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China's involvement in the Democratic Republic of Congo's resource curse mineral driven conflict: an Afrocentric review

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ABSTRACT

Resource curse mineral driven conflicts have taken a major toll in the African continent. Observably, most of the studies which have been conducted do not address major aspects such as the international influence coming from economically powerful countries who rely heavily on Africa's mineral resources for their economic feed. It is in this context that the current research article is driven by this scholarly major gap that China (second global biggest economy) is deployed as a test case to explore her involvements in the mineral resources curse and conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This article answers a research question on whether international major influencers such as China do have a role to play on resource curse mineral driven incessant conflicts in Africa. Equally, this article argues that China's Sicomines deal secured with DRC is at the forefront of China's big indirect role in the continued resource curse mineral driven conflict in the DRC's Eastern region driven by mineral resource wealth. This argument is achieved methodologically by the deployment of document analysis and content analysis of the prevailing scholarly conversation throughout Africa.

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Introduction

Several scholars have explored the resource curse and mineral conflicts globally and continentally. This is part of the significant past research studies that have been conducted to gain a more solid footing on what might be happening in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Admittedly, these studies have contributed a lot in the sharpening of the current study although they were limited in various areas of interest to the current study. These include the studies conducted by Perez-Sebastian and Raveh (2016) who reveals a novel hypothesis supported by large coverage of several decades and countries' empirical evidence to demonstrate how the booming of natural resources can formulate negative effects in fiscally decentralised countries. We also have the study of Luca, Maystadt, Sekeris, and Ulimwengu (2014) that explored the cycle of DRC conflicts and the contributions of natural resources in it. Their study built on various past research studies that had three principal shortcomings. The first one was that previous studies (Wick & Bulte, 2006) did not 'recognise that commodities are not homogenous', second being that they (Brunnschweiler & Bulte, 2008) failed to explore the 'relationship between mineral

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resource and conflict and how it is endogenous' and the study of Cotet and Tsui (2013) that ultimately failed to 'realise the effects of the uneven distribution of resources within the Congo' (2014: 722). The study then implemented a 'two-stage least square estimation at two geographical levels of analysis of the territory and districts' (2014: 723) to conclude that whilst granted admission do not affect the number of conflicts in the DRC territorial level, they do sky rocket the prevalence of conflicts at the level of districts. We also have the study of Nichols (2018) which connected the overall downfall of the DRC government and economic instability to the notion of resource curse. With abundant literature on the DRC's resource curse, there is a clear scholarly gap curbed out which relates to the role played by international economic powerful countries and their Multinational Corporations (MNCs) in the African country's resource mineral driven conflict. Often translated into a resource curse, previous studies have not provided sufficient and counter policy engagements to the DRC in relation to how to counter-balance the suppression of internal civil unrest and respond to international pressure from global big economies. Equally, nothing much has been done in the current extant literature to address this ongoing problem. The most prevalent gap engaged with in the extant literature is the role of global big economies (i.e. China) in the DRC's resource curse mineral driven conflict. This study aimed to employ Afrocentricity as a brand new theoretical and contextual lens to analyse China's involvement in the DRC's resource curse and mineral wealth historically driven conflict. The foremost principal purpose is to explain the concept of Resource Curse in a broader context; trace Resource Curse in the African continent with a particular case point of DRC and analyse DRC's post independent un-ending civil wars and key actors and how China has played a contributory role over time.

