

# Scholarly Horizons: University of Minnesota, Morris Undergraduate Journal

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Volume 5 | Issue 2

Article 6

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June 2018

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### Recommended Citation

Nichols, Erin (2018) "The Resource Curse: A Look into the Implications of an Abundance of Natural Resources in the Democratic Republic of Congo," *Scholarly Horizons: University of Minnesota, Morris Undergraduate Journal*. Vol. 5 : Iss. 2 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/horizons/vol5/iss2/6>

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The Resource Curse: A Look into the Implications of an Abundance of Natural Resources in the  
Democratic Republic of the Congo

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May 28, 2018

### Abstract

This paper's purpose was to look at why the Democratic Republic of the Congo faces consistent economic and political instability despite having an abundance of natural resources. The goal was to connect the economic instability and overall downfall of the Congolese government with the notion of the resource curse which focuses on the concept that countries who have an abundance of natural resources tend to have less economic growth and experience more conflict. This has been done by examining the Democratic Republic of the Congo's past of colonization as well as its current issues such as conflicts within and near its borders, exploitation perpetrated by neighboring countries and rebel groups, international influence and the corruption that exists from within its own government. The analysis of those factors suggests that there was a noticeable connection between the instability within the country and its natural resource wealth.

## Introduction

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a country that has an abundance of natural resources and is home to some of the largest reserves of the most sought after mineral deposits on earth, but it is also a country that faces frequent economic and political instability and is considered one of the poorest countries in the world. That leads to the overall question which is why does the Democratic Republic of the Congo face consistent economic and political instability despite having an abundance of natural resources? In order to answer that question this paper will look at the issues within the Democratic Republic of the Congo through the lens of a historical analysis and will include sections on what the resource curse is as well as what natural resources are available. The overall goal of this study is to show that even though there are multiple contributing factors, the abundance of natural resources played a pivotal role in the continued economic and political insecurity within the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

## The Resource Curse

The resource curse also known as the paradox of plenty refers to a resource-rich country's inability to fully benefit from their natural resource wealth as well as have a government that can effectively respond to its public welfare needs. A common reason why it is called the resource curse or the paradox of plenty is because one might expect a country that has an abundance of natural resources to have a stable government and economy, however, resource-rich countries tend to have higher rates of authoritarianism and conflict, in addition to having low-rates of economic stability and economic growth compared to non-resource-rich countries. It is also important to note that natural resources such as minerals, oil, and gas are distinct from

other types of wealth due to factors such as large upfront costs, long production timeline, scale, price and production volatility, and non-renewable nature.

Resource-rich countries also face a plethora of internal and external issues. One of the many being conflict because natural resources can provoke and sustain conflicts as different groups fight for control or use of available resources. Another problem that arises is insufficient spending and borrowing done by the government because the amount that it collects from year to year can vary drastically due to change in commodity prices and production, which can cause governments to get trapped in boom-bust cycles. During boom-bust cycles it is common that governments will spend money on legacy projects or on large-government salaries and underspend on education, health, and other social services. Governments also tend to over-borrow during times when revenues from resources are high. The limited government capture of resource revenues is also an issue. In some cases, only a small share of the production value of the resources stay within the country. A reason for this is because of the split of revenue between companies and other governments that results in the failure to compensate the state and communities for the environmental damage, depletion of resources, or loss of livelihood. Those events occur due to a government's eagerness to extract resources causing the country to allow for lower rates on taxes and royalties without understanding the true value of their resources.

An additional problem is the notion of weaker institutional development. It is argued by researchers that resource-rich countries have weaker institutions because it is easy for elites to capture large sums of money. Elites in resource-rich countries are less likely to invest their money in productive enterprises and instead pursue rent-seeking in order to fight for control over the natural resources. In some cases, politicians or government officials have gotten involved by purposely dismantling societal checks or created new regulations in order to get access to the

resources or give access to friends and family, the process is called rent-seizing (NRGI Reader, 2015).

