

Mineral Resources, Sovereignty and Armed Conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: from Jadotville to the Geopolitics of Critical Minerals

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Abstract

The relationship between mineral abundance and territorial violence is a central theme in contemporary political geography. This article examines that relationship in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, taking the siege of Jadotville, which occurred in September 1961 during the Katanga secession, as a historical and analytical starting point. The aim is to understand the persistence of Congolese mineral geopolitics from the decolonisation crisis to current disputes over critical minerals. The research is qualitative, bibliographic, documentary and interpretative, combining a review of the literature on the political economy of natural resources, analysis of reports by international organisations, and secondary data on the Congolese mineral industry. The results show that the Katanga crisis revealed the strategic importance of copper, cobalt and uranium, as well as the weight of foreign corporate interests in the formation of the post-independence Congolese state. In the twenty-first century, the centrality of cobalt, coltan and copper has repositioned the country at the core of global supply chains linked to the energy transition and digitalisation, without this translating into social justice, economic sovereignty or territorial stability. Armed groups are also found to interfere in a substantial share of artisanal mining sites in the east of the country, and traceability mechanisms prove necessary yet insufficient. The article concludes that mineral resources do not cause Congolese conflicts in isolation but finance, prolong and internationalise violence, so that their analysis requires the simultaneous consideration of coloniality, institutional fragility, global value chains and territorial justice.

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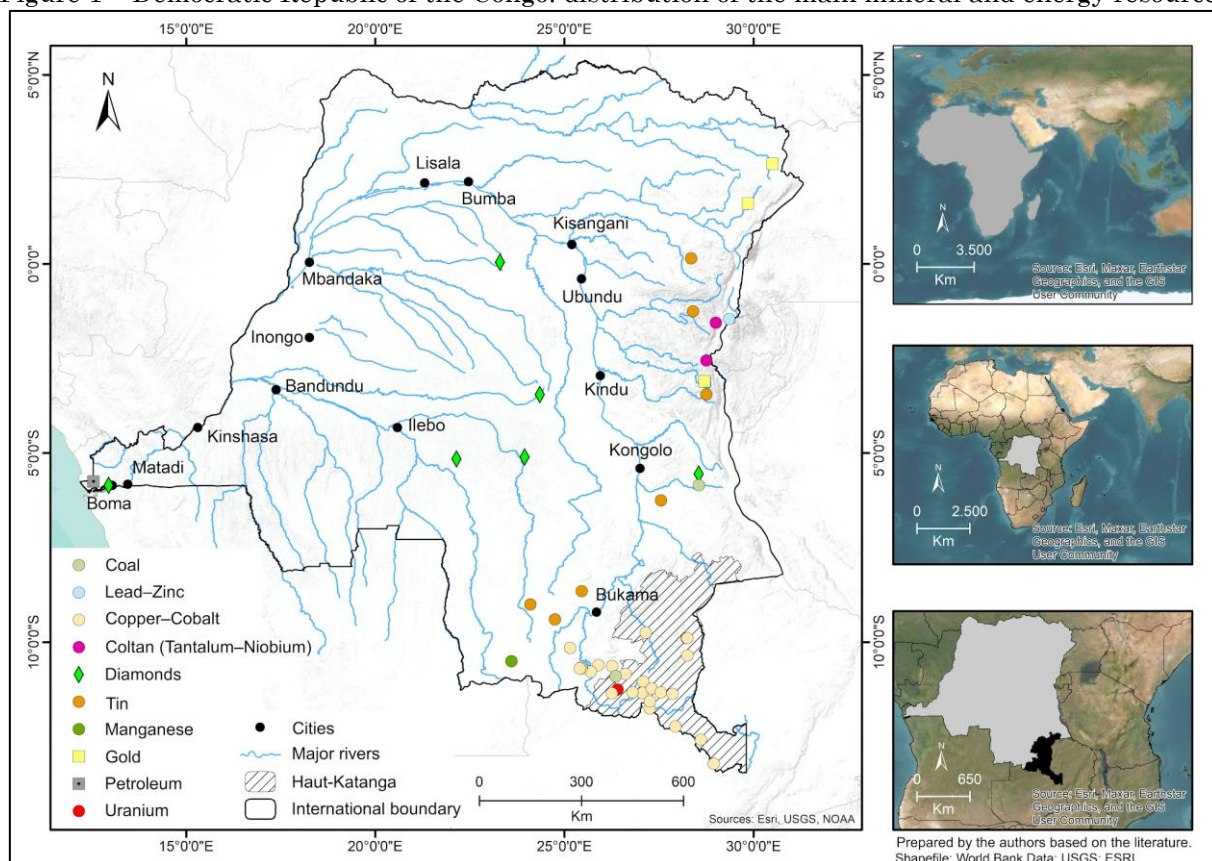
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INTRODUCTION