Theoretical and methodological framing

This study is informed by the Afrocentric theory. The theory is accredited to Molefi Kete Asante (2003) who has developed it over time. There are other like-minded scholars who have helped shape the development of Afrocentricity including Modupe (2003), Shai (2016), Rapanyane (2020), Maphaka (2020), Schreiber (2000). The theory of Afrocentricity advocates that African studies should be conducted from the perspectives of Africans as subjects and active participants instead of observers. It prescribes that Africans should be at the centre of the analysis of African phenomenon. Whilst each and every study conducted on the African continent should be conducted in the manner informed by African way of knowing. Most importantly, African concepts, ideas and theories should never be undermined or marginalised in anyhow (Rapanyane, 2020). Thus this study leans on the theory of Afrocentricity to best explain China's involvement in the DRC as a contributory indirect factor to the ongoing mineral conflict and the ongoing resource curse activities in the African country (Rapanyane & Shai, 2019). It is in this context that the study is ground rooted in the tenets of Afrocentricity which are cultural centredness, paradigmatic pluralism and liberation and cultural agency. Cultural centredness advocates that African phenomenon cannot be completely understood when studied from outside the African continent. It simply talks about the place/position or location of the authors in the study of African ideals, values, culture and history (Maphaka, 2020). Africans are therefore to assume their ideals, history, values and culture to relocate their thinking from the margins to the centre of education. Paradigmatic pluralism dismisses Eurocentric ethnocentrism as supreme and places it as a perspective among perspectives including those from Africa in a multicultural context (Schreiber, 2000). Liberation and Cultural Agency was invoked to liberate and recentre African minds from the Greek civilisation mythology that does not credit Africa in anyhow. The latter covers a review of the African views and history on axiology, epistemology and ontology (Schreiber, 2000). Methodologically, this article relied on a qualitative research approach that took the form of document review composed of journal articles, books, web site reports, research reports, official and policy documents. The author sampled 45 documents to produce credible and dependable secondary and primary data. Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) was deployed to analyse the collected data.

Resource curse

The resource curse concept often referred to as the paradox of the plenty is characterised by resource rich countries that are unable to fully benefit from the wealth of their mineral resources as their governments are not able to respond effectively to the public welfare needs. It is understood within this context because people expect a country that is resource rich to be having a stable economy and government, but worse, they instead have higher rates of structural conflicts and authoritarianist governments on top of low rates of economic growth and economic stability, in comparison to those which are not resource rich. Resource rich countries also face a considerable number of external and internal problems including conflicts that are driven by natural resources. Such conflicts are also sustained and continuously provoked by various groups that continuously fight for control and use of the resources. Another significant problem led by a resource curse is the deficient spending and borrowing by governments as the money they collect on a yearly basis often change in the commodity prices and production to lead to government ending up getting trapped in boom–bust cycles (Moran, 2013; Li, Gupta, & Yu, 2017). Boom–bust cycles often manifest when governments spend money collected on large government salaries and legacy projects and underspend on health, social services and education. The proceedings characterising the boom–bust cycles as a reinforcer of the concept of resource curse are led by the eagerness of governments in extracting their mineral resources and make their laws to be flexible for lower royalties and tax for global companies without a clear apprehension of the accurate value of their mineral resources (Wenar, 2008, p. 11). Resource curse is also caused by weaker institutional development due to weak institutions in resource rich countries that makes it easy for elites to capture huge sums of money whilst investing less in productive businesses and choosing to pursue rent seeking to fight for the predominance over their countries' mineral resources. In certain cases, government officials and top politicians intentionally dismantle societal checks and balances to create brand new regulations that allow them ultimate access to the mineral resources so that they can give them to family and friends in the process called rent-seizing (NRGI, 2015).

