizing that much of the instability in Congo is a result of proxy fighting enabled by local disputes.

When looking at the Dongo conflict, there have been many elements that caused and perpetuated instability and violence within the region. From structural violence to corruption, the formation of the Dongo conflict has been characterized by many factors. These factors have led the way for a small conflict between two small groups to escalate to a large conflict that required military force to quell. This following section is a discussion of the findings presented in the research thesis.

Identity and its Effect on Violence:

The success of Odjani’s campaign was largely due to his ability to acquire military arms left after the second Congo war and the military assistance/training from military officials. However, the most powerful weapon used by Odjani in his quest for power was not necessarily military weapons or training, but the power of discourse and identity. Through the discourse of identity, Odjani was able to accumulate power.
I learned therefore I am. From the time we are born until the day we die, we are constantly fed information on how to survive in the society in which we are born and raised. We are taught to speak a particular language, behave a certain way, follow certain rules and norms, and look down taboos. Identities in most societies are shaped under the categorization system. From birth, one is classified into different categories that define his/her identity (male, female, Lobala, Boba, white, black, etc.). As one gets older, he/she realizes that he/she is still stuck in this categorization system. Under this categorization system, individuals have limited freedom to choose their respective identities; choosing only what is presented to them and what is acceptable within the society. Sen (2006, p. 6) understands this reality as he states; “[our] freedom to assert our personal identities can sometimes be extraordinarily limited in the eyes of others, no matter how we see ourselves.”

Identity is formed through the discourse of society which creates inequality between the oppressed and privileged (Adams, 2000). Therefore the classification of identity is used by the privileged to safeguard their privileges within a particular society. That is to say that identity, which refers to differences, greatly shapes the advantage of some groups, those that have power and the disadvantage of other groups, those that are minorities, the “others” (Adams, 2000, p.1). This basic classification allows certain groups to justify inflicting violence on those that they claim “others,” without remorse. This also creates the phenomenon of ‘us versus them.’

The dynamics of the conflict in Dongo directly links to the theoretical framework of discourse and the formation of identity. In alignment with Foucault, individuals’ identities are shaped by the construction of discourse that is formed by community. Dominant narratives help create and give power to discourse. As mentioned earlier, from birth, individuals are categorized
and divided within the community. Depending on the ethnic group a person is born into, their perception by others is characterized by the associations affiliated by the person’s ethnic group.

Despite Dongo’s diverse identities, identity was reduced by the perpetrators to that of ethnicity. Identities such as gender, age, religion, profession, and marital status are ignored and emphasis is put on the individual’s group affiliation. Therefore, the culture that is constructed through discourse shapes the way individuals see themselves from those they call ‘the others.’ The construction and categorization of identity as well as the reduction of identities to a general classification of a single identity is highly dependent on a society. For instance, the United States of America strongly puts emphasis on racial identity; other societies might put more emphasis on gender or religion. In Dongo, the discourse focuses on group and/or ethnic affiliation. Individuals are categorized within the community by the group affiliation that has been given to them; whether Boba, Lobala, Ngombe, or Bomboli. Therefore, in relation to power and conflict, by reducing a group to a single component of identity such as ethnicity, that component is made powerful. This power could potentially be used through violence to obtain a particular goal or privilege a particular group while oppressing another group.

In Dongo, the formation of identity created inequality between the Boba and the Lobala. Since the creation of the Dongo sector, the Lobala controlled much of the political and economic power of the community. The creation of inequality between the oppressed and the privileged was created in order to uphold the interests of the Lobala. By reducing the diversity of identity to that of a particular group, power was given to the meaning of identity. The power was then used to oppress the Boba while privileging the Lobala. The existence or the perception of an incompatible goal, such as the 1982 local election created conflict between the Lobala and the Boba. Identity was then used to justify violence.
The dispute between the Enyele and Munzaya was used by the Lobala to inflict violence on the Boba, as a scapegoat, and thus regain their socio-economic and political power within the community. The majority of the population that was attacked by Odjani and his militia group did not have the power to separate themselves from the identity that was imposed upon them by their perpetrators. During the course of attacks, diversity in identity such as race, religion, gender, and age were neglected and reduced to that of a particular group affiliation. People were killed and chased out of their homes because they were non-Lobalas and were considered ‘others’; choosing to not be a Boba or Munzaya did not matter since the perpetrators had a definition, through discourse, of who is Boba, Munzaya, and who was not a Lobala.

