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# **You Cannot Get Blood Out of a Stone: The Nexus of Neoliberalism, Violence and Slavery in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

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## **Abstract**

This paper seeks to analyze the global forces that feed conflict and other pathologies that are powerfully present in the DRC, e.g., modern slavery and environmental degradation. I begin with a brief historical context of the DRC and then proceed with empirical examples of the destruction of the environment by industrial and artisanal and small-scale mineral extraction. I will then show how this extraction produces violence that fuels conflict and turns people into slaves. The paper will then proceed with the genealogy of the causes of violence in the DRC which are inherent to mineral extraction and also a condition of an affordable standing of living in the rest of the world. Raw materials from the DRC have to be cheaper and mined in such conditions that global capitalists continue to make a profit. The solution this paper proposes to reduce violence in the DRC is an education of conscience. The paper shows that today the world is made of neoliberal winners and losers, and that the future depends on the capacity to stop the expansion of products and profits. I conclude by stating that the only way to reach this goal is to revive solidarity among the people of the DRC.

# **You Cannot Get Blood Out of a Stone: The Nexus of Neoliberalism, Violence and Slavery in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

## **Introduction**

Many studies, forums, and conferences have focused on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), particularly in the area of emergency concerns such as war, massacres of innocent civilians, child soldiers, rape, and internally displaced people. Such matters are critical, but they should be supplemented with a holistic and systemic approach to an analysis of violence and slavery in the DRC, reaching beyond emergency circumstances to look genuinely into their causes. This paper seeks to analyze the global forces that feed conflict and other pathologies that are powerfully present in the DRC, e.g., modern slavery and environmental degradation, both on a stunning scale, and tied to the lifestyles and consumptive habits of prosperous countries. This paper will interrogate and explore the meaning of the DRC's brutal facts in relation to the responsibilities of various stakeholders. I believe that a global matrix of reasons and forces are deeply connected to the DRC, and this holistic perspective will help us to understand the predicament of the country from a neo-liberal perspective to see the same pattern in relation to other less developed countries.

I will begin this paper with a brief historical context of the DRC and then proceed with empirical examples of the destruction of the environment by industrial and artisanal and small-scale mineral extraction. I will then show how this extraction produces violence that fuels conflict and turns people into slaves. The paper will then proceed with the genealogy of the causes of violence which are inherent to mineral extraction and also a condition of an affordable standing of living in the rest of the world. Raw materials from the Congo have to be cheaper and mined in such conditions that global capitalists continue to make a profit. The solution the paper proposes to reduce violence in the DRC is an education of conscience. The paper shows that today the world is made of neoliberal<sup>1</sup> winners and losers, and that the future depends on the capacity to stop expansion of

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<sup>1</sup> Neoliberalism could be defined in multiple ways; the general definition of the term is related to free market and less state intervention in the economy in order for the market alone to figure it out. But, since I consider the state as

products and profits. I conclude by stating that the only way to reach this goal is to revive solidarity among the people of the DRC.

## **Historical Context**

Similar to other countries in Africa, the DRC received its independence in the 1960s. One of the consequences of the rush in granting independence was that those who took over from the colonial power were not adequately prepared for the task that was waiting for them. The likes of independence leaders, such as Patrice Lumumba, were half-educated men and some of the most unprepared leaders in the world. As a result, the country slipped into chaos at independence. The violence that followed was rooted in the very form of authoritarian state inherited from the colonizers, in conjunction with the unpreparedness of the African political classes to manage a state they did not build. Violence and war have continued to be the DRC's way of existing since the 1960's; the violence of independence, wars of secessions, invasions from neighboring countries, and civil wars, are all manifestations of the persistence of the Leopoldian model of the State, in which the goal is to extract resources and capital rather than organize the life of people. Extraction is carried out today in the context of the neoliberal world market and post-colonial violence.