Resource curse in Africa: continental observations

Mineral and natural resources endowment treasures with considerable flow of income to a country, assist with economic growth to prosper rapidly and supports a high standard of living in resources-blessed countries (Cronin & Pandya, 2009). In spite of these benefits, resource rich African countries are often outstripped when it comes to long-term economic growth, economic development and the reduction of poverty by those countries that are not obviously rich in mineral resources (Sachs & Warner, 1997). The African situation especially in the Sub-Saharan Africa (SAA) is a clear case point of how natural resources and mineral resources endowments can distract and suffocate the governments from the principal tasks of delivering long-term prosperities promised (Timms, 2016). There are explanations to this kind of paradox including a dominant view that economies that are producing mineral resources often become disturbed because of their shock vulnerabilities from unforeseen and additional huge profits generated through exportation. Far different like in countries that lack mineral resources as their citizens are able to monitor the public expenditure for effective development as they are directly in charge of generating the funds, so they are also alert on the spending by government. The latter is not done in resource rich countries especially the scrutinisation of the government spending as national and global extractive industries are responsible for much of the royalties and taxes including other forms of payments that generate much of the public funds required for development (Kelley, 2012). This lack of strictness on the part of citizenry contributes to the vulnerability of the economy to exploitative national and global extractive industries and governments in the form of prodigal utilisation of public funds and rent seeking and depletion of national wealth by self-fish politicians (Pendergast, Clarke, & van-Kooten, 2008; NRGI, 2015). Amongst the African countries which are mostly affected include the DRC, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea and Angola which are the African relevant examples of economies that are experiencing the Dutch disease, incessant resource conflict, and inefficacious spending and borrowing, social and environmental problems and weak institutional development driven by resource curse (Durovic, 2006). Irrespective of this, we have far different African countries like South Africa and Botswana which sets a totally different stage for a debate about whether mineral resources can be regarded as a curse or a blessing, although they remain the biggest producers of diamonds globally. This is because they use their export earnings to address social needs, promote economic growth and stabilise the country's economy (Musyoka, 2018; Kuzu & Nantogmah, 2010; Li, 2013). Due to this complete difference, Botswana and South Africa have often placed a challenge to other African economies that are heavily blessed with mineral resources but are not able to improve their standards of living nationally. This is a clear representation of the complicated nature of the relations between living standards and mineral resources endowment (Pendergast et al., 2008; Basedau, 2005). Such complicated nature of relations have led to the international relations scholars and practitioners to be intrigued by mineral resource related questions such as whether African countries with abundance of mineral resources are cursed or blessed, why do such mineral resource rich countries suffer from resource related wars whereas others enjoy the benefits of their mineral resources and if ever there is a good explanation for this. Whilst Kelley (2012) and Pendergast et al. (2008) propose corruption (abnormal use of power that is entrusted for selfish private gain) as the possible tool to having resource curse, they are equally endorsed by Rapanyane (2020), Nye (1967), Transparency International (2018) who view corruption as the intrinsic reason for resource curse throughout Africa. The latter authoritative views in international politics argue that having huge resource endowment is not an actual guaranteed resource curse, as the latter is instigated by corrupt government officials who fail to account for the transparent expenditure of public funds and safeguard their citizenry from theft (Li, 2013). As a result, countries that have these corrupt government officials and politicians then suffer from stagnant economic growth, weak institutions, poor development and mass poverty (Li, 2013), implying that rich mineral resources do not necessarily designate a curse to African countries that are mineral rich. Collier and Hoeffler (2005) remind us that even if this is the case, there are several types of mineral resources that affect a country's vulnerability to corruption and serve as the validation of resource curse. These resources as highlighted by both Humphreys, Sachs, and Stiglitz (2007) and Pendergast et al. (2008) include fuel against ore resources (diamonds, gold, etc.) which are not prone to corruption. Both their findings have revealed possible relevant explanations of why both Nigeria, DRC as compared to South Africa and Botswana have opposite end of the scale on resource curse.

Natural resource rich African country: Democratic Republic of Congo

DRC is arguably an African country that is mostly blanketed by vast mineral and or natural resources. Essentially, the Southern African country is rich in oil and gas with which the discoveries have made it to have the second biggest crude oil reserves in Southern and central Africa after Angola. The three dominant sedimentary basins are (i) Central basin in the Congo River estuary, (ii) Coastal Basin in the Kongo Central and (iii) Grabens Albertine and Tanganyika extending from the Southern tip of the Lake Tanganyika in the Uganda-DRC border to the Zambian-DRC Border. In the recent times, the country's production of oil had been narrowed to the Coastal basin that produces 25,000 barrels daily, although it had proven beyond measurable means that it contains 180 million reserves that could produce over 5 billion petroleum barrels. On top of the oil fields, the country is in charge of 30 billion cubic metres of natural gas and methane from the three crucial petroleum deposits in addition to other significant mineral resources and being globally known for its mining industry (Nichols, 2018). The other significant mineral resources which are being mined in the country include copper, cobalt, niobium, tin, silver, diamonds, tantalum (coltan), manganese, uranium and coal (Jansson, 2011; Rapanyane & Shai, 2019). DRC is also the biggest producer of cobalt ore worldwide whereby the cobalt ore biggest mines are located in the Southern Katanga province. The mines are capable of producing discrete million tons of copper and cobalt ore in a yearly basis. In addition, DRC remains the continental biggest producer of copper with large quantities amounting to 80% of the global coltan reserves and is home to almost 30% of the global diamond reserves. Also, it is said to be having an estimated \$24 trillion tons of untapped mineral deposits (Nichols, 2018).