As a result, identity is a powerful tool that could be used to inflict violence. As an opportunist, Odjani was able to use the power of identity to create the explanatory framework necessary to establish a rebellion. By classifying members of Boba ethnic group as the primary reason for much of the Lobala’s marginalization, Odjani was able to accumulate power. His power did not necessarily come from military weapons, although the weapons helped, but the power came from his ability to recruit able bodies that were willing to fight for his cause. Through discourse, Odjani was able to manipulate the population, whether enemies or allies. The discourse primarily focused on forming the perception of Odjani by other; the power of perception. Until today, the way local population sees Odjani is characterized by mysticism. People continue to perceive Odjani as a powerful sorcerer. Through discourse and identity, Odjani was able to accumulate power and further cause instability, not just in Dongo but throughout the Equateur province of Congo.
Dongo Peace Process:

The peacebuilding process succeeded in ending the Dongo conflict but failed to promote a lasting peace. It centered on reconciling different ethnic groups that were involved or were affected by the conflict. The reconciliation process focused on ending the imminent problem by bringing different communities together. Yet factors that caused, fueled, and perpetuated the conflict were not addressed during the peacebuilding process. Identity and its ability to create the dichotomy of privilege and oppression, as well as structural violence, greatly contributed to the dynamic of the Dongo conflict. Because these factors were not addressed and dealt with during the peacebuilding process in Dongo, tension and instability continues to overwhelm the current dynamic in Dongo. After the reconciliation process, not much has been done in Dongo. Many NGOs left after the peacebuilding process ended. Not much has been done in Dongo or in Munzaya and Enyele to eliminate or reduce structural violence. Poverty and competition due to scarce resources continues to fuel tension. Corruption and impunity continue to characterize the actions of the government. The main antidote to another possible ethnic conflict in Dongo is fear; fear of another massacre.

Revelations of the Dongo Conflict:

When looking at the Dongo conflict we see that corruption, structural violence, and unmet human needs formed the necessary basis for conflict to emerge. The massacre in Dongo as well as Odjani’s quest for power did not happen instantaneously. There was a series of events that caused and perpetuated instability within Dongo and its surrounding villages. The above analysis of the Dongo conflict revealed three key points. First, ethnic tension had a basis, a history. The creation of the Comule Mokusi plantation originally formed the necessary basis for ethnic tensions within the Dongo region. As a result, the struggle for political power, economic
control, and the right of land began to shape the hostile relations between different groups within the region. Second, corruption is a tool for destruction and violence. The escalation of the conflict between the Munzaya and the Enyele was characterized by the government’s inability and unwillingness to find a viable solution to the conflict. Instead of impartially resolving the conflict through legal means, government officials and political leaders manipulated the conflict for their own political and economic gains. As a result, the land disputes between the Enyele and the Munzaya evolved to a violent conflict. Third, violence in conflict will increase in severity if conflict is not dealt with properly and efficiently. The violence that resulted from the conflict between the Munzaya and the Enyele allowed Odjani to accumulate power and establish a rebellion that threatened national security and had detrimental effects on civilian lives.
Chapter VII: Conclusion/Recommendation

The main message of this thesis is to broaden the awareness of how local struggles have and continue to cause instability within the Congo. The implementation of the peacebuilding efforts in Congo by the international community could have been better managed. Understanding the nature of the conflicts as well as the unmet needs of different groups in Congo could have prevented ill-informed decisions made by the international community and the Congolese government during the establishment of the peacebuilding efforts. The peacebuilding process did not acknowledge the impact of local struggles on the broader conflict in Congo and simply ignored the importance of local and communal interests.