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) exemplifies the complex interplay between mineral wealth, state fragility, territorial disputes, and armed conflict in the contemporary era. Since gaining independence from Belgium in 1960, the DRC has experienced a series of crises, including the potential expansion of the Cold War into African territory. The country's borders with nine African states have contributed to political rivalries and heightened vulnerability; for instance, during the 1990s, the borders with Angola and Rwanda became focal points of international conflict (Meditz; Merrill, 1994). In recent years, clashes between government forces and the M23 rebel group near the Rwandan and Ugandan borders have centred on control of the eastern region, which is notably rich in strategic minerals (Nebe, 2024).

The Congolese territory, characterised by significant geological diversity, has held a strategic position in the global economy since the colonial era due to the exploitation of copper, cobalt, uranium, diamonds, gold, tin, tungsten, tantalum, and coltan (Figure 1). Recent data underscore this centrality: in 2022, the DRC accounted for 73% of global mined cobalt production, 45% of tantalum, 11% of mined copper, 8% of diamonds, 7% of refined copper, 6% of tin, and 1% of gold, and possesses approximately 55% of global cobalt reserves (Yager, 2025). Despite this prominence, mineral wealth has not historically resulted in political stability, social justice, or comprehensive economic sovereignty. Instead, it has often been linked to external dependence, foreign intervention, territorial violence, and the unequal distribution of mineral rents (Gibbs, 1991; Le Billon, 2001; Nest, 2011).

Figure 1 – Democratic Republic of the Congo: distribution of the main mineral and energy resources



Source: The authors (2026). Cartographic bases: World Bank Data (2026); USGS (2026); ESRI (2026).

This article adopts the siege of Jadotville as its analytical starting point. The event occurred in September 1961, during the Congo crisis and the Katanga secession, when Katangese gendarmes and European mercenaries in

Jadotville (now Likasi) surrounded Irish soldiers deployed by the United Nations (UN). The episode, involving A Company of the 35th Battalion of the Irish Army under Commandant Pat Quinlan, is thoroughly documented by

Power (2005), Whelan (2006), and Doyle and Quinlan (2006), and took place within the framework of the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC), established in 1960. The dramatisation of this event in the film *The Siege of Jadotville*, directed by Richie Smyth and released in 2016, is referenced here as a means of raising analytical questions, rather than serving as a primary historical source.

Jadotville serves as a symbolic representation of the interplay between territorial sovereignty, international intervention, and competition for subsoil resources, enabling the connection of a localised event to broader dynamics such as the Katanga crisis, mining company interests, the role of the UN, the Cold War, and the persistence of colonial economic structures post-independence. The central hypothesis posits that mineral resources alone do not account for Congolese conflicts; rather, they underpin the economic dynamics, internationalisation, and territorial persistence of these conflicts. This perspective deliberately avoids a deterministic interpretation that attributes war solely to mineral presence. Instead, it contends that, in contexts marked by institutional fragility, porous borders, and external dependence, mineral resources can finance armed actors, attract foreign interests, and perpetuate cycles of violence (Le Billon, 2001; Autesserre, 2010; Nest, 2011).