Post-independence era: Eastern region's political instability

DRC emerged from decades of brutal colonial rule in 1960 with Mobutu Sese Seko as the African country's post-independence first leader. By the virtue of being the darling of the West and a brand new fresh start for Zaire (as known then), Sese Seko ruled the country with an iron fist until he decided to instigate various nationalisation policies especially in the mining sectors and foreign owned companies. Most of the businesses that were nationalised by his government including in the plantations, mines and other extractive industries were handed down to his family and friends and some kept for himself. The remarkable wealth amount generated by the nationalised companies was kept for himself that made him to increase his personal wealth to over 1 billion dollars (Peniel, 2019; Hardy, 2020). Mobutu's corruption reign had encouraged the squandering of the profits from Zaire's export earnings and the African country's cobalt, copper and diamonds to Western States where he kept most of the profits for himself (Nichols, 2018). Equally, his corruption reign had ultimately ended in the year 1997 when he was replaced by Laurent Desire Kabila who then changed the name of the country from the Republic of Zaire to the Democratic Republic of Congo. In governance matters, the exploitation of vast array of the country's mineral resources had continued implying that there was no transformation in ending corruption within the government institutions as Kabila continued to hand the rights of the minerals within the country to his military and personal associates. This led to the economic downfall of the country whilst the beneficial parties continued to milk the country unabated. By amassing a strong support system from the citizenry through a symbol of resistance abutting invading forces depiction, Kabila benefited heavily off the resentment of the Tutsi in his maintenance of his Katanga home regional troops, who received his fixed supplies and pay at the peril of other significant forces countrywide. This contributed towards a cycle of conflict that erupted from 2003 (Nichols, 2018).

It is argued greatly that the DRC's political instability that erupted from the early 2000s had stagnated the country's economy and provided involved actors with continuous incentives and motive to continue fighting as there was no prudent forward planning to sustainable economic development in the country (Collier, 2007). Equally, political instabilities lead to civil wars that erupt mostly when rebel groups are able to finance their activities against the government as they are not satisfied. The viability of the rebel groups in the DRC has historically been motivated by a combination of illegal dependence on resource exports, stagnant economic growth and low wages (Collier, 2007). Usually, when the situation becomes worse without the productive consultation platforms, violence then becomes the only way to survive as rebellions are more and more commercialised and rebel groups fight the government for resource territories and capitalise the fight by illegal trading of mineral resources at their disposal (Nichols, 2018). The vast array of mineral deposits of gold, tungsten, cassiterite, coltan and diamonds in the Eastern part of the DRC are extracted through low-tech artisanal methods. These mineral resources are also in the forefront of the heavy presence of many rebel groupings in the African country's Eastern region as the country's army is extensively underfunded and underpaid to control the situation in the region. Another reason why the Eastern part of the country is ungovernable is because the army does not have much interest in intervening in the region as it is made up of former rebel groups who are still intending on extraction and exploitation of the region's vast array of minerals (Ogoti, 2019). Both Olsson (2006) and McGreal (2008) remind us that historically, diamonds are at the centre of war-torn Eastern region of the country. Although it is an underdeveloped country with vast mineral resources and that does not have necessary skills and capital to advance its own economic development, the African country's economic prosperity still relies heavily on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). DRC's situation seems far from attaining a sustainable peace as it is still battling with poor health care and infrastructure and relies heavily on aid and charity (BBC News, 2013). Another contributory factor to the politically unstable Eastern region is higher levels of governmental corruption that is evidenced by Transparency International (2020) ranking DRC number 168/180 on its 2019 corruption perception list with a score of 18/100.