### Literature Review

In order to gain a more solid footing in current research it is important to look at past research. When it comes to studies surrounding the resource curse, the articles have a tendency to be more recent. Research studies in the area of the resource curse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been fairly light over the years. Perez-Sebastian and Raveh (2016) looked at the idea of the resource curse and fiscal decentralization. The research focuses on the idea that the abundance of natural resources in one country can be seen as a blessing while in other countries it can be seen more as a curse. Within their study they were able to explore a model that suggested possible channels through fiscal decentralization and nature resources boom can interact to increase the probability of a resource curse. The study then went on to talk about how countries with a high degree of fiscal decentralization are more vulnerable to the resource curse (Perez-Sebastian and Raveh, 2016).

That leads to Matti (2010) who continued on the idea of the resource curse, but looked at it in terms of political economy. The article had three aims which were to examine the impact of resource revenues on the Congolese economy, the post-war period as a source of easily corruptible revenue, and third the examination of whether or not the Democratic Republic of the Congo's deal with China will break the former's cycle of underdevelopment. This study emphasizes the need to understand the Congo's natural resources, foreign aid, and foreign investors because the political and economic trajectory of the country would have very real implications for the Congolese people as well as Sub-Saharan Africa (Matt, 2010).

The next article by Lalji (2007) continued with the theme of the resource curse. However, this time the article looked more specially about the natural resources available, especially the coltan. Similar to the other articles that were looked at, this article defined and described what the resource curse was. The article then spends the rest of the time focusing on coltan and its impact throughout the Congo. It goes on to talk about how international demand for minerals, particularly coltan has led to rampant corruption and violence, especially on the eastern side of the country. Lalji also goes on to say that even if militias were withdrawn from the eastern provinces that greedy settlers would still retain power (Lalji, 2007).

The last article Luca et.al (2012) looked at the exploitation of natural resources as well as the cycle of conflicts that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is trapped in. It planned to expand on past research and identifies the three main shortcomings of it. The first being the fact that past research fails to recognize that commodities are not homogenous. The next is that the relationship between mineral resources and conflict is endogenous. Third that past contributions fail to realize the effects of the uneven distribution of resources within the Congo. The study then goes on to implement a two-stage least square estimation at two geographical levels of analysis of the territory and the districts to come to the conclusion that while granted concessions do not impact the number of conflicts at the territory level, they do increase the frequency of conflicts at the district level (Luca et.al, 2012).

### Natural Resources

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a country covered in vast natural resources. The country boasts the largest extent of tropical rainforests in Africa. The forests in the eastern region of the country are extremely diverse and are one of the few forest areas in Africa that have survived since the ice age. It is estimated that around 45 percent of the

Democratic Republic of the Congo is covered by primary forests which provide refuge to various large mammals that have faced extinction in other African nations (Mongabay 2006). In addition to immense forests the country is also a very wet country with an average of 900km<sup>3</sup> of internal renewable water resources which accounts for a quarter of the freshwater resources in Africa. It is home to the Congo River which is the second longest river in Africa, the second largest river in the world by watershed area, and is the world's deepest river (Ndoki, 2013). The river has a basin that has multiple lakes, streams, rapids, and waterfalls. The river and river basin are surrounded by fertile soil and lush vegetation (Sautter & Pourtier, 1999).

The Democratic Republic of the Congo also has oil and gas. The discoveries have led the Congo to have the second largest crude oil reserves in Central and Southern Africa after Angola and there are three sedimentary basins located within its borders. The first is the Coastal Basin located in Kongo Central, the next one is the Central Basin, which extends offshore past the Congo River estuary, and the third one is the Grabens Albertine and Tanganyika it extends from the Uganda-Democratic Republic of the Congo border to the southern tip of Lake Tanganyika on the Zambian-Democratic Republic of the Congo border. As of now the Congo's oil production has been limited to the Coastal Basin yielding 25,000 barrels per day. However, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been proven to have 180 million reserves and it is estimated that the total amount of petroleum surpasses 5 billion barrels. In addition to the oil fields the Congo may also hold as many as 30 billion cubic meters of methane and natural gas within the three major petroleum deposits (Export, 2017).