Accordingly, the primary objective of this study is to analyse the relationship between mineral resources, territorial sovereignty, and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, spanning from the Katanga crisis to current disputes over critical minerals. Specifically, the study aims to contextualise the Katanga crisis within the formation of the post-independence Congolese state; to examine the role of mining in the political economy of conflict, including the involvement of armed groups, artisanal mining, smuggling, and global value chains; and to critically assess the country's contemporary prominence in the geopolitics of critical minerals, particularly in relation to the energy transition, human rights, and the limitations of mineral sovereignty amid external dependence.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The research adopts a qualitative approach of a bibliographic, documentary and interpretative nature. The literature review was guided by authors who discuss the political economy of

natural resources, armed conflicts in the DRC, mineral geopolitics and territorial governance. These works were mobilised to avoid a deterministic interpretation of Congolese conflicts and to sustain the understanding that mineral resources operate in articulation with colonial, political, institutional, regional, land-tenure and social factors.

The documentary research drew on technical and institutional reports produced by the U.S. Geological Survey, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Security Council, the African Union, the African Minerals Development Centre, the African Peer Review Mechanism, ISS Africa and the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre. These documents made it possible to update the analysis of mineral production, reserves, global value chains, artisanal mining, traceability mechanisms, human rights and agreements involving minerals and security. Secondary quantitative data systematised by Yager (2025) in the *2022 Minerals Yearbook: Congo (Kinshasa)* were also considered and employed to complement the qualitative analysis.

The analysis was organised along three interpretative axes. The first examines the Katanga crisis and the Jadotville episode as a historical expression of the relationship between mining, sovereignty and external intervention. The second discusses the political economy of mineral conflicts, with emphasis on artisanal mining, armed groups and territorial governance. The third analyses the country's contemporary insertion into global critical mineral chains, in light of the energy transition and of debates on human rights and territorial justice.

THE KATANGA CRISIS AND MINING IN POST-INDEPENDENCE CONGO

The independence of the Belgian Congo, proclaimed on 30 June 1960, took place in a context of extreme institutional fragility. According to O'Ballance (2000), the process was sudden and unexpected. The country was not prepared to become an independent state, above all because the 'Africanisation' of the structures of power, administration and the economy had come late — the Belgians restricted political debate until the final years of the colonial period, so that independence movements emerged abruptly, without time to consolidate experienced leaderships (Meditz; Merrill, 1994). The new state inherited a vast, deeply unequal

territory organised according to colonial interests geared towards mineral extraction. A few days after independence, the province of Katanga, led by Moïse Tshombe, declared its separation. This secession cannot be understood merely as a regionalist movement: Katanga was one of the country's most important mining regions, historically associated with the exploitation of copper, cobalt, zinc and uranium (Gibbs, 1991; 1993).

The material basis of this centrality was built during the colonial period. Most of the DRC's known mineral resources are associated with Precambrian rocks distributed around the Congo Basin, and many of these deposits were identified between 1920 and 1960 through geological reconnaissance and alluvial panning in the rivers draining those terrains (GF Consult, 2015). In the early twentieth century, the territory was organised into large concession domains controlled by a few colonial and corporate actors: in Katanga, the *Comité Spécial du Katanga* granted rights over a substantial part of the copper belt to the *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga*, founded in 1906, and more than a third of the territory was handed over as an exclusive concession to the *Société Internationale Forestière et Minière du Congo* (GF Consult, 2015). The country's contemporary mineral geography cannot therefore be dissociated from the colonial history of geological surveying and from the formation of extractive enclaves.

The specialised literature stresses that the Congo crisis was strongly traversed by economic interests linked to mining. Gibbs (1991) analysed it from the perspective of the political economy of external intervention, arguing that Western mineral and commercial interests carried significant weight in the dynamics of the conflict; in a later study, he discussed the role of the UN and of Dag Hammarskjöld, observing that the secession of Katanga was one of the central sources of political instability between 1960 and 1961 (Gibbs, 1993). Mining structured Katangese territory through towns, railways, energy infrastructure and export networks organised to meet external demand for raw materials rather than to promote balanced territorial integration. In this sense, the secession can be read as an attempt to preserve a colonial economic order at a moment when African political sovereignty was being reorganised.