The key actors in DRC's pro-longed political instability in the Eastern region

There are several key actors who contributed and continue to contribute to the exploitation of the rich mineral resources in the DRC and ultimately a prolonged political instability that resembles a resource curse. These include the State, rebel groups, government, neighbouring countries and major influence from International key actors such as China (presented in the final analysis). These are the key primary drivers of the key cycles of the country's prolonged civil wars and political instabilities that lead to the country to being a failed State. First, is the State which played a prolonged important role in resource management and it never guaranteed the protection of the country's citizenry and the preservation of peace countrywide. The overtime escapade of enormous inflations, production reductions in manufacturing and agriculture and higher food prices lead to the pulling out of local and foreign investors from investing in the country (Ogoti, 2019). Second it is the rebel groups who are the leading actors in major part of the Eastern region's continued political instability. By 2014, BBC News (2014) had reported that there were 30 rebel groups region-wide who were still benefiting economically from the regional minerals. The rebel groupings have been at war with the DRC government for a very long time over the control of natural and mineral resources particularly in the South Kivu province where there is Raja Mutomboki which is in control of the rich cassiterite main ore of tin mines area. The benefaction from the tin mines by the rebel group had affected the country's use of its natural resources to benefit the people in general. It is argued that by 2009, more than 200 mines in the province of Kivu were under rebel groups (Koning, 2011). Brydges (2013) understands that the rebel groups have been benefiting from the country's mineral resources alone through checkpoints, protection fees, deep illegal extraction of minerals and taxation and they make billions from the extraction and exploitation with international investors privately. Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) is one amongst the many which exploits coltan mines to make millions too. The continued looting of natural and mineral resources in DRC is structurally linked to the continued armed rebel groups and conflict in the Eastern region (UNHCR, 2015). Those prominent include the likes of FDLR, Movement for Liberation of Congo (MLC) and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (UNHCR, 2015).

The third contributing factor in the political instability and the country's resource curse is the Multinational Corporations (MNCs) whom would never be excluded in the analysis of the trade problems (International Trade and Investment Policy 2008). The establishment of partnerships between MNCs and Rebel groups had undermined the State unstable authority in the mining regions and empowered the local militia with an end goal of having access to the mining regions for personal and selfish gains (Batware, 2011). MNCs play a significant role in the continuation of the armed conflict for resources resulting in major atrocities in the Eastern Region as the armed rebel groups continue to use the benefits emanating from their trade connections with MNCs to fund their violent activities, purchase arms and fight the government troops to maintain their hold over the unstable regions. It is in this context that I argue that MNCs although unintentional and not knowing fully prolonged the DRC violent war over resources by purchasing arms and weapons for rebel groups. The propelling confusions over the transparency and credibility of partnership transactions have also had a considerable effect on the population country-wide. I argue that the involvement of the MNCs in the exploitation of the natural and mineral resources of the country is a huge factor in the determination of the preservation of the armed conflict and resource curse as rebel groups have economic interests that are forever met by MNCs. Some experts have argued that the 'engine of the conflict' is the MNCs in DRC (Ogoti, 2019). We have several MNCs in the country including Chinese mining companies and Western Mining companies. One of the global biggest commodities trading firm by the name of Glencore was criminally probed by the Swiss authorities over allegations of corruption with the government of Kabila in DRC. The company is responsible for almost a quarter of the global cobalt which is principally found in the DRC and the criminal probes continue to amount also in the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK) and Brazil on the company's activities in DRC. The last one is the Neighbouring States like Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi which often depicted support for favourable rebel groups in the DRC that is led by mineral profit gains. On top of that, they have become passage points for the movement of smuggled diamonds and other significant minerals out of DRC. The ground-breaking 2019 Final Report of the United Nations (UN) Group of Experts on the DRC has revealed how Rwanda was used as a major transit route for smuggled minerals out of DRC using the historically trading routes from Bakavu, South and North Kivu to Kigali. Historically, these minerals were transported to Rwanda before they were reported or declared. There are several Rwandan organisations that have historically imported DRC's cassiterite that is not reported or declared anywhere else including in the country of origin (Global-Witness, 2005). We also have China which is heavily invested in the DRC mineral resource curse through the Sicomines deal (Rapanyane & Shai, 2019).