As the Dongo conflict shows, in order to perform a successful peacebuilding effort it is important to first understand the contextual framework of the conflict. This requires a careful analysis of factors that fuel and perpetuate the conflict. Second, the locals must be incorporated in the analysis. Understanding the locals and the functions of different groups within a conflict is essential. The conflict in Dongo best illustrates the importance of understanding local disputes and how local struggles can lead to a larger conflict if the situation is not handled properly. In order to successfully eliminate or minimize the chance of a small local struggle from escalating into a large scale conflict in Congo, the following actions are recommended:

All actors involved in the peacebuilding effort should recognize that:

- Small violent incidents can escalate and create a larger conflict
- Identity can be used to justify violence and thus create the notion of ‘us versus them’
- Discourse can be used to accumulate power through dominant narratives and communal truths
- Deep-rooted conflict arises from threatened human needs
• Understanding the contextual background of a conflict is as important as overcoming conflict, to ensure it does not repeat itself

• Poverty, corruption, and structural violence contribute to violent conflicts

• Prevention is better than reaction

To the International community:

• When working with conflict, consider every conflict to be unique

• Consider cultural context when working with conflict

• Partner with civil society or local communities and establish a peacebuilding coalition

• Create more programs that advocate for peaceful dialogues and community solidarity

• Support more research on local struggles and local conflicts

• Invest on other peacebuilding efforts beside the top-down peacebuilding agenda

• Start pilot programs aiming specifically at combining the process of a top-down and a bottom-up peacebuilding

To the Congolese government, necessary tools for peace and stability:

• Develop better education system
  
  o Provide free primary and secondary education to children and youth.

  o Establish sport facilities and afterschool programs to keep children occupied, while learning valuable life skills.

  o Invest in higher education: medicine, math, science, economy, international relations, technology, social science, physical science, agronomy, engineering, and environmental science.

  o Equal opportunity for girls and women in education

• Develop functional infrastructure
• Invest in local economic development and entrepreneurship
• Minimize corruption within the government
• Minimize structural violence by promoting opportunities (social, political, and economic)
• Establish a transparent and functioning judicial system
• Develop a well-trained police force
• Eliminate impunity

Congo can only succeed in bringing peace and development when it is capable of changing the hearts and minds of the people. When breaking a cycle of violence, nothing is more powerful than education. Therefore, the government and the international community must work together to provide the locals with the necessary tools needed to develop and maintain peace.

Identity is a powerful weapon that was used in the Dongo conflict. How to deconstruct the power of identity is a question that scholars, peacebuilders, and communities in Congo must strive to answer. If communities in Congo continue to be dominated by the discourse of identity, Congo will continue to fall short in obtaining a lasting peace. The international community in collaboration with the Congolese government and communities must invest in programs that focus on ways to address identity in peacebuilding.
Reference List

General Sources:


Rathje, F. (2007).*The EU in the Congo: Adding Value to the International Community’s Peacebuilding Efforts*. Department of Political Science; Lund University.


Sources Covering the Dongo Conflict:


Appendices

Appendix A: The Democratic Republic of Congo Map (p.117)

Appendix B: Democratic Republic of Congo, Equateur Province, Sud-Ubangi District, Dongo (p.118)

Appendix C: Major Ethnic Groups Involved in the Dongo Conflict (p. 119)

Appendix D: Interviewee Demographic (p.120)

Appendix E: Timeline (p.121)
The Democratic Republic of Congo Map:

Re-evaluating Peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A case study in Dongo

Democratic Republic of Congo, Equateur Province, Sud-Ubangi District, Dongo Map:

This map is not drawn to scale. Its purpose is to provide a visual setting of key villages and cities involved in the Dongo conflict.