The strategic dimension of this mineral complex went beyond copper. The Shinkolobwe mines supplied the exceptionally high-grade uranium used in the Manhattan Project, which helps to explain why Western powers came to

treat control of the Katangese subsoil as a first-order security interest (Williams, 2021). The assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the first prime minister of the independent Congo, in 1961 deepened the international character of the crisis. Lumumba defended the country's territorial unity and sought to assert Congolese sovereignty in the face of Belgian interests and Cold War pressures. Recent historical documentation shows that this internationalisation was not merely diplomatic: the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was directly involved in covert operations aimed at removing Lumumba, including a poisoning plan (Williams, 2021). His overthrow and death became a landmark of post-colonial African political violence, and the mineral question was not a secondary element but the material dimension of the dispute over control of the state and of export networks.

Allen Dulles, director of the CIA under the Eisenhower administration, stated that the United States could not lose the Belgian Congo to the Soviet Union. Larry Devlin, head of the CIA station in the country, recorded in his memoirs that Soviet control in the Congo would give the Soviet Union "almost a monopoly on the production of cobalt, an essential mineral used in missiles and many other weapons systems" (Devlin, 2007, p. 53), which would place the United States weapons programme at a disadvantage. Cobalt has always been a strategic mineral of great value to the major powers; it is believed, however, that the main United States interest was the Shinkolobwe uranium, shipped under the designation 'Special Cobalt' (Teixeira, 2006; Williams, 2021). Jadotville must therefore be situated within this broader framework: the siege of the Irish soldiers was not an isolated episode of military confrontation, but occurred in a province whose economic importance made the political dispute particularly sensitive and where mining, sovereignty, international intervention and corporate interests intersected.

MINERAL RESOURCES AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CONFLICT

The relationship between natural resources and armed conflict has been widely debated in political geography and in international political economy. Le Billon (2001) argues that conflicts involving natural resources must be analysed in terms of location, form of exploitation, lootability, trade networks and the power relations that structure the political economy of

war. The concept of “conflict minerals” — which designates minerals whose exploitation contributes to human rights violations and to the financing of criminal activities in risk zones (Dikamona, 2025) — is particularly useful in the Congolese case, since it shifts the explanation from the mere fact that minerals exist to the way in which they are appropriated, traded and converted into political or military power.

The expression “resource curse”, in turn, should be employed with caution. Mineral abundance does not automatically condemn a country to war or poverty: the central problem lies in historical forms of exploitation, external dependence, weak public institutions, corruption, smuggling, the presence of armed groups and subordinate insertion into global value chains (Le Billon, 2001; Nest, 2011). This interpretation can be broadened through the lens of natural resource governance, which links governance, development, peace and security to taxation, illicit financial flows and the state’s capacity to convert natural resources into social development (African Peer Review Mechanism, 2025). For the Congolese case, this approach is relevant because it shifts the analysis from mere mineral availability to the institutions, oversight mechanisms and revenue management that condition the appropriation of mineral rent.

The economic dimension reinforces this reading. The mineral sector accounted for approximately 19.6% of the DRC’s real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2021, while mining and mineral processing were responsible for 46.9% of GDP growth that year (Yager, 2025). Mining is therefore not merely a sectoral activity but a structuring axis of the national economy, with a strong capacity to influence public revenue, investment, labour relations and territorial disputes. Even so, Autesserre (2010) draws attention to the importance of local dynamics of violence, which involve land disputes, community tensions, conflicts over local authority, population displacement and questions of citizenship. This reading is fundamental if the analysis of mineral resources is not to become simplistic.

In the east of the country, minerals such as gold, cassiterite, wolframite and coltan came to be associated with the financing of armed groups, especially in contexts of artisanal mining and in poorly transparent trade chains. Nest (2011) shows that coltan became the international symbol of “conflict minerals”, although he stresses the need to avoid generalisations that criminalise all Congolese mineral production. The cobalt industry, in turn, has frequently been associated with

human rights violations, since this mineral is often extracted through artisanal mining, including child labour; even though it holds a significant share of the world’s mineral wealth, Congolese society sees few benefits, as much of the extraction and trade is controlled by armed groups and foreign interests (Panzi Foundation, 2024). Field investigations describe how militias and dissident military units came to control artisanal mines of coltan, tin, gold and diamonds in the Kivus and in Ituri, in a scenario shaped by the regional aftermath of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, connecting local violence to global electronics chains (Eichstaedt, 2011).