China's involvement in the DRC

China's heavy involvement in the DRC is mostly substantiated by the 2008 Sicomines deal that is often interpreted as natural resources in exchange for infrastructure. Sicomines deal is a multibillion infrastructure for minerals deal that was signed between China and DRC back in 2008 (Rapanyane & Shai, 2019). The deal is initially worth $6 billion and was historically seen as a win–win for both the Asian giant (China) and DRC (Ogoti, 2019). Until it was made clear as stipulated by Kushner (2013) that the Chinese were poised to 'extract 6.8 million tons of copper and 427,000 tons of cobalt over the next 25 years'. Kushner (2013) further adds that Sicomines is not just an ordinary mining deal as in exchange, China is only spending $3 billion to improve DRC's infrastructure, making it a part of the Chinese new philosophy that amalgamates mineral concessions and development aid in one package deal. Through the Sicomines deal, both China Railway Group Limited and Sinohydro Corp (SINOH.UL) companies managed to build considerable number of hospitals and roads in exchange for DRC's 68% stake in the country's copper and cobalt extraction mineral deal. Ogoti (2019) highlights that the production of the Sicomines deal begun late in 2015 with only 44,000 tons of copper cathodes to be effective annually. Rapanyane and Shai (2019, p. 6) argue that 'to all appearances, China's policy on DRC is shaped through the attributes of mineral resources such as copper and cobalt, aluminium, diamonds, iron ore and others, all in the name of Sicomines mining deal'. Alex Griffith has revealed the most appalling secrets of the Chinese conduct in DRC through the Sky News (2017). Special report that indicated how illegal mined cobalt is mined by children by hands, with rudimentary tools in harsh and potentially hazardous areas in DRC and sold to Chinese MNCs and Chinese traders at very low prices. It also highlighted the Chinese dominant exporter of cobalt company named CDM. China does not question where the Cobalt comes from but only look for the best trade deals (Sky News, 2017). On top of that, it has been revealed that the Chinese mining companies already had invested at least $8 billion in the DRC's mining industry especially in the copper and cobalt deposits since the year 2012. We have also seen the Tenke Copper and cobalt mine being bought by the China Molybdenum in 2016 for $2.65 billion (Burns, 2016). Large Chinese MNCs such as the Citic Metals and Ivanhoe mines are desperate for huge Chinese influence in the resource rich African country and can do everything to fuel the already unstable political environment in DRC (Burns, 2016).

Conclusion

From the above analysis, it is clear that people living in resource rich countries like the DRC are undergoing traumatic experiences caused by the mismanagement of vast revenues made from natural and mineral resources. This unfortunate has reasserted a well-established resource curse pattern that transmute into these countries being less competent in governance and less wealthy. Often, the resource mineral conflict underlines a good empirical correlation between resource rich countries like DRC and their reduced human capital investment, huge domestic political corruption, and a dangerous reduction of economic diversification for economic growth. The final result of these consequences is the diminutive long-term economic stagnation of the supposedly unfortunate nation. Equally, DRC historically known as either Zaire or the Republic of Congo is presented in this article as the heart of darkness. A country that is undergoing the most severe mineral resource conflict which is characterised by exploitation and brutality. One can argue that the present-day DRC is not different to the earlier colonised DRC. This is due to the fact that even if there was a transition of government from colonial rule to democratic rule, accompanied by several other societal changes, the horror is still very much unchanged. The lush land is overwhelmed by the ongoing resource curse mineral conflict by different ethnicities, nationalities and ideologies within the country. It is apparent that the political greed for resource wealth has fuelled the extreme exploitation of the general population, homelands and their resources. Indeed, the complexity of the African country's unstable history of corruption and substandard governmental performance, ethnic hostilities and global MNCs invasion of its mining industry including those from China compounded with vast array of un-monitored and undeclared illegal mining is what leads to the ongoing mineral resource conflict and ultimately a resource curse in DRC.

Recommendations: To avoid the continuous exacerbation of the resource curse country wide, DRC needs establish strong democratic mechanisms of checks and balance to monitor the country's democracy. The central government should intervene with the army in the regions that are captured by rebel groups with the intention of restoring peace and order countrywide. Neighbouring States that are used as gateways for illegal mining activities done inside the country should be reminded of the independence and/or sovereignty of the DRC and the borders should be monitored strictly. Any international mining agreement with any foreign country should compose of financial resources and precise objectives that guarantee the local upskilling and training of workers. Including conditions that outline how foreign powers entering into mining agreements with DRC will conduct a know-how transfer of skill to assist local companies and people. Equally, the additional taxes and mineral revenue from the extractive industries should be invested in other social programs and economic activities with the intention of promoting development.

Future research Agenda: Interested future researchers may build on this study and further provide supplementary views and arguments on how other big global economies like the USA and the UK MNCs play a role in other African countries. Particularly where there is an apparent resource curse mineral driven conflict.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

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