Despite having an abundance of natural resources the Democratic Republic of the Congo is widely known for its mining industry and is among the most mineral rich countries in Africa. The mined resources within the country include cobalt, copper, niobium, tantalum (coltan),

diamonds, gold, silver, zinc, manganese, tin, uranium, and coal (The World Factbook). The Congo is largest producer of cobalt ore in the world. The largest mines are found in the Katanga province located in the south. Those mines have the ability to produce several million tons of cobalt and copper ore every year. The Congo is also the largest producer of copper in Africa. In addition to the Congo's large quantities of cobalt and copper, the country possesses 80 percent of the world's coltan reserves (Breaking the Silence). The Democratic Republic of the Congo also houses 30 percent of the world's diamond reserves. It is also important to note that the Democratic Republic of the Congo has an estimated \$24 trillion in untapped mineral deposits (Mining Africa, 2017).

### Method

In order to attempt to prove whether or not the resource curse played a role in the political and economic instability within the Democratic Republic of the Congo this study will conduct a qualitative historical analysis. The qualitative historical analysis will consist of sections including pre-independence which will focus on the Congo during the time it was colonized by King Leopold II of Belgium and the actual country of Belgium. The study will then move on to cover corruption from within the Congo's government, which focuses both on the leaders of the country as well as its government. The next portion will look at the exploitation as well as the conflicts that occurred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the hands of its neighbors, it will consist of the First and Second Congo wars and the remaining conflicts. It will also look at the way that neighboring countries and militias exploited the resources within the country. The last section will cover international involvement, particularly the Soviet Union, the United States, China, and the United Nations.

There is one hypothesized outcome in the historical analysis. There is evidence to suggest that the impacts of the resource curse can be felt throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo's history leading to the theory that there is a link between the abundance of natural resources and the Congo's political and economic insecurity.

### Pre-Independence

Towards the end of the 1800s a man named King Leopold II of Belgium established his authority over the Congo basin and deepened the reign of terror by setting out on a private venture to colonize the Kongo Kingdom. In doing so he was able to convince Belgium that the colonization stemmed from his great philanthropic desire to spread Christianity to the *savage* people of the Kongo Kingdom. With his country's permission King Leopold II hired explorer Henry Morton Stanley to be his man in Africa. For the next five years Stanley and his men tricked the illiterate people of the area into signing treaties that benefited King Leopold II as well as raping and pillaging entire villages if the people did not comply. During that time King Leopold II gained international approval for his efforts and renamed the region the Congo Free State. At first the major resource that was exploited was the vast amount of ivory within the basin area. However, in the late 1890s a rubber boom swept across the world and King Leopold II jumped at the chance to sow the numerous rubber trees that were available in his new country (Hochschild, 2018).

During that time women were held as hostages so that the able bodied men would reach their quotas, if quotas were not met the forced laborers were supposed to be killed and their hand cut off as proof. Instead the soldiers cut off the hands of those who were alive at the time as well as their families and stored them in baskets. Soon after that soldiers were instructed to mutilate more people in an effort to shorten their time as a soldier as well as receive bonuses. That

became a trend within the Congo Free State and dismembered hands became some sort of currency. The continued mistreatment of the indigenous people caused the population to shrink exponentially due to the harsh conditions attributed to procuring the rubber, starvation, infection, disease, murder, and depopulation efforts (Stockton, 2018). It is widely believed that during King Leopold II's reign more than ten million indigenous people died.

The abuse of the people for the purpose of obtaining resources did not end after King Leopold II, in 1908 Belgium bought the country and renamed it the Belgian Congo. During that time the working conditions of the forced laborers were slightly improved and the dismemberment tradition discontinued. However, the little improvement did not result in the end of extracting resources and various Belgium mining companies grew in size and continued to mistreat the indigenous population. The population was allowed some benefits during this time such as access to education, but they were only allowed to reach an eighth grade level because the Belgian government did not want them to become too smart (Ankomah, 1999). The Congolese people were also forbidden from voting and from forming unions and political associations. Out of 5,000 government jobs only 3 were held by Congolese and there were no Congolese doctors, lawyers, economists, or engineers (BBC, 2013). It was not until June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1960 that the country gained its independence, but the problems did not end when the new country began.