## **Environmental Destruction and Economic Impact of Mineral Extraction**

In the DRC, both industrial and artisanal extraction coexist, even in the same geographical area at times. Some of the artisanal mineral extractions take place around old and abandoned industrial sites. Pollution and destruction of the environment have become a major concern in these areas. For example, in Luwidja (situated 39 kilometers south of the city of Bukavu), Banro Corporation (a company listed on the Canadian Stock Exchange), obtained a license in 2010 to exploit gold in this region for 25 years<sup>2</sup>. Banro has created a water pool where it disposes the chemical residue

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the protector of the market, I chose to define neoliberalism as the system we live in today and for which the unsurpassable horizon of human achievement is the profit.

<sup>2</sup> See Kabamba, P. (2014), Mining in the Congo. In: Selin H. (Ed.) Encyclopaedia of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures: Springer Reference ([www.springerreference.com](http://www.springerreference.com)). Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg, 2008. 2014-04-26 3

from its exploitation. This water pool has become the cemetery of many birds and other species that try to drink the contaminated water. The silence around this ecological catastrophe is maintained because Banro pays tax to the central and provincial governments, which in turn have become allies of Banro against local people who have complained about the environmental destruction in Luwidja.

Practices such as this are not new, as the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is known to use contracts, such as those with Banro, to pocket money for personal enrichment rather than invest in the country. Baudoin Nzowo, a government employee in charge of advising the Senate on economic affairs, wrote after his resignation that “out of 50 billion dollars produced from Congo mining, only 6 billion dollars reach the state treasury, the rest goes to individual pockets.”<sup>3</sup>

Another contributing factor to the industrial destruction of the environment is the length of the contract signed between the DRC government and Banro Corporation. Even if the physical damages to the environment by Banro are less visible than the artisanal ones, the impact on humans is enormous. Today in the city of Bukavu, which registers one of the highest fertility rates in the country, many young women of reproductive age are either carrying a baby, breastfeeding or are pregnant. The growing populations mean that when Banro concludes its twenty-five-year-exploitation of gold, the region will run out of natural resources that could be essential for future generations. Indeed, twenty-five years of industrial extraction without a real return to the region would not only starve future generation from resources in this highly fertile province, the lack of investment and depletion of resources will also keep the region backward in terms of development which could have been prompted by the richness of the under soil.

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<sup>3</sup> Radio Okapi, Grand Interview. (2017, October). DRC: Only 6 billion USD of the 50 Congolese subsoil produced have entered the state coffers. Accessible from <https://www.radiookapi.net/2017/10/23/actualite/economie/rdc-seuls-6-milliards-usd-sur-les-50-que-le-sous-sol-congolais>

The DRC, in Bukavu and elsewhere, has failed to protect its future populations. In his text, *Imperative of Responsibility*, Hans Jonas<sup>4</sup> reminds us of the responsibility for future generations and argues that the earth we have inherited is a fragile thing we need to protect in such a way that the next generation can live in better conditions.

The US Senate voted in July 2010 to pass the Dodd-Frank Act, which included a clause to establish conflict free supply chains of minerals from countries such as the DRC, and more importantly to reduce the vulnerability of artisanal and small-scale mining communities to conflict. The law increased financial regulation of the Industry and provided stipulations to enforce transparency and accountability.

While the intention of American lawmakers is commendable – breaking the chain of violence by starving the rebels from their sources of revenue – there were consequences for the very people the law aimed to protect. Since the collapse of the Congolese formal economy in the 1980s, many people in the Congo, mostly in the eastern part of the DRC, have benefited from the economy that emerged from with the extraction of minerals used for modern technology – such as tin, tantalum, tungsten (known as triple T) and gold. These communities turned to artisanal and small-scale mining in order to survive and produce income for their families. The Dodd-Frank Act hit these families severely when they could not sell the product from artisanal mineral extraction. In economic terms, artisanal mining activities were the only alternative viable source of income in many households in eastern Congo<sup>5</sup>. However, small-scale artisanal mining not only brought income for households, but also helped cash-starved rebel groups reconstitute their arsenals, (which the Dodd-Frank Act was targeting). Hence, the question arises: how can we stop the circle of violence in the Congo, while also allow small-scale mineral extraction to be a part of normal economic activity without fueling conflict? This dilemma is more complex than one may assume, because many rebel groups who either dig minerals, such as 3T and gold, or who levy a tax on