This distinction is essential, since artisanal mining represents, in many contexts, one of the few economic alternatives available to impoverished populations. Its social scale is considerable: in 2022, it was estimated that up to two million people worked as artisanal miners in the country, of whom between 150,000 and 200,000 were linked to cobalt and copper, more than 270,000 to gold, 95,000 to tin, 26,000 to niobium and tantalum, 7,700 to tungsten and around two thousand to tourmaline (Yager, 2025). The problem is not artisanal mining in itself, but its capture by armed networks, illegal intermediaries, corrupt authorities and international buyers who benefit from low traceability. To address this situation, the OECD drew up due diligence guidance intended to steer companies that purchase minerals from conflict-affected or high-risk areas (OECD, 2016).

Mineral resources must therefore be understood as part of a multiscale network. At the local scale, they involve workers, communities, chiefdoms, militias and territorial authorities; at the regional scale, they connect mines, transport routes, borders and neighbouring countries; at the global scale, they are integrated into the production chains of the electronics, automotive, energy and military industries. The Congolese mineral question is, in this sense, also a problem of territorial governance: effective natural resource governance depends on creating an adequate institutional environment, on optimising the value generated by the sector and on the public management of revenues (African Peer Review Mechanism, 2025). When these elements are fragile, mineral abundance tends to feed political capture, corruption, informality, smuggling and the financing of armed or clientelist networks.

FROM THE COLD WAR TO THE ENERGY TRANSITION: THE UPDATING OF MINERAL GEOPOLITICS

Congolese mineral geopolitics is not confined to the colonial past or to the Cold War: it remains current in the twenty-first century through growing demand for critical minerals. If, in the 1960s, copper, cobalt and uranium were related to heavy industry, nuclear energy and competition between blocs, today cobalt, copper, tantalum, tin and tungsten are tied to the electrification of transport, to batteries, electronic equipment and digital technologies, in a scenario of demand driven by electric vehicles, energy storage and renewable energy (International Energy Agency, 2024; 2025). In this context, Africa occupies a strategic position, and the African green minerals strategy argues that the continent should move beyond the export of raw materials and build integrated chains of beneficiation, regional industrialisation, value addition and local capacity development (African Union; African Minerals Development Centre, 2024).

In the Congolese case, this centrality is directly related to the copper–cobalt pairing. In 2022, mined copper production rose from 1.77 million to 2.47 million tonnes, refined copper from 1.46 million to 1.9 million tonnes, and mined cobalt from 118,000 to 144,000 tonnes (Yager, 2025). There are signs of partial progress in domestic processing: 77% of copper production was refined before export and a further 6% was smelted in the country. At the same time, cobalt was exported after processing into intermediate products such as carbonate and hydroxide. By contrast, most of the production of diamonds, niobium, tantalum, tin and tungsten continued to be exported before downstream processing stages (Yager, 2025), so that value addition remains uneven across mineral segments.

Cobalt is particularly emblematic. Its importance for lithium-ion batteries has made the DRC a key piece in the economy of electric vehicles and electronic devices, and recent studies on supply chains in the country discuss the environmental, social and economic risks associated with artisanal and small-scale mining, pointing to the need for traceability and corporate responsibility (Cao *et al.*, 2024). For the DRC, this means that mineral sovereignty does not depend solely on formal control of deposits, but on the capacity to convert copper, cobalt and coltan into productive development, public revenue, skilled employment and territorial justice (African Union; African

Minerals Development Centre, 2024). A central contradiction thus emerges: the country is indispensable to the global low-carbon economy, yet a significant share of its population remains subject to poverty, violence, precarious work and environmental degradation.

The passage from Jadotville to the contemporary geopolitics of critical minerals therefore reveals a structural persistence. Minerals change their strategic function, international actors are reconfigured, and technologies are transformed, but the Congolese subsoil remains bound up with external disputes. This observation makes it possible to problematise the very idea of energy transition: replacing fossil fuels with low-carbon technologies does not automatically eliminate socio-environmental inequalities and, in many cases, merely displaces the impacts of the global economy onto producing territories. The expansion of critical mining in the DRC has been associated with allegations of labour exploitation, environmental degradation, community displacement and human rights violations; in 2024, 45 allegations of abuse linked to critical mineral mining were recorded in Africa, with Congolese cobalt and copper mines accounting for almost half of that total (Bhrc Africa Team, 2026).

CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTS IN THE EAST OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Contemporary conflicts are concentrated above all in the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri, a region that combines porous borders, the presence of numerous armed groups, land disputes, community tensions, population displacement and the exploitation of high-value minerals. The literature stresses that violence cannot be explained exclusively by mining, but that the mineral economy constitutes a decisive dimension of the persistence of conflict (Vlassenroot; Raeymaekers, 2004; Autesserre, 2010). Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers (2004) highlight the overlap between armed conflict, local authority, the informal economy and regional networks, making it possible to understand that conflicts are not only military confrontations but also forms of reorganising territorial power: in many cases, armed groups control mines, levy illegal taxes, regulate movement, capture trade routes and establish parallel administrations.

The mineral importance of eastern Congo can be observed in the diversity of artisanal sites

mapped between 2017 and 2022. Surveys by the International Peace Information Service (IPIS) cited by Yager (2025) indicated, in the provinces of Ituri, former Katanga, Maniema, North Kivu and South Kivu, at least 1,230 gold mines, 620 cassiterite mines, 258 niobium and tantalum mines, 61 wolframite mines, 37 diamond mines and nine tourmaline mines. Recent data also make it possible to quantify armed interference: in a survey carried out by IPIS at 354 active mining sites between September 2021 and March 2022, armed groups interfered at no fewer than 41% of the sites analysed, mainly through the illegal taxation of miners, more frequently at gold mines than at niobium, tantalum, tin and tungsten sites; among the actors identified were Congolese military units, police forces and local armed groups (Yager, 2025). Violence is therefore not external to the mineral economy, but takes part in its practical regulation in territories with a weak state presence.

Gold illustrates this connection between artisanal mining, informality and the war economy in a particular way. Its artisanal production occurs in Ituri, Maniema, North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika, has been estimated at around 20,000 kilograms per year and has most of its exports undeclared (Yager, 2025), which explains its attractiveness to armed networks, illegal intermediaries and cross-border trade circuits. Reports by the United Nations Group of Experts repeatedly document the relationship between armed groups, the mineral trade and regional instability: report S/2024/432 recorded the continuation of clashes involving the M23, the Armed Forces of the DRC and regional actors, as well as the importance of illegal economic networks in financing the war (United Nations Security Council, 2024).

Contemporary discussion must also incorporate the debate on so-called “minerals-for-security” deals. Verelst, Abdullahi and Chepseba (2026) argue that this kind of bargain, by exchanging preferential access to mineral resources for promises of support for security or stabilisation, tends to reproduce asymmetrical dependencies, weaken sovereignty over natural resources, and offer few effective guarantees for addressing the structural drivers of conflict. A concrete example of this logic is the peace agreement signed in June 2025 between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Rwanda, mediated by the United States, which links the disengagement of armed groups to a “Regional Economic Integration Framework” aimed at articulating the two countries’ critical mineral supply chains, from

mine to processed metal, in partnership with the United States government and investors (United States Department of State, 2025). From a critical perspective, the arrangement may be read as a way of strengthening the United States’ economic position. At the same time, a peace treaty is established, so that the DRC is perceived above all as a site of extraction, and not as a territory inhabited by people whose minerals ought to sustain their own development (Verelst *et al.*, 2026).

This critique updates, in contemporary terms, the problem opened up by the Jadotville case. In the 1960s, the Katanga crisis revealed the articulation between territorial secession, corporate interests, international intervention and control over strategic minerals; in the twenty-first century, the language of stabilisation and energy transition may perform a similar function, legitimising new forms of privileged access to the Congolese subsoil without confronting the political, social and territorial causes of violence. The OECD due diligence guidance was created precisely to address this problem, proposing that companies identify risks, audit suppliers and avoid contributing to conflict and to human rights violations in high-risk areas (OECD, 2016). This regulatory effort also appears in International Tin Supply Chain Initiative (ITSCI), a mechanism launched in 2011 by the former provincial government of Katanga and the International Tin Research Institute, which in the fourth quarter of 2022 covered 401 mining sites in former Katanga, 509 in Maniema, 267 in South Kivu and 218 in North Kivu (Yager, 2025). Such mechanisms subject the 3T minerals — tin, tantalum and tungsten — to international controls. Still, they reveal the difficulty of regulating dispersed and informal chains, proving necessary yet insufficient without institutional strengthening, protection of communities and action against cross-border smuggling.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND TERRITORIAL JUSTICE IN CRITICAL MINERAL MINING