#### Corruption from Within

Five years after obtaining its independence a new leader emerged. His name was Mobutu Sese Seko and he was seen as a western darling as well as a fresh start for the newly named Republic of Zaire. Instead of ruling the country for the betterment of his people in 1971 he

decided to nationalize various foreign-owned companies, especially in the mining sector. Most of the businesses obtained by the government such as mines, plantations, and industries were either kept for himself or given to his friends. A significant amount of the wealth generated by the companies went directly into his pockets and from the 2,000 foreign-owned businesses Mobutu managed to increase his personal income to over one billion dollars. In one province alone, Mobutu was able to acquire 14 plantations and formed CELZA, a conglomerate that became the third largest employer in Zaire. He ended up taking most of the profits from the conglomerate. Mobutu's reign of corruption did not end there, he also squandered the profits from Zaire's exports and earned more by selling significant amounts of the country's diamonds, cobalt, and copper to western countries and kept the majority of the profits for himself (Searching in History, 2015).

Finally in 1997 the reign of Mobutu was ended and a new leader took control of the country. The new leader's name was Laurent-Desire Kabila and his first step was to change the name of the country to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The change in leadership did not result in the end of corruption within the Congolese government. Kabila similar to Mobutu exploited the Congo's vast array of natural resources. He handed out the rights of the minerals located within the country to his commercial and military associates causing the parties involved to gain a significant profit, all while the country's economy fell apart. Laurent-Desire Kabila still received support from the citizens of the Congo by portraying himself as symbol of resistance against invading forces. He profited off of the hatred of the Tutsi and supported the troops from his home region of Katanga, who he provided with regular pay and supplies, but did not supply or even pay other forces within the Congo causing a cycle of conflict to erupt (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

The tradition of corruption within the country goes beyond the presidency. The natural resources sector within the government is riddled with corruption and the government's management of the natural resources within the Congo lack transparency. State-owned companies dominate the extractive industries sector causing the process of allocating exploration and exploitation licenses arbitrary. The revenue made by the natural resources sector is also commonly siphoned off by the ruling elite to fund their lavish lifestyles. Particular sectors such as mining and oil have faced rampant corruption as well as secrecy and informal meetings, which allowed for the embezzlement of public resources. The logging sector is also impacted because illegal and informal logging actually account for nearly 90 percent of all logging activities and 94 percent of licensed forest land was issued illegally to companies rather than individuals between 2010 and 2012. A large portion of illegal logging permits were issued in order to financially benefit the Congolese political elite (DR Congo Corruption Report, 2016).

The corruption within the government extends further than the natural resources sector. That was made clear by the fact that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is losing around a fifth of all mining revenue due to corruption and mismanagement. An estimated \$750 million paid by companies to state-owned mining company Gecamines and to the Congo's tax agencies have disappeared between the years 2013 and 2015. It is believed that part of the funds were distributed through corrupt networks that appear to have connections to current President Joseph Kabila. The loss of revenue deprived the country of funds that were supposed to be allocated to public services.

Many believe that the main culprit of the recent diversion of funds is linked to the company Gecamines, which is a state-owned company that is tasked with the exploration, research, and the production of the Congo's mineral deposits. One of the main issues is that the

company is losing money in suspect transactions all while failing to make any substantial contributions to the national treasury or even invest in its own mining operations. The problem with Gecamines continues to be exacerbated by the corruption within tax agencies that also take a portion of the revenues from the mining industries. The overall revenue lost is estimated to be an upwards of one billion dollars when the tax agencies are factored in (Al Jazeera, 2017).