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<sup>4</sup> Jonas, H. (1984), *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for The Technological Age*, University of Chicago Press

<sup>5</sup> See Weyns, Y., Hoex, L., & Matthysen K. (2016, October). Analysis of the interactive map of artisanal mining areas in eastern DR Congo. International Peace Information Service (2015). Accessible from [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Analysis-and-map-artisanal-mining-DR-Congo\\_v005-1.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Analysis-and-map-artisanal-mining-DR-Congo_v005-1.pdf)

minerals, are also family members and their households depend on them to survive. This has turned civil war in eastern DRC into a lucrative business. For the Dodd-Frank Act to really be efficient and operative as far as starving the resources of armed groups is concerned, it would have to find a trade-off that allows household income to continue to flow, while resources that fuel conflict are restricted. According to a UN group of experts<sup>6</sup>, there is already progress in making the 3T export free of conflict. However, this is not the case for gold which is smuggled to neighboring countries to provide income for rebel groups. To succeed, the Dodd-Frank Act or other outside interventions should not isolate the conflict in the DRC from the demand for the market created by the rest of the world, where Congolese minerals are consumed and purchased.

There is a direct link between the enslavement and deaths of DRC citizens and the standard of living in other countries where tin, tungsten, and tantalum are wanted for cellphones, computers or other electronic gadgets in great demand. In the coming years, cobalt - of which 60% of the world's supply originates in the DRC - will create similar effects of turning Congolese people into objects and tools for global production chains. New technologies such as electronic cars will need batteries made from cobalt found in the DRC<sup>7</sup>. In order to stop the national army and the rebel groups in the DRC from illegally using profits from the mineral trade (the goal of Dodd-Frank), it is important to also work on the demand side of this issue. If Apple and other major companies frequently release new versions of their phones and other electronics each year, why then should other countries be surprised that the demand for the raw material would go up? When demand goes up, the supply will also increase to meet it, even if this means that the extractions of minerals are done in conditions the West deplors, including slavery. Addressing the demand side of this dilemma the key issue of minerals such as coltan being sold to produce iPhones at 25% their market value, which contributes to slavery by creating additional pressure to lower the cost of labor in the production cycle<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> see UN Group of Experts (2017, August). Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Accessible from <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/final-report-group-experts-democratic-republic-congo-s2017672>

<sup>7</sup> See Behtmann, E., Farchy, J., & Dodge, S. (2018, January 11). Hype Meets Reality as Electric Car Dreams Run into Metal Crunch. Accessible from <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2018-cobalt-batteries/>

<sup>8</sup> idem

## **Modern Day Slavery<sup>9</sup> and Neoliberalism: Destruction of Human Solidarity**

Since the fall of the British Empire and other European powers, the global economy has been characterized by neoliberalism where privatization of public goods is encouraged, and market openness is a key pillar. It is also characterized by a minimal role of the state in the economy; the market has free reign. It is in these global conditions that the DRC endures slavery to keep the standard of life unchanged in other countries. The provision of cheap raw materials by the Congolese people allows global consumers to purchase electronic commodities – such as computers and cell phones – at affordable prices. Thus, the relationship between global consumers and modern-day Congolese slavery is almost linear.

In the city of Walikale, in North Kivu for example, coltan is extracted, which is used in electronic appliances including computers, cellphones, and video games. The head of the mining site - often the traditional chief who owns the land where coltan is being extracted – will make a deal with national police to arrest young men for even small violations of the law, and fine them an amount of money they are not able to pay, resulting in their imprisonment for six months to a year in the city prison. After they have been imprisoned, the “chef de carrier” (the head of the mining site) will volunteer to pay the fines for the young men in exchange for labor at the extraction site, for six months or an entire year, to repay this debt. Because the people digging for him are not paid, this is indeed a type of slavery - euphemistically known as indentured servitude - being perpetrated in the DRC today. However, the police and the state in the DRC do not have a monopoly on legitimate violence - many rebels and militia groups have mushroomed in the DRC, mostly in the eastern provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, and Northern Katanga. These groups compete for slaves, both male and female.