### Major Ethnic Groups Involved in the Dongo Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Association</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bamwe, Bendere, Bozaba</strong></td>
<td>Agronomists, Fishers</td>
<td>Considered minority groups within the Kungu Territory. Were involved during the reconciliation process, since they were greatly affected by the conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bomboma</strong></td>
<td>Investors, Merchants, Traders</td>
<td><em>Bobo derive from Bomboma</em> · Currently holds the majority population and socio-economy standing in Dongo · Never had a member win the Chef de Secteur (mayor) position in Dongo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bomboli</strong></td>
<td>Fishers</td>
<td><em>Munzaya derive from Bomboli</em> · Are indigenous to Dongo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lobala</strong></td>
<td>Agronomists, Fishers</td>
<td>Enyele derive from Lobala · Lobala has four Sub-groups: Lobala-Poko, <em>Lobala-Tanda (Enyele derive from this sub-group)</em>, Lobala-Sud, and Lobala-Tandacome · The Lobala ethnic group is the most dominant in the Dongo region · Chef de Secteur (mayor) position has always been held by a Lobala member · Are Indigenous to Dongo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Munzombo</strong></td>
<td>Fishers</td>
<td>Munzombo and Lobala made a peace agreement during their first encounter and allowed mixed marriage · Migrated from Sudan to Congo in the early 19th Century.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ngbaka</strong></td>
<td>Labor Workers</td>
<td>Migrated to Dongo to work at the Comule Mokusi Plantation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ngbandi</strong></td>
<td>Labor workers</td>
<td>Migrated to Dongo to work at the Comule Mokusi Plantation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ngombe</strong></td>
<td>Labor Workers</td>
<td>Migrated to Dongo to work at the Comule Mokusi Plantation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Interviewee Demographic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Association</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Location of Interview</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jacqui</td>
<td>Munzaya (Student)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Dongo</td>
<td>Young Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Enyele (Farmer)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dongo</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabadi</td>
<td>Ngandi (Pastor)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kinshasa</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lala</td>
<td>Ngbaka (Student)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kinshasa</td>
<td>Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lalamas</td>
<td>Ex-President of CEUM (Covenant Church of Congo)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gemena</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loko</td>
<td>Boba (Businessman)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dongo</td>
<td>Young Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maji</td>
<td>Munzaya (Village Historian)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dongo</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makia</td>
<td>Boba (Trader)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dongo</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makima</td>
<td>Ex- Minister of Education</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kinshasa</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaka</td>
<td>Enyele (Village Historian)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Enyele</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manybo</td>
<td>Dongo Chef de Sector (Mayor)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dongo</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Lobala (Student)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dongo</td>
<td>Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Coordinator (La Societe Civil)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Gemena</td>
<td>Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayaya</td>
<td>Munzombo (Student)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dongo</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micheline</td>
<td>Bozaba (Mother)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gemena</td>
<td>Young Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mossabi</td>
<td>NGO Director (Sabuli’s Children Orphanage)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Gemena</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyenedo</td>
<td>Munzaya (Fisherman)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dongo</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samba</td>
<td>Ngbaka (Journalist)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Gemena</td>
<td>Young Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sespa</td>
<td>Ngombe (Student)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dongo</td>
<td>Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibi</td>
<td>Bamwe (Student)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Dongo</td>
<td>Young Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatine</td>
<td>Munzaya (Student)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Dongo</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theo</td>
<td>UN Official</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Gemena</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Congolese Historian (Secretary General of the Movement for the Liberation Congo political party)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kinshasa</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonton</td>
<td>Bomboli (Student)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dongo</td>
<td>Young Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walama</td>
<td>Enyele (Student)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dongo</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waya</td>
<td>Lobala (politician)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dongo</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yaka</td>
<td>Boba (politician)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dongo</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yawal</td>
<td>Boba (Student)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dongo</td>
<td>Young Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yolanda</td>
<td>Lobala (Mother)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Dongo</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Totals**

- Dongo: 18/
- Enyele: 1
- Adults: 18
- Males: 22
- Kinshasa: 4
- Young Adults: 7
- Females: 7
- Gemena: 6
- Youth: 4
Timeline