### Exploitation and Conflicts among Neighboring Countries

The First Congo War started in 1996 and lasted until 1997. The war was actually an invasion of the country led by Rwanda and Uganda to replace Mobutu. It was sparked by the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide when an estimated two million Hutu refugees poured over the Rwandan-Congo border into refugee camps in eastern Congo. The refugee camps eventually became the de facto army bases for the exiled Interhamwe and Army for the Liberation of Rwanda (ALiR) genocidaires. They terrorized and robbed local populations as well as plundered nearby mines with impunity because they were protected by the Mobutu regime (Zapata, 2011). Mobutu's inability to distance his regime from the Hutu forces led to the invasion of the country. The invaders sought to overthrow Mobutu and replace him with the pro-Rwandan Laurent-Désiré Kabila. They did so by creating a coalition of armies from Rwanda, Uganda, and Congolese opposition groups, the group was called Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL). The AFDL was soon able to control the eastern part of the Congo and eventually the capital, leading to the overthrow of Mobutu and the presidency of Kabila. Soon after the victory Rwanda started preparing another military force under the guise of security, in actuality it was a force created to exploit the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as gain leadership of the country. However, the new president Laurent-Désiré Kabila feared the annexation of the country by Rwandan forces and ordered

them to leave the country, which inadvertently caused the Second Congo War (Vlassenroot and Romkema, 2002).

The Second Congo War which occurred 1998-2003, was sparked by Kabila's forced removal of Rwandan and Ugandan forces. Unlike the First Congo War, the Second Congo War was a conflict that involved nine other African nations as well as twenty-five rebel groups, dubbing it as Africa's Great War and causing it to become one of the deadliest conflicts in Africa's history. The Congolese rebel groups were backed and guided by Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi, and Kabila was backed by Libya, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, the Sudan, and Chad. The stakes in the war were extremely high due to the drive for political power and control of the natural resources that are found in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is even believed that the country's natural wealth was a main driver of the violence, either as a way to finance the warring parties or as a warfare objective in itself. It is also important to note that a majority of the conflict was fought in the eastern provinces of the Congo, which is the part of the country where a significant portion of the minerals are located (Woudenberg, 2006).

Around a month after the conflict had started both sides had reached a stalemate which caused a proxy war to happen. While official militaries of the countries still remained in the war, a surge in rebel groups happened during this time. Pro-Congolese forces in the west and in the central portion of the country and pro-Rwandan and Ugandan forces in the east and part of the north. In June of 1999 a peace conference was held in Lusaka, Zambia, where parties involved were supposed to sign a ceasefire agreement as well as other provisions such as the exchange of prisoners in order to bring about peace. However, not all rebel groups were in attendance and other groups refused to sign. Before the agreement became official, Rwanda and Uganda split, and their rebel groups began fighting each other in the Congo. One of the most significant

battles between Rwandan and Ugandan forces was in the city of Kisangani, which is an important site in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's lucrative diamond trade. As the war continued despite the agreement the main focus of various rebel groups was to gain control of the country's minerals, especially its gold, diamond, coltan, and tin. The conflict minerals made the war more profitable for all that were involved in the extraction and sale. That eventually caused the war to focus more on profit and eventually resulted in the rebel groups ignoring past alliances and divisions that were formed at the beginning of the war and the rebel groups just took what they could.

In 2001 Laurent- Désiré Kabila was assassinated by one of his bodyguards and he was replaced by his son Joseph Kabila. Soon after Joseph Kabila took power the Democratic Republic of the Congo received more foreign aid. In addition to the increase in foreign aid to the Congo, Uganda and Rwanda were cited for their part in the exploitation of conflict minerals in the country and received sanctions and Rwanda eventually started to lose ground in the Congo. All of those factors led to the eventual end to the Second Congo War as a peace agreement was reached in Pretoria, South Africa in 2002 (Thompson, 2017).