The territory of Walikali in North Kivu is home to many militia factions who use slavery as the mode of extraction of coltan, and enslave young males and females by raiding villages. The males are responsible for digging for the militias, while the females remain in the kitchen and the bedroom as sexual slaves. All of this is done to make life in other countries more accessible with

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<sup>9</sup> Author's interview with people from Walikale in the city of Goma.

cellphones and computers. If coltan were to be produced in such a way that it reflected the true cost of labor, and if there were a legitimate market organized around the commodity, cellphones and computers would be sold at ten to twenty times their current price. However, the price of raw materials is kept low for the citizens of other countries to afford cell phones and computers, and other commodities.

This situation produces enormous violence in the region, especially between factions which prey on slaves. In the territory of Beni-Lubero, some of the competing factions that support slavery in North Kivu are the Allied Democratic Forces/National Liberation of Uganda, ADF/ NALU and the Movement of May 23, 2003, popularly known as M23. In the territories of Masisi, Rutshuru and Walikale, different armed groups coalesce and fight against Congolese Armed Forces generally known as FARDC (Forces Armees de la Republique Democratique du Congo).

The situation in the DRC is much more profound and alarming than most people are aware. The capitalist invasion of the DRC challenges the social fabric of the country, and as a result, rebels and local militias are fundamentally revolting against a specific social and economic order which marginalizes them in favor of a small portion of government officials. In response to predatory governance practices, militias resort to the strategy of slavery to acquire their part of the cake. All of this takes place at the expense of the people of the DRC.

### **Genealogy of the Causes of DRC's Predicaments: The Fetishism of Merchandise**

As Rosa Luxemburg (1951) correctly pointed out, capitalism has two phases of domination: formal domination when capitalism is still relying on previous modes of production and morality, and the total power of capitalism we are witnessing today.<sup>10</sup> According to Marx,<sup>11</sup> “There is an inherent contradiction between the unlimited expansive capacity of productive forces and the limited expansive capacity of social consumption under conditions of capitalist distribution.” Capitalism contains the principle of its destruction; the decrease of the rate of profit in which the cost-benefit decreases with overproduction. During formal domination of capitalism, the surplus was canalized

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<sup>10</sup> Luxemburg, R. (1951), *The Accumulation of Capital*. Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing.

<sup>11</sup> (Marx, *Capital*, Volume III, Chap. 15: “unravelling the Internal Contradiction of the law”)

to new lands, leading to the colonial invasion which started in the 15th century with the Columbus expedition, and continued until the 19th-century occupation of African countries. In the total domination of capitalism, the surplus was destroyed by wars. Similarly, the two world wars that followed were a way for capitalism to destroy its surplus to start producing again. Thus, death on the battlefield was a pre-condition for production in factories. Capitalism's mode of production and its relentless race for increasing profit have become the driving forces in the history of the world's economy. Quinn notes that:

Man was at least free of those restraints that ... the limitations of hunting-gathering life had kept man in check for three million years. With Agriculture, those limitations vanished, and man's rise was meteoritic. Settlements gave rise to division of labor, division of labor gave rise to technology. With the rise of technology came trade and commerce. With trade and commerce came mathematics and literature and science, and all rest, as they say, is history... The problem is that man's conquest of the world has itself devastated the world. And in spite all of the mastery we've obtain, we don't have enough mastery to stop devastating the world – or to repair the devastation we've already wrought. We've poured our poisons into the world as though it were a bottomless pit – and we go on pouring our poisons into the world. We have gobbled up irreplaceable resources as though it could never run out – and we go on gobbling them up.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, the history of capitalist expansion was not homogenous, but rather it went through different phases to reach total domination observed in the DRC today. During the First World War, capitalism entered into real domination. The difference between formal and real domination is that in formal domination capitalism still relies on the modes of accumulation which preceded it, and in total domination capitalism dominates all human life by turning nature into objects, and objects into nature. In formal domination, the excess was sent to new worlds, including the colonies, however, in total hegemony, the residue is destroyed through war. The world today, including the DRC, is led by a complete domination of capital where we learn how to make more and better products, but we do not necessarily create products in the interest of marginalized people.