- 1482 – Portuguese traveler Diego Cao’s arrival at the mouth of the currently named Congo River in 1482 marks the first encounter between the Kongo Kingdom and Europe.
- 19th Century – First encounter between Dobula and Kpoluku. The signing of the peace agreement (Pact de Sang) of protection and respect between Dobula and Kpoluku. The Munzaya village is established near the Enyele Village.
- 1908 – Congo Free State is given to the Belgian government and becomes a Belgian Colony. Exploitation of the Congolese people continues.
- 1945 – United Nations is created.
- 1946 – First land dispute between the Munzaya and Enyele is brought to Court.
- 1949 – The Dongo Sector is created. The Lobala, Bomboli, and Munzombo are the three major ethnic groups occupying the Dongo Sector, with the Lobala being the majority.
- 1955 – The Comule Mokusi Plantation is created, resulting in mass migration of different ethnic groups such as the Ngbaka, Ngbandi, and Bomboma to the areas surrounding Dongo. Ethnic tension begins to increase.
- 1956 – A Munzaya man kills a Judge (from the Enyele village) that is sent to investigate the conflict between the Enyele and the Munzaya.
- 1960 – Belgium gives Congo its independence
- November 24, 1965 – Mobutu seizes power.
• 1973 – Members of the Motombi Village and Enyele village attack the Munzaya village, burning several houses.

• 1974 – The Mobutu regime integrates all chiefs, whether elected or traditional, into the territorial administration; transferring them away from the land of their origin.

• 1982 – First election that a non-Lobala from the Boba ethnic group decides to run for the Chef de Secteur (mayor) position. The political and socio-economic struggle between the Boba and the Lobala begins.

• 1984 – Members of the Munzaya Village stop Nyaingbala (an Enyele), the father of the current Dongo mayor Desire Manyale, during his work, tortures and malice him.

• 1985 – The dispute over fishing rights begins. Members of the Munzaya village begin to overfish in the Enyele fishing ponds.

• 1994 – The Rwanda genocide brings an influx of Refugees to the eastern borders of Congo (formerly known as Zaire).

• 1996 – AFDL and its backers begin the campaign to oust Mobutu, marking the first Congo war.

• 1998 – The second Congo war begins.

• 1999 – The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement is created, leading to the involvement of the United Nations a year later.

• 2002 – Pretoria and Luanda peace agreement is signed.

• 2003 – The Sun City Accord is signed. The process for the 2006 democratic free election begins. The process is complicated by instability and fighting in eastern Congo.

• 2006 – The Munzaya village makes a land boundary that separates the Munzaya village from the Enyele village. The Land boundary does not respect the Enyele territory and prohibits their ability to access their fishing ponds that are located in the Munzaya forest.

• 2007 – Makuma and his wife are captured by members of the Enyele village when they are working in the forest. Makuma is tortured and his wife is raped by members of the Enyele village. The case is brought to court and ruled, but Mozangi, Makuma’s father in law, is unsatisfied with the court ruling and takes the case to Gemena.

• September 2007 – The Superior Court of Gemena manipulates the conflict in order to financially benefit from the conflict. Angered by injustice, the Munzaya members decides to take action. On the return of Makuma and Mozangi, the Munzaya village seizes the Enyele fishing ponds and denies the Enyele access to their forest.

• 2008 – Chef de Secteur Nyabotake brings the Munzaya and the Enyele together to reconcile but is unsuccessful.

• 2009 – Odjani is sent by his father to help the Enyele people with their struggles against the Munzaya.

• February 2009 – Odjani’s first encounter with the Munzaya turns into fighting and Odjani becomes victorious.

• March 31, 2009 – Members of the Munzaya village infiltrates the Enyele village, kills a woman and her husband, and kidnaps their 13 year old daughter. In retaliation, Odjani and his crew attack, pillage, and burn down the Munzaya village; chasing the Munzaya from their village. Odjani’s victory leads him to recruit and create a militia group consisting of members of the Lobala ethnic group.

• October 22, 2009 – Odjani and his militia group enter Dongo.
October 23, 2009 – The Dongo massacre begins, killing hundreds and displacing thousands.

April 20, 2010 – Desire Manyale becomes Dongo’s Chef de Secteur and is given the responsibility of resolving the Dongo crisis. Prior to the position, he was captured by the Congolese government for manipulating the conflict in Dongo.

June 2010 – La Societe Civile gathers all the major ethnic groups affected by the Dongo conflict for a reconciliation process.

March 31, 2011 – Leaders of the Enyele and the Munzaya are brought to Mokusi to reconcile. The two group returns to the peace agreement that was established between Kpoluku and Dobula.