Despite the official end of the Second Congo War, conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo did not end and the eastern provinces continued to be a warzone, particularly again because of some rebel forces lack of participation in the peace talks. Rebel groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army from Uganda, Nyatura, and Mai Mai are concentrated in North and South Kivu. The rebels groups have continued to plunder and exploit the resources of the area. Some rebel soldiers have admitted to being sent from Rwanda in order to participate in the conflict. It is believed that traders from Rwanda are funding the conflict with the money from

tin, tungsten and tantalum that was smuggled from mines in the Congo across the border into Rwanda (Al Jazeera, 2012).

### International Involvement

Throughout its brief history there has been consistent international involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Shortly after its independence the country faced what is now known as the Congo Crisis which occurred from 1960 to 1965 as a mutiny broke out in the army led by the white military leadership. It was at that time that the Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba reached out for assistance from the United States as well as the United Nation in an effort to suppress the Belgian-supported Katangan secessionists. The pleas of the Lumumba fell on deaf ears so he instead sought help from the Soviet Union who immediately sent military support and other advisors. The involvement of the Soviet Union split the Congolese government and angered various western nations. The Soviet Union was eventually expelled out of the country by Mobutu. In 1961 the Eisenhower administration authorized the kidnap and execution of Lumumba, even though he was democratically elected by the Congolese due to their fear of the spread of communism in Africa. In addition to that the United States did not want the Soviet Union to profit from the Congo's abundance of natural resources (Lumen).

United States involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo did not end after the Eisenhower administration. The United States remained heavily involved in the country throughout its history. After the United States aided in the removal of the country's prime minister, it backed Mobutu due to his pro-west stance. The United States was able to keep him in power for his entire over thirty year reign and provided him with over \$300 million in weapons and \$100 million in military training during the Cold War (Weissman). In addition to

providing financial assistance to a leader who took most of the profits for himself, the United States also created policies in an effort to attempt to curb the conflict mineral problem in the Congo, the United States passed the Dodd-Frank Act, Section 1502. Section 1502 requires that United States companies to ensure their products do not contain minerals that originate from conflict-affected regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The main objective of Section 1502 was to cut the financing of armed rebel groups. However, the objective was never fully achieved and rebel forces either moved the minerals to certified mines or moved to other precious minerals such as gold. Section 1502 of the Dodd-Frank Act also led to the de facto boycott of minerals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighboring countries because companies found it easier to stop sourcing minerals from that region, instead of facing the high compliance costs for setting up and monitoring supply chains due diligence (Geenen, 2017).

The United States was not the only foreign power involved, the United Nations also played a role in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The United Nations has dealt with the issue of the unlawful taking of land in the eastern provinces of the Congo and has created various resolutions in an effort to eradicate the exploitation of minerals within the country. One of the resolutions passed by the Security Council was Resolution 2360 (2017). Resolution 2360 aimed to extend the sanctions against the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the sanction include an arms embargo, assets freeze, and travel ban. The measure also set out to condemn the violence and exploitation of resources, particularly among militias (United Nations, 2017). The United Nations has also been attempting to prosecute perpetrators of war crimes within the Democratic Republic of the Congo, by means of the International Criminal Court.

One of the most notable measures of the United Nations involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is MONUSCO, which is the United Nations peacekeeping force. Despite being the United Nations largest peacekeeping efforts to date, its 1999 start date, and its current approved budget of \$1.1 billion it is seen as a failure. Since its emergence MONUSCO, formerly MONUC has made little positive impact within the Congo. It has also rarely engaged with the rebel forces that MONUSCO was sent to protect the people against. Within the country itself some of the Congolese citizens are against their presence because the people believe that MONUSCO does very little to help the people who they are supposed to protect. There are various examples of soldiers not working with the benefit of the civilians in mind. One example would include the explosion of sixty-three troops in 2005 for paying children for sex. Another example would be the peacekeepers who sold weapons to rebel forces for gold. There have even been times where MONUSCO troops barricaded themselves in their bases at the first signs of trouble. There was even an instance where the town of Pinga, west of Goma was invaded by Mai Mai forces. Once the town was captured the militia ordered the decapitation of several citizens, during that time MONUSCO troops remained at their base. They remained in their base during the entire attack even when the militia group threw the severed heads of the civilians directly at them (Hatcher, 2012).