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<sup>12</sup> Quinn, D. (1993). *Ishmael: an adventure of the mind and spirit*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.

## **Mineral Exploitation to Sustain Living Standards across the Globe**

This enterprise of extracting raw materials is part of a global capitalist regime which addresses decreasing profit rates by minimizing the cost of production. In this model, the cost of raw materials is kept as low as possible to maximize the cost-benefit. In the process of capitalism, the people of the DRC are not considered human beings, but rather as expendable tools in which the DRC exists to respond to the crises of overproduction. The destruction of the environment, the enslavement of Congolese people, and the objectification of the Congolese are all the result of the total domination of capitalism.

The leaders of the DRC receive taxes from the multinational companies to exploit minerals at the lowest cost possible, in order to increase the companies' profits. From 2009 to 2014, the state mining company based in Katanga, GECAMINE (General Des Carrieres de des Mines) province, has produced at least 1.5 billion dollars of profit. According to Global Witness<sup>13</sup>, only 5% of this money went to the DRC state treasury, and 750 million dollars disappeared from the GECAMINE accounting book between 2011 and 2014<sup>14</sup>.

### **Proposition of Solutions: Education for Solidarity**

Anyone who has a close look at the overall situation of the DRC is stunned by the contrast between what the country offers in terms of public services, and what the population expects from its government. The immense riches of the soil and sub-soil include minerals, arable land, rivers, climates, etc. Michaela Wrong poetically wrote:

The mineral belt that fans out from Katanga's dry savannah into neighboring Zambia

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<sup>13</sup>Global Witness. (2017, July). *Regime Cash Machine : How the Democratic Republic of the Congo's booming mining exports are failing to benefit its people*. Retrieved from <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/democratic-republic-congo/regime-cash-machine/>. « More than \$750 million of mining revenues paid by companies to state bodies in DRC was lost to the treasury between 2013 and 2015. Instead, the money disappeared into a dysfunctional State-Owned mining company and opaque national tax agencies. There is no clarity on what this money was spent on or where it ended up, but testimony and documentation gathered by Global Witness indicates that at least some of the funds were distributed among corrupt networks linked to President Joseph Kabila's regime » (Global Witness Report 2017, p.12)

<sup>14</sup> DRC: Un Rapport pointe du doigt les activites troubles de la GECAMINE, published by Radio France Internationale on November 3, 2017.

contains copper and zinc in concentration rival nations can only dream about and enough cobalt to corner the global market. Nearly 500 miles North-West lies another gift of nature: the dark red gravel bank that traces the winding course of the Kanshi River, second biggest source of industrial diamonds in the world. There are other gifts: diamonds at Tshikapa in South-West and Kisangani in the North, what was for a time the world's main source of uranium at Shinkolobwe, and across from the border with Uganda comes the enticing glitter of gold, cadmium and cassiterite, manganese and wolframite, beryl, columbo tantalite and germanium: metals with mysterious, evocative names. No wonder a US ambassador once memorably referred to the Congo caviar in a cable to Headquarters.<sup>15</sup>

There is a high population density, and the population which is relatively young and educated<sup>16</sup> tends to live in dire poverty. There is indeed a considerable discrepancy between the existence of natural wealth and the living standards of the people. Macroeconomic indicators (such as GDP growth and inflation) seem to indicate a healthy economy, while the reality of life suggests chronic poverty and inequality.