The expression “green minerals” may suggest that these resources are automatically sustainable because they are associated with low-carbon technologies. However, a mineral used in batteries, electric vehicles or energy grids may be associated, in its territory of origin, with land conflicts, environmental contamination, precarious labour and the

displacement of communities. Communities located in critical mining areas frequently bear the environmental and social costs of extraction. At the same time, the economic benefits shift towards companies, intermediaries, political elites and external markets, in a scenario in which the geopolitics of peace, security and mineral access are increasingly interconnected in the Great Lakes region (Bhrc Africa Team, 2026).

The central question is not only whether the world needs cobalt, copper, lithium or coltan to decarbonise its economies, but under what conditions these minerals are extracted, who benefits from their commercialisation, and which rights are guaranteed to affected populations. Without effective public governance, community consultation, fair compensation, traceability, and reparation mechanisms, the energy transition risks reproducing old forms of extractivism under a new environmental justification. The Congolese productive structure further requires analytical caution: in 2022, Gécamines participated in copper and cobalt operations with minority stakes of between 5% and 49%, private companies controlled large gold mines, and artisanal miners accounted for most of the production of diamonds, gemstones, niobium, tantalum and tungsten (Yager, 2025). The social impacts and the possibilities for regulation vary substantially across these segments, and mineral sovereignty must be understood as more than legal control over deposits: it involves the state's capacity to regulate contracts, oversee companies, protect workers, guarantee community rights, combat illicit flows and internalise stages of production.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis of the relationship between mineral resources and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo makes it possible to understand one of the central contradictions of contemporary geopolitics: the coexistence of mineral abundance and socio-spatial vulnerability. From the Katanga crisis to contemporary conflicts in the east of the country, mineral resources appear as strategic elements in the dispute over territory, in external intervention, in the formation of war economies and in the country's subordinate insertion into global value chains.

Returning to the initial hypothesis, it is confirmed that minerals do not, on their own, cause Congolese conflicts. Violence in the

country has multiple roots — colonial, political, regional, land-related, ethnic-territorial and institutional — but mineral resources finance, prolong, reorganise and internationalise these conflicts, transforming local disputes into regional and global problems that connect artisanal mines, armed groups, intermediary companies, neighbouring countries, technology industries and end consumers. The Jadotville episode fulfils an analytical function along this path: it provides an entry into the debate on Katanga, the UN and the fragility of Congolese sovereignty in the period immediately following independence and, from there, connects the 1960–1963 crisis to the current geopolitics of critical minerals.

The data gathered reinforce the country's exceptional position in the global mineral economy: a majority share of world cobalt production, a strong presence in the tantalum market, economic dependence on mining and a high proportion of artisanal workers. At the same time, the interference of armed groups at artisanal sites and the persistence of undeclared exports demonstrate that this centrality remains traversed by problems of governance, territorial violence and limited state control capacity. The energy transition places the DRC back at the centre of world geopolitics. Still, it does not guarantee territorial justice and may even intensify old forms of extractivism in the absence of effective mechanisms of governance, traceability and revenue distribution.

As a research agenda, it is recommended that the analysis be deepened at the local scale of mining territories, combining fieldwork, cartography and historical series of production and exports, to examine the relationship between state presence, armed control and the performance of traceability mechanisms empirically. From Jadotville to the current dispute over critical minerals, the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains a key territory for understanding the relationship between subsoil, sovereignty and power, revealing that the geopolitics of natural resources must be analysed not only from the perspective of the energy security of consuming countries, but also from the standpoint of social, environmental and territorial justice in producing countries.

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Luiz Eduardo Panisset Travassos: study conception, data collection, data analysis, manuscript drafting.

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DATA AVAILABILITY: The data that underpin the results of this study may be made available by the corresponding author, upon duly justified request. [Luiz Eduardo Panisset Travassos].



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