

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF COLTAN IN THE EASTERN  
REGION OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO'S SECOND WAR  
(1998-2003)

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## **Abstract**

The role of natural resources in African conflicts has been subject to extensive scholarly analysis. However, much of this analysis has taken a narrow economic reductionist bias. As such, it is imperative that the dominant assumptions and accepted concepts and theories about the role of natural resources in African conflicts be re-examined. The aim of this thesis is to offer a reevaluation of the role of coltan during the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) Second War (2003-2008) through a critical engagement with the resource wars literature. The purpose is to offer a re-reading of the role of coltan in the DRC Second War and the broader regional and global economic context in which this conflict took place. It rejects the commonly cited assumption that the presence of coltan in the DRC means it is an initiator of conflict. Rather, this thesis argues that the central role of coltan in the DRC Second War was as an aggravator of conflict in that its exploitation was used by different parties to fund their military and political ambitions. This thesis also argues that the DRC's weak state structures and pivotal role within the Great Lakes region, as well as the international trade of coltan and the nature of the DRC coltan mining industry are all key factors in understanding coltan exploitation in the country's Eastern Region during the Second War.

## **Declaration**

I, Teboho Moleko declare that this thesis has never been submitted by me before, for a degree at Rhodes University or any other institution of higher learning. It is work of my own design and implementation. All materials herein have been fully acknowledged.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my parents Michael and Pearl Moleko, for giving me the best chance at life possible. I am eternally grateful for your love and consistent support throughout my life and my seemingly never-ending academic journey. I would also like to thank my siblings Thabang, Nthabiseng, Molebohang and Mamoleko for your immeasurable, love, emotional support and guidance. To my friends, thank you deeply, for your encouragement and friendship. Lastly, I would like to thank my supervisor Georgina Barrett for guiding me on this journey.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFDL	Alliance of Democratic Liberation Forces for the Liberation of Congo
AU	African Union
BCDI	Banque de Commerce, du Developpement et de l'Industrie
CLF	Congolese Liberation Front
CRA	Congo Reform Association
DDR	Disintegration, Disarmament and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EU	European Union
FAR	Forces Armées Rwandaises
GSDRC	Governance and Social Development Resource Centre
ICG	International Crisis Group
IR	International Relations
IS	International Studies
KG	Kilogram
NGO	Non-governmental-organisation
OAU	Organisation for African Unity
PRP	Parti de la Revolution Populaire
RCD	Rally for Congolese Democracy
RPA	Rwandan Patriotic Army
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
SADC	South African Developmental Community
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SOMIGL	Société Minière des Grands Lacs
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UPDF	The Uganda Peoples Defence Forces
USA	United States of America



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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

From the tyrannical rule of King Leopold II (1835-1909) to the present day, natural resources have been of central importance to the politics and the economic development of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). One cannot divorce the human suffering from the DRC conflicts that can be attributed to the pursuit of its natural resources; the majority of the citizens of the DRC have barely benefited from the country's resource endowment. However, this resource tragedy is not unique to the DRC (Shah, 2009:1). Like elsewhere in Africa, there is a history of resource exploitation in the DRC. However, what is unique about the DRC and what makes it a worthy focus of study is the explicit and undeterred resource exploitation undertaken by those who have held power during colonial times and post-independence. This has made the DRC prone to conflicts in which issues around resources play a pivotal role. As such, the study of coltan in the DRC Eastern Region can be used as a microcosm to investigate the correlation between resources which are: valuable in commodity terms, easily accessible, traded in an unregulated system, procured illegally and with low labour costs alongside conflict in developing states (Ndikumane and Emizet, 2003: 39).

#### **1.2 Objective of the study**

The objective of this thesis is to understand the role attributed to coltan in the DRC Eastern Region during the Second War (1998-2003). This will be achieved through a critical assessment of: the key state, sub-state and regional actors' involvement in the DRC Eastern Region during the Second War, as well as investigating the potential motivation for their involvement in the conflict and their role in the exploitation of coltan. Additionally, it shall undertake its objective through analysing the association between international demand (particularly from the international corporate sector), for coltan and the implications of this demand on the War.