Beyond the destruction of the physical and human environment through savage mining and the enslavement of Congolese, there is also the question of education, which is one of the pillars of development. Eradicating a country's education system is enough to destroy a nation, and this has been observed in the DRC where young men and women are forced to work in the mines rather than attend school. An accessible and affordable education system would provide the youth of the DRC with the skills and resources necessary to pursue income-generating activities outside of the mineral extraction industry. In addition to this, the curriculum implemented in the country's education system should be tailored to the local environment that students learn in.

We need to reflect on the curriculum in schools and universities, the teaching methods, and their impact on the youth who constitute more than sixty percent<sup>17</sup> of the Congolese population. This is important because the future of a country depends partly on the ways young people are trained for the role they will play in their community. Education is a rite of passage, and as Victor Turner

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<sup>15</sup> Wrong, M. (2001). *In the footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: living on the brink of disaster in Mobutu's Congo*. New York: Harpet Collins Pub.

<sup>16</sup> CIA. (2017, July). Country Comparison: Population. *The World Factbook*. Retrieved January, 2018, from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2119rank.html>

<sup>17</sup> idem

described it: a luminary period during which young people who are not yet adults, and no longer children, are given the necessary tools to work for the survival of society<sup>18</sup>. The society hopes that those sent to school will come out fully prepared adults to deal with the major social challenges the community faces. In the DRC, there have been various attempts to reform the country's education system, but these efforts did not produce significant results. It is, therefore, time to think about alternative educational models which include participatory values.

To meet the challenge of building Congolese communities, the education system should ensure that the curricula imparted can root Congolese youth in their communities, rather than encourage them to leave the country and become part of the “reserve army of the capital.” There are indeed many other reasons why people chose to leave their country. Ambroise Kom enumerated some of them in the case of Africa: work conditions in the country and political repression of free spirits<sup>19</sup>.

In obliging brilliant intellectuals to leave the country, Mobutu surrounded himself with very opportunistic intellectuals whose fate would depend on his generosity to bring them out of darkness and offer them political and economic power.

Indeed, with the current schooling program in the Democratic Republic of Congo, it is likely that the recipients of education would be more comfortable in Paris or Brussels as slaves of capitalism than in Popokabaka or Kanyabayonga. If Congolese students in early childhood were learning in a rigorous and disciplined manner about the fauna and flora of their ecosystems, geological and mineralogical composition of their soil and subsoil, they would be able to master their environment better and propose informed and relevant solutions for their region. It is this ingrained knowledge and enrooted training that would result from attachment to their land, loyalty to their people and their homeland - in short, a healthy sense of community. Indeed, when the rooting is emotionally and intellectually and efficiently ensured, migration is no longer the only option for educated Congolese. In fact, when they do not migrate abroad, Congolese intellectuals join corrupt leaders and serve them as intellectual legitimization of predatory actions. As for Congolese intellectuals

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<sup>18</sup> See Turner, W. V. (2014), *Betwixt and Between: The liminal Period in Rates of Passage*, Print Book.

<sup>19</sup> Kom, A. (1993). *Intellectuels africains et enjeux de la démocratie: Misère, répression et exil. Politique Africaine. Vol. 51*, pp. 61-68.

who have migrated to the West, prosperity of the Post-War era has isolated them from the issues I have described in this paper; they live in a world of regularity in which the world is a mirror reflecting their own alienation.

### **The Need for Political Reform: Anti-Corruption Strategies**

After ten years of civil war (1996-2006), the DRC has reached a hopeful conclusion with a new constitution voted in by referendum in 2005, which proposed a decentralized approach to governance. However, this hope will quickly fade because of rampant corruption in President Joseph Kabila's administration that has been evident during his almost 16 years in power. Decentralization is praised for its virtue of bringing governance closer to people. However, in a country where corruption is endemic, decentralization has created new sources of corruption. Before the vote for decentralization, members of the national government privatized tax collection in each region. Hired by the federal government, tax-collectors generally send money upwards to their patrons and by the same token drain the state treasury. Before 2005, corrupt government officials received money from state employees who were supposed to collect taxes in each region of the DRC. When decentralization was implemented in 2016, new patrons were created in each area, and corruption was decentralized. Each governor of a province has built a new network of tax collectors who report to him and send the money they collect directly to him. The tax collectors from before 2005 are still in place and continue to send money to their patrons in the national government. The number of taxes that citizens have to pay has doubled so that each network of tax collectors, the local and the national, continue to work with the state officials who hired them.<sup>20</sup>.