Another country that is deeply involved in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is China. China has had its eye on the mining sector in the Congo for decades. Chinese investment in the mining industry in the Congo has come in three phases. The first phase was artisanal mining, the second was semi-industrial mining, and the third industrial mining. It is important to note that formal Chinese investment in the mining industry was very recent, it occurred after the

end of Mobutu's regime, but Chinese investments were made during Mobutu's reign on a government-to-government basis though (Kabemba, 2012).

Chinese involvement within the Congo has been demonstrated most by the 2007 Sicominex infrastructure for natural resources deal. The \$6 billion deal was originally seen as a win-win for both China and the Congo. The deal was meant to have an immediate economic impact and the government had already produced at \$800 million in infrastructure investment. Chinese firms SinoHydro Corp (SINOH.U.L) and China Railway Group Limited built roads and hospitals in the Congo in exchange for a 68 percent stake in the Sicominex copper and cobalt mine, which is one of the largest mines in Africa with around \$6.8 billion in proven reserves (Ross, 2015). The deal did not prove to be as worthwhile as China had originally hoped. The convention that led to the creation of Sicominex stated that the venture had to produce 200,000 tons of copper cathodes annually by the end of its first commercial year and a corresponding amount of processed cobalt. It also stated that output should rise to 400,000 tons of refined copper by the third year. However, Sicominex started production in 2015 and only produced 44,000 tons of copper cathodes. One of the leading causes of the lack of production is the lack of electricity available that is needed to power the operation prevented Sicominex from being able to work at full capacity. Another issue is that the Congo ordered an export ban on copper and cobalt concentrate in 2013, but was unable to fully implement it due to the electricity issues (Clowes, 2017).

## Results

Through the use of a qualitative historical analysis of the Democratic Republic of the Congo it appears as if both of the study's hypothesized outcomes are correct. The hypothesis

focused on the concept that the abundance of resources within the Congo has led to political and economic instability. That was shown by the Democratic Republic of the Congo's history of being exploited and lack of strong government as well as its consistent conflicts, where natural resources such as minerals played a role in funding. It appears that even before the Congo became a country that it had faced an onslaught of conflicts as well as economic instability despite having an estimated \$24 trillion in untapped resources. Clear evidence of the economic and political instability could be seen during the Second Congo War where multiple African nations as well as twenty-five rebel groups fought for control of the country's natural resources as well as political power.

#### Discussion

The research shows that there appears to be a connection between the abundance of natural resources in the Congo and the continued instability of the country. However, it is important to realize that the research is limited. It did not include any tribal or ethnic conflicts other than the Hutu and Tutsi conflict in nearby Rwanda. Another limitation is the lack of definitive proof of whether the natural resources in the Congo are the cause of the multiple issues within the country or the effect of them. The purpose of this research was to find a connection between the resource curse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the continued political and economic instability. In the future more research should be done to see if other resource-rich countries faced similar issues all in an effort to see if the Democratic Republic of the Congo is just an isolated incident. This study is important because it brings awareness to the problem of the resource curse and how it has impacted the Congo over time. In addition to that the visible connection between the abundance of natural resources and the political and economic volatility within the country that was shown within this study or a future one could lead to the creation and

implementation of laws that could actually benefit the country, unlike the laws from the past and present. Another reason this study is important is because it could lead to more research in the future.

### Conclusion

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a country that is rich in natural resources, but faces constant political and economic insecurity. While all of the problems in the Democratic Republic of the Congo may not be caused by the resource curse, the resource curse definitely played a major role in a significant amount of the conflict and could have possibly fueled the expansive international involvement throughout the country's history. In this case it appears as if a wealth of natural resources does not lead to economic wealth or political prosperity. Through the use of a qualitative historical analysis which looked at the Democratic Republic of the Congo before its independence, corruption within its own government, conflict and exploitation perpetrated by its neighbors, and international involvement, the study was able to detect a visible connection between the abundance of natural resources within the Congo to its continued economic and political volatility.

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