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a rise in the consideration of non-traditional military and state-centric security threats which play a role in conflicts, including those pertaining to the environment and, more specifically, natural resources

(Myers, 1993: 12). This study posits that environmental concerns that include resources can be considered 'new' security threats because "while they may not always trigger outright confrontation, they will help destabilize societies in an already unstable world" with the potential to result in conflict (Myers, 1993: 20). As such a clear understanding of the role attributed to coltan in the DRC Second War could assist us in preventing other conflicts, especially in regions where resource concerns are perceived as central to the economic and political development of the state. Whilst understanding the individual and contextual complexities of each case, the themes that are appropriate in the DRC conflict with regards to coltan could be applicable in other contexts.

### **1.3 Methodology**

This thesis is the product of desk-based research and draws on a range of official documents including reports by international organisations such as the three United Nation (UN) Reports of The Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of Congo (2001, 2002, 2003) (henceforth the UNSC Report of the Panel of Experts), reports compiled by the African Union (AU) as well as the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Analysis of these reports will also help to elucidate information regarding the levels and growth of trade in coltan globally and particularly during the period of the Second War. They provide detailed information pertaining to the exploitation of coltan in the DRC Eastern Region and evidence of global trade linkages that will facilitate understanding of the regional and global dimensions of the conflict and the role attributed to coltan in it. In addition, secondary sources including relevant scholarly literature and media reports pertaining to resource wars and specifically those in Africa and the DRC will be drawn on to develop a theoretical understanding of the given context and the role attributed to coltan in the conflict, as well as the motivations of various sub-national, regional and global state and non-state actors. Other sources, including the reports of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as Global Witness and the International Crisis Group (ICG) who have researched the declared motivations of involved actors and the implications of the conflict for national and regional security and stability will be utilised. In particular, this data will be used to ascertain the motives driving particular actor's involvement in the conflict and in coltan exploitation. However, there are limitations within this research pertaining to

information. For example, its parameters do not permit it to take account of grassroots and personal accounts of the DRC conflict. Nonetheless, this offers an opportunity for further study. Furthermore, some actors may not be honest due to the implications of being involved in illicit trade or the implications of admitting to playing a role in conflict. Despite this drawback there is substantial research pertaining to this, which will enable the study to meet its objectives.

#### **1.4 Thesis Structure**

The thesis will undertake a comprehensive study of the role attributed to coltan in the DRC Second War. *Chapter One*, the Introduction sets out the research question and lays the foundation for the thesis by giving the chronological sequence that the study shall follow. *Chapter Two* provides a comprehensive analysis on resource wars literature, starting with an historical analysis and ending with an analysis of the DRC's coltan issue and where it sits within the contemporary resource wars debates. *Chapter Three* focuses specifically on the historical context of the DRC, arguing that traditionally political supremacy in the DRC (formerly known as Zaire), the Congo and the Congo Free State, has always led to the subjugation of the masses. Furthermore, it provides an analysis of the variables that allow coltan to be easily exploited (notably the DRC's weak state structures, as well as the DRC coltan mining industry). *Chapter Four* critically explores the economic significance of coltan as an international noteworthy commodity and argues that the regional actors involved in the DRC conflict (notably Rwanda and Uganda) accrued substantial economic benefits from their involvement in the conflict. In addition, it argues that global demand and trade by the international private sector perpetuated the DRC Second War. *Chapter Five* argues that coltan was an aggravator and funder of conflict of the DRC Second War, as opposed to being the initiator of the conflict. Furthermore, it demonstrates that coltan was part of the greater 'war economy' that included, amongst other natural resources, diamonds, gold and timber. *Chapter Six* the Conclusion reflects on the thesis findings and suggests some recommendations on the DRC coltan issue in light of the current situation in the DRC Eastern Region.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Theoretical Framework: Resource Wars Literature**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

There exists a dichotomy between those that attribute the emergence of conflict in Africa to reasons above the ground, specifically, social political reasons, and those that consider conflict to be a consequence of what is found underground, notably resources. This thesis will critically engage with both. Historically nations have fought over resources. However, industrialisation and capitalism impacted on the demand for raw materials as production expanded and markets grew. Furthermore, the history of industrialisation cannot be divorced from the history of colonialism and imperialism. Industrialisation was often exported to the colonies, where the indigenous people of the colonies were utilised as disposable cheap labour to extract the raw materials necessary for the development of their mother countries. This chapter shall highlight that oil and other resources that are crucial in industrial and capitalist development added a new dimension to the violence associated with resources. Governments, in the contemporary era, that do not possess resources have allotted strategic significance to economic resource concerns, as there has been an ascending concern that the non-renewable resource wealth of the world is finite (Klare, 2001). This chapter shall trace out the evolution of the resource wars literature from the neo-Malthusians to three contemporary related approaches notably, the resource course debate, the resource conflict argument and the conflict resource argument. This is important as it highlights the different debates pertaining to resource wars that could elucidate the role attributed to coltan in the DRC Second War.