The decentralization of tax corruption is illustrated in the state of Maniema in the DRC. When the new governor was elected in 2011, he found that the region had no money at all despite all of the tax that had been collected. He decided to fire all of the tax collectors of the area, and replaced them with his own group of tax collectors. A month later, the governor received an injunction from

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<sup>20</sup> cf. Engelbert P. and Kasongo Mungongo E. (2016), "Misguided and Misdiagnosed: The Failure of Decentralization in the DR Congo," *African Studies Review*

the Prime Minister asking him to reinstate all of the tax collectors that he had fired. The governor of Maniema obeyed the Prime Minister's order, and duplicated the number of taxes in the province in such a way that both networks (his own and the Prime Minister's) continued to exploit the population for their benefit.

The DRC has engaged in reform of its financial sector. A council to monitor the finances of the country was created. COREF, Commite d'Orientation de la Reforme des Finances Publiques (a steering committee for the reform of public finance), was established in 2013 to monitor financial in-flows in provinces. Despite COREF's presence, the tax grabs continue unpunished.

Political reform is needed but should be focused on the structure of the state itself. As I have stated elsewhere,<sup>21</sup> the major challenge of the DRC is to move from an extractive space to a political one - that is to say, resolutely abandon the Leopoldian and colonial state model. This is the challenge that has faced the DRC since independence but has its roots in the original strategy of political and economic organization of the Congo Basin. The magnitude of this titanic challenge was clear from the accession of the Congo to independence, and to this day the Leopoldian model is still evident. Getting rid of it is a task that several generations of Congolese have to reckon with.

As described above, the DRC's enemies are its political elites whose corrupt nature does not allow any progress. The second group of enemies of the Congo is the global political economy which has reduced the DRC to a mere provider of raw materials for market exploitation, which is why there is a need for profound structural reform related to the global political economy.

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<sup>21</sup> Kabamba P (2015), "Congolese Sisyphus: Rolling the Rock of Conrandian Project at Vitaem Eternum," Global Journal of Human Social Science, Vol. 14 (3), pp. 23-28

## **Conclusion: Solidarity**

The commodity chain, from the DRC to global consumers of electronics, continues to operate at the expense of citizens. DRC's population has lost millions of souls; many of the country's people have fallen into slavery to dig for minerals needed in other countries. The British Member of Parliament, Oona King, wrote "Kids in Congo are being sent down into mines to die so that kids in Europe and America can kill imaginary aliens in their living rooms"<sup>22</sup> The burden of responsibility is also on the DRC's side; Congolese citizens have to get their act together, combat corruption, and educate their children to become productive citizens for their country rather than migration. As for political reforms, the Congolese people have to enforce their constitution by not allowing their leaders to violate fundamental laws and hang on to power as is the case now. Overall, community needs to be built outside of the frame of the state, politics and money, as this framework has destroyed solidarity among DRC citizens. According to Marcuse<sup>23</sup>, solidarity is a biological need to hold people together against inhuman and brutal exploitation. This kind of solidarity requires the education of conscience, of knowledge and sentiments of both the West and the DRC; this is the *raison d'être* of my intellectual struggle.

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<sup>22</sup> See Bush, C. & Seeds, J. (2008, April). Apocalypse Found: Coltan, Cell Phones, and Crisis in the Congo. *The Bear Deluxe Magazine*. Accessible from <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2008/04/19/apocalypse-found>.

<sup>23</sup> Marcuse, H. (1968), *L'Homme Unidimensionnel*, Les Editions de Minuit,