#### **2.2 Historical accounts of Resource Wars Debates**

According to Michael Klare (2002: 24) global market forces have the ability to proliferate conflict in regions where there is a prevalence of particular resources or minerals. The probability of increased conflict in these regions escalates when the contested resources or minerals are valuable in monetary and commodity terms. The prevalence of these resources or minerals can intensify conflict particularly when the actors involved in a specific conflict are reluctant to accept its loss (Klare, 2002: 24). In addition, resources have the ability to incite conflict within regions with already divided ethnic and political factions (Klare, 2001: 191), such as the Great Lakes region.

As previously indicated the strategic importance of resources for countries that do not possess them has risen, this has culminated in the rise of resource wars. Resource wars are defined as “conflicts that revolve, to a significant degree, over the pursuit or possession of critical material” (Klare, 2002: 23), making the DRC Second War (1998-2003) a resource war. The thesis shall utilise the definition of resources brought forward by Abiodun Alao (2007) who states that, “natural resources as all non-artificial products situated on or beneath the soil, which can be extracted, harvested, or used, and whose extraction, harvest, or usage generates income or serves other functional purposes in benefiting mankind” (Alao, 2007: 16). As this thesis will show, this definition is applicable to coltan.

The aforementioned three approaches pertaining to the role of natural resources in conflict - the resource curse debate, the resource conflict argument and the conflict resource argument - are the product of historical debates pertaining to the role of resources in conflicts that emerged in the immediate post-Cold War era. This is an important moment because it was the time, as indicated above, when non-traditional security threats were gaining sustained scholarly and international political attention. A key scholar in the early theorising about the role of resources in conflict was Thomas Homer-Dixon (1999) who made the claim that environmental scarcity may result in conflict (Homer-Dixon, 1999, Porter, 1990, Wirth, 1989). Environmental or resource scarcity is defined as the condition of a resource becoming scarcer, and can occur due to resource depletion or because of the “uneven capture or allocation of resources or the rising demand of a resource” (Le Billion, 2012: 14). This means that the increasing global population and the simultaneous growing worldwide output of goods and services will inevitably lead to the increasing scarcity of vital resources that may destabilise social order and cause conflict (Porter, 1990, Wirth, 1989). Homer-Dixon’s claim was not that resource scarcity would necessarily result in war between states but that it could disrupt society and cause social upheaval, the consequence of which could be violent (Homer-Dixon, 1999: 5). It could be argued that developing countries in the world may be more susceptible to this type of violence because of their heavy dependence on natural resources for the economic and social wellbeing of their countries. Moreover, economic dependence on primary commodity exports can be further exacerbated by weak or small manufacturing sectors (UNEFCA, 2013: 13). These developing countries have deficits in their financial, material and human capital

resources; in essence exhibiting weak state structures, which can aggravate the adverse effects of environmental scarcity (Homer-Dixon, 1999: 4, Heywood, 2007: 29). As will be argued in *Chapter Four*, the DRC is a developing state with weak state structures and as such, the dependency on natural resources such as coltan has a direct impact on the country's economic and political prospects.

There are three precursor schools of thought pertaining to environmental problems and conflicts. These have culminated in the resources wars narratives which shall be explored in more detail below. They are as follows: the neo-Malthusians, the economic optimists and the distributionalists.

### **2.2.1 Neo-Malthusians**

Neo-Malthusian arguments emerged in an effort to reinvigorate the original arguments put forth by Thomas Malthus in 1798 in *An Essay on the Principles of Population*. He believed that overpopulation was the primary cause of human suffering (Flew and Malthus, 1970). Recognising that the world does not have a finite supply of natural resources, Neo-Malthusians prescribe a stringent limitation on population growth and consumption because to do otherwise would exceed the carrying capacity of the Earth's resources; the consequence of which would be poverty and the disintegration of peace in the international system (Flew and Malthus, 1970: 1, Homer-Dixon, 1999: 28, Barbier, 2006: 63). Distributionists undermine this school of thought by highlighting how in the Great Lakes region and notably in the Eastern region of the DRC, it is rather the absence of resource governance that may cause problems as opposed to overpopulation and increased consumption (Chabal, Engel and Gentili, 2005: 55). Furthermore, the next section shall argue that economic optimists convey the limitations of this school of thought by highlighting the gains in resource innovation in light of rising populations and increasing resource scarcity.

### **2.2.2 Economic Optimists**

The emergence of the neo-Malthusians led to a rival school of thought identified as the economic optimists (Homer-Dixon, 1999: 28). In contrast to the neo-Malthusians economic optimists do not believe that there is a need for stringent limitations on population growth and consumption. Rather they argue that the effective and efficient

institution of the market “provides incentives to encourage conservation, resource substitution and the development of new sources of scarce resources and technological innovations” (Homer-Dixon, 1999: 28). Technology and innovation allow for solutions to resource scarcity without leading to conflict or social turmoil. Furthermore, new reserves of resources have been found and the extraction and refining practices of most resources have been improved. This undermines the perspective of neo-Malthusians, because it suggests that states and societies have the capacity to adapt to the shortage of resources that result from population increases and associated consumption patterns (Homer-Dixon, 1999: 28, Flew and Malthus, 1970).

In addition, economic optimists stipulate that a rise in the price of a resource due to its increasing scarcity could lead to three possible resource outcomes. First, the substitution of that particular resource and a move away from commodities that require its use. Second, technological innovation that could refine exploration and extraction of that resource allowing smaller input to generate more output. Third, products manufactured by human beings could act as alternatives for the resource (Neumayer, 2000). The claims of economic optimists offer a great understanding of what has occurred in the contemporary times in light of increasing population growth. However, as shall be argued in *Chapter Three*, economic optimist’s claims are problematic in the context of the DRC because the DRC does not have the necessary skilled personnel in state and private institutions to effectively manage the socio-economic demands of a growing population facing resource scarcity. This is the lasting damage of colonialism and slavery and the product of ongoing structural inequalities that have in many instances fractures African states socially and systematically weaken their economic growth. As such, the exodus of Europeans post-independence created a skilled personnel vacuum that has been difficult for contemporary elites to address.

### **2.2.3 Distributionists**

The distributionist school of thought advances the notion that the uneven and unequal distribution of resources and poverty are the reasons for the activities and the current *modus operandi* that depletes resources, and not the outcome of high population growth rates or the existence of finite resources (Alao, 2007, Homer-Dixon, 1999). This argument is advanced by Alao (2007) who articulates that the emergence of resource

wars and environmental problems is a problem of the absence of resource governance, as opposed to being a product of the nature of things. This perspective is applicable to the DRC due to the uneven distribution of resources, often the result of centralised corrupt governments, who distribute resources on the bases of ethnicity as opposed to needs.

As previously discussed, these narratives led to the emergence of three debates pertaining to the notion of resource wars. Nonetheless, and as the example of coltan in the DRC attests, it is near impossible to attribute the cause of conflict to an individual factor, as most wars or conflicts are attributable to a combination of interconnected and complex social economic factors.

## **2.3 Contemporary Resource Wars Debates**

### **2.3.1 Key Features in the Resource Wars Debate**

Prior to engaging on the literature of the three contemporary resource wars debates, it is necessary to give a summary of some important concepts and nuances in the literature in order to help explicate the three contemporary resource wars debates discussed below.

The notion that resource scarcity can increase the likelihood of conflict is a key component in all three contemporary resource wars approaches. It has also become a common focus of analysis in the African context of the resource wars debates (Kalyvas, 2001). Resource scarcity is defined as the condition of a resource becoming scarcer due to depletion of the resource or because of the “uneven capture or allocation of resources or the rising demand of a resource” (Le Billion, 2012: 14). However, resource scarcity has been proven to promote cooperation and collaboration amongst actors vying for the same resources. Furthermore, this has either led to the expansion of resources through innovative developments or cooperative solutions as opposed to conflict, as indicated by the economic optimists (Myers, 1993). However, it can be argued that in the Great Lakes region of East Africa, the poor resource governance and general inadequacies’ of state institutions have failed to promote collaboration and cooperation amongst actors vying for the same resources (Alao, 2007).

Another feature of the resource wars debate is the location of the resources. There are *point source* resources which are concentrated in a concise area as well as *diffuse source* resources which are scattered over larger regions. *Point source* resources are arguably more easily controlled by one group due to their concentration in one region, whilst it is more difficult for one group to control *diffuse source* resources because of the material and logistical requirements needed to control resources dispersed over a large territory (Le Billion, 2012, Ross, 2004). As a result of such geographical factors, the pursuit of resources often yields different outcomes. For example, there is a correlation between *point source* resources near the capital of a country and conflicts regarding the control of the state such as *coup d'états*. A correlation has also been found between *point source* resources far from the capital and the emergence of secessionist movements (Le Billion, 2012, Ross, 2004), such as the separatist movements in the resource rich Shaba region of the DRC in March 1977-June 1978. Furthermore, *diffuse source* resources near the capital have been linked to conflict associated with mass rebellion and looting whilst diffuse resources far from the state capital have been linked to warlordism (Ross, 350: 2004). Warlordism represents a state of affairs where locally based armed groups struggle for power in the absence of a sovereign state (Heywood, 2011: 121). Additionally, there is a further distinction between renewable resources such as freshwater, forests and fertile soils and non-renewable resources such as oil, minerals and gemstones (Myers, 1993). This distinction is important as more often than not in conflicts, non-renewable resources are attributed a role in the aggravation and inception of conflict, such as coltan in the DRC or diamonds in Sierra Leone (Ross, 350: 2004).

A key contribution to the contemporary resource wars debates has been made by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler (1999) who argue that civil wars can be caused by two pursuits; either the quest for justice or the quest for loot. Individuals or groups seeking justice are identified as having grievances whether legitimate or illegitimate. Those on the quest for loot are seen as being motivated by the outcome of capturing resources; to procure the financial benefits of controlling the resources (Collier and Hoeffler, 1999). In this area of the resource wars debate, military victory or loss is immaterial in the encounter as loot is captured during the conflict and is not the outcome of it. As a result, even factions that have no possibility of a military victory can accrue economic benefits during the process of conflict. Conflicts associated with the pursuit of justice

or the rectification of perceived injustice, which is understood to be a public good, suffer from problems associated with the pursuit of public goods. Public goods are traditionally defined by two properties: joint-ness of supply and the impossibility of exclusion. Joint-ness of supply denotes that the consumption of that particular public good by an individual or other individuals does not reduce the quantity of the good available to other individuals; an example of a good that is fully joint is 'ideas' (Hardin, 1982). As a result, collective action problems associated with the pursuit of public goods, such as free-riding, are common (Collier and Hoeffler, 1999: 6). The concept of free-riding arises when everyone benefits from collective action, regardless of them partaking in it. Under these circumstances an individual's most optimal move is not to take part in collective action but to rather allow others to do so as everyone will benefit (Kalyvas and Kocher, 2007: 179). As such, one can obtain justice from the rebellion of others, making motivation to partake in conflict in the pursuit of justice not as likely as partaking in conflict in the quest for loot. Furthermore, and as previously discussed, loot-seeking rebellions do not have to topple governments to benefit from the economic opportunities from capturing resources. However, justice-seeking ones often do need to overthrow the incumbent government. Nonetheless, this distinction has some critical shortcomings. For example, it is possible for actors to pursue resources in order to advance their potential to realise justice, particularly given the legacy of colonial exploitation and the unequal distribution of resources in African countries. This observation is significant as the thesis argues that the DRC Second War was most likely a loot-seeking rebellion rather than one defined by the pursuit of justice.

The thesis supports the hypothesis that one of the plausible causes of rebellion or conflict in Africa is loot-seeking as the grievance associated with justice-seeking rebellion is often harder to attain, due to a need for a military victory and the low individual motivation to partake in such conflicts. This is attributed to the possibility of accruing the benefits of justice without participation (Hardin, 1982, Collier and Hoeffler, 1999). *Chapters Three and Four* seek to demonstrate how the DRC Second War can be principally characterised as a loot seeking rebellion. It is apparent that in numerous African states the opportunity costs of rebellion are relatively low due to the weak economic prospects that exist outside of the looting enterprise, denoting the inability of a state to provide for its citizens as an important variable in this type of rebellion (Collier and Hoeffler 1999). However, Paul Williams (2011) suggests that

loot seeking is not the dominant driver that perpetuates or incepts armed conflict in Africa. According to him the idea that people make rational cost-benefit calculations before embarking on wars is flawed. According to Williams (2011) if greed were the root cause of war, African military leaders would inevitably cash out after accumulating millions and perhaps retire in more peaceful surroundings. Nonetheless, African military leaders tend to continue engaging in armed conflict in unequivocally dangerous positions and do not disengage from potentially unprofitable strategies when attempting to gain control of the capital (Williams, 2011:75-85). This observation by Williams is again indicative of the limitations of the loot-seeking rebellion hypothesis.

### **2.3.2 Resource Curse**

The first of these contemporary resource wars debates is the resource curse approach advanced by Collier and Hoeffler (1998). It posits that there is a relationship between primary commodity reliance and the risk of civil wars (Collier and Hoeffler, 1998; Collier, 2007; Hodler, 2006). This is an econometric theory in that it identifies primary commodity export dependence as the leading driver of civil war due to rents accrued from the resource sector. It stipulates that the reliance on resource wealth results in the neglect of other sectors and the weakening of the institutions of governance (Collier, 2007). These rents distort the economy and result in the disintegration of state structures, which are inefficiently utilised, leaving the state potentially vulnerable to armed conflicts. As such, “vulnerability to war, in other words, is associated with resource exploitation” (Le Billion, 2012: 13).

Although this perspective is applicable to the DRC, it is limited in that it has a narrow intrinsic economic reductionist bias which fails to account for other factors accounted for in political ecologist analyses including ethnic inequality as a contributing factor in the cause or protraction of conflict (Stewart, 2002; Williams, 2011). Political ecologists argue that resources or economic incentives are not the root cause of war, but rather should be viewed for their ability to inhibit peace. Resource and economic outcomes of war perhaps ought to be viewed more accurately as the disincentives for facilitating peace in Africa, through conflict financing (Stewart, 2002; Williams, 2011). Moreover, James Fearon and David Laitin (2003) argue that there is no link between primary commodity exports and civil wars based on their research on

45 civil wars that occurred between 1945 and 1999. Rather, based on their analysis they argue that

*The main factors determining both the secular trend and the cross-sectional variation in civil violence in this period are conditions that favour insurgency. We hypothesize that financially, organizationally, and politically weak central governments render insurgency more feasible and attractive due to weak local, policing or inept and corrupt counterinsurgency practices (Fearon and Laitin, 2003: 76).*

Their finding is echoed by Michael Ross (2004: 238) who adds that the correlation between natural resource occurrence and conflict is spurious. He argues that the relationship between war and resource dependence could be produced by an alternative variable, such as the weak institutional capacity of a state. Furthermore, in the analysis of inter-state relations, there is a supposition that monetary benefits of cooperation and compromise eclipse the probable costs of engaging in conflict. Consequently, most states regress from their extreme demands if they are assured a comparative segment of the available resource pie (Klare, 2002; Ross, 2004).

Additionally, Francis Stewart (2008) asserts that the fundamental reasons for conflicts are always “horizontal inequalities”. Horizontal inequalities are defined as the disparities in economic, social, political as well as cultural aspects in the lived experience of racial, ethnic, religious, regional or caste groups, within a particular society. Stewart (2008) argues that these inequalities culminate in grievances that can ultimately lead to conflict. The thesis supports the claims made by Stewart (2008) and Keen (2012), that conflicts in Africa are often caused by the amalgamation of ethnic, religious, historical and contemporary social economic inequalities. As shall be discussed below, in the context of the DRC, these inequalities provided a legitimate opportunity for Laurent Kabila and his regional partners to challenge the Mobutu regime during the Second War. Furthermore, it is the same inequalities that provided an opportunity for Rwanda to enter the DRC in ‘support’ of their ethnic brothers and sisters.

### **2.3.3 Resource Conflict Argument**

The second related approach pertaining to resource wars is the resource conflict argument, which states that violent conflict can be directly attributed to the struggle for

control and exploitation of resources (Montague, 2002). As such, the availability of a resource is seen as an influential factor in the triggering of conflict. Thus, “grievances and violence associated with resource control and exploitation increase the risk of the onset of large-scale armed conflict” (Le Billion, 2012: 13). This could be due to different ethnic or political factions or individuals with a strong support base seeking to monopolise control over resources to wage conflict against the state or other actors. In this approach, resource control and exploitation is considered to be the primary motivator of the onset of rebellion (Montague, 2002: 112). This is a common argument pertaining to resource wars in Africa where conflicts have proliferated in the political and ideological vacuum resulting from the decline in superpower sponsorship in the post-Cold War era (Kalyvas, 2001: 89). However, such analysis is context specific. *Chapter Three* argues that the DRC has characteristics - including ineffectual governmental institutions – that potentially make it more susceptible to this type of conflict (Kalyvas, 2011; Keen 2003; Le Billion, 2001; Le Billion, 2012). Although *Chapter Three* explores the utility of this perspective in explaining the DRC Second War, it nonetheless posits that the inception of conflict is never attributable to resources alone. As previously indicated it is near impossible to attribute the cause of conflict to an individual factor, as most wars or conflicts are attributable to a combination of interconnected and complex social, economic and political factors many of which are grounded in a particular historical experience. Therefore, the resource conflict argument is limited in its understanding of conflict as it tends to reduce explanations of its occurrence to the struggle for control and exploitation of resources independently of any other contributing factor.

#### **2.3.4 Conflict Resource Argument**

The third related approach pertaining to resource wars is the conflict resource argument advanced by Michael Ross (2004) who argues that sustained conflict is often the result of financial opportunities available during wartime. Thus, trading in lootable resources such as gemstones and drugs during warfare can become so profitable that armed combatants are de-incentivised to pursue a peace settlement (Ross, 2004: 345). However, other factors, including the type of resource, where it is found, and how easily it is exploited can also have a significant bearing on the existence and continuation of conflict (Le Billion, 2012: 13). Such factors are influential in the context of coltan

exploitation in the DRC and shall be returned to in *Chapter Five*, which reflects on the use of coltan by armed combatants, including the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) to finance their war efforts. This perspective is perhaps the most applicable to the DRC Second War, as it does not suggest the reasons for the cause of conflict, but merely explains one of the consequences of having resources in a particular region during conflict.

#### **2.4 Geographical Context: Resource Wars in post-Cold War Africa**

The perceived increase in African conflicts post-Cold War and the simultaneous increase in the strategic importance of resources in the global political economy, forces us to critically investigate the link between the resource endowment of Africa and the prevalence of intra-state and inter-state conflict in post-Cold War Africa. The focus on African resource wars is important, as Africa possesses the majority of the remaining available non-renewable resources in the world. The DRC in particular has some of the continent's greatest resource wealth. It is a major producer of copper, gold, oil and zinc amongst others.

The end of the Cold War was not only a watershed moment in International Relations and security praxis but opened the academic space for consideration of non-traditional military and state-centric security threats, including those pertaining to the environment and, more specifically, natural resources. Norman Myers (1993: 12) highlighted the potential for environmental concerns such as soil erosion and water scarcity to be considered as 'new' security threats. He further added that "while they may not always trigger outright confrontation, they will help destabilize societies in an already unstable world" and thus potentially lead to conflict (Myers, 1993: 20). Furthermore, environmental scarcities create conditions that increase the probability of conflict (Duedney, 1991; Myers, 1989; Myers, 1993). Building on the work of Myers, other scholars (Homer-Dixon, 1993; Homer-Dixon and Levy, 1995) suggest that population growth also has the potential to accelerate environmental and resource depletion and increase scarcity, which could culminate in conflict. Moreover, competition for resources can result in new or exacerbate existing tensions in the international arena, particularly in and between African states whose primary source of wealth is that of natural resources, similar to the argument advanced by neo-

Malthusians (Klare, 2001: 23). Klare (2001: 23) argues that this will become more acute with “the emergence of significant resource shortages, the relentless expansion in worldwide demand and the proliferation of ownership contests”, all of which could lead to conflict. Such theories gained scholarly ground as Mary Kaldor (2012) and Marrack Goulding (1999) drew attention to the changing nature of post-Cold War conflict, from inter-state to intra-state conflict, albeit with complex regional dimensions as exemplified by the conflict in the Great Lakes region.

Political tension over resources between African states and different factions within the different territories were present prior, during and post-World War II. These tensions revolved around the desire to control, exploit and gain access to resources. Nonetheless, during the Cold War, the persistent quest for resources was eclipsed by the political and ideological ‘crisis’ attributed to the rivalry between the United States of America (USA) and The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, later Soviet Union) (Klare, 2001: 25). Not surprisingly, the end of the Cold War allowed these tensions to resurface. Developed states as well as some developing states have the necessary conflict resolution mechanisms to resolve and regulate tensions concerning competition for resources. This is done through market forces and legislation enforced by civil courts and other regulatory bodies. The absence of these mechanisms in the DRC to adjudicate resource disputes arguably increases the possibility of conflict in post-Cold War era because of the absence of superpower direct involvement in Africa (Klare, 2001).

Moreover, disenfranchised and marginalised groups deprived of economic power or groups wishing to halt the elite’s monopoly over lucrative commercial sectors often view engaging in violent conflict as their only means of effecting change (Klare, 2001: 193). However, during the Cold War such group rebellions were often violently suppressed by either the USA or the Soviet Union in proxy wars that advanced a capitalist or communist economic agenda. African governments supported by either superpower were often provided with considerable military and economic aid that allowed them to halt any insurgent movement within their borders attributed to resource concerns. For example, the USA overtly assisted the then president of Zaire Mobutu Sese Seko to suppress separatist movements in the Shaba region of the DRC in March 1977-June 1978 (Emizet and Ndikumana, 2003: 13). Thus, with the end of the Cold

War and the significantly diminished military and monetary assistance from the superpowers, wars were resources play a pivotal role have been able to occur as the absence of external super power support created a power vacuum, especially given the limited capability of African states. *Chapter Four* shall argue that in the contemporary era it is in the interest of most western governments to abstain from intervening in African conflicts attributed to resources. The fragmented *de facto* sovereign states (often the consequence of conflict amongst other factors) provide favourable conditions for multinational corporations to embark on resource extraction, as opposed to dealing with legitimate governments during peacetime (Montague, 2002: 104).

James Fearon and David Laitin (2003, 75) dispute the commonly held perception that the rise in African conflicts was the result of the end of the Cold War. Rather, they advocate that a significant portion of the conflicts that were on-going post-Cold War were a result of an array of factors and minor conflicts that came to be after the end of World War II. Thus, they assert that a significant portion of these conflicts attributed to the end of the Cold War were already underway prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union (Fearon and Laitin, 2003: 75).

Abiodun Alao (2007:4) argues that the dramatic rise in the accessibility of light weapons has aggravated resource war conflicts post-Cold War in Africa. Moreover, gaining control over resource rich territory and extracting funds from resources became one of the best alternatives to obtain funds from warring groups, after the halting of funds attributed to the expiration of Cold War sponsorship. Alao (2007) states that,

*More often than not, natural resource issues form core considerations in conflicts that are attributable to other causes. Issues such as ethnicity and religion (in cases of internal conflicts) or boundary and ideological disagreements (in cases of external conflicts) are some of the subterfuges often exploited to conceal the crucial aspects of natural resource considerations (Alao, 2007: 4).*

A key feature in the resource wars narratives is that resource wars post-Cold War can be attributed to the absence of natural resource governance. Alao (2007) argues that the unequal and sometimes absent distribution of resource wealth by African governments is a key component leading to resource wars. Furthermore, the inability of African states to effectively utilise their resource wealth can lead to grievances due to the unbalanced resource wealth distribution (Aloe, 2007; Keen, 2012; Gleditsch, 1998). Additionally, Alao (2007) asserts that local peculiarities and idiosyncrasies are

pivotal determinants on how the relationship between resources and conflict will transpire. He places an emphasis on the different systems of governance and how their efficiency or inefficiency acts as a mitigating or aggravating factor in the inception of conflicts where resource are attributed a role. In short, “it is the institutional mechanisms and the political will embedded in the management of natural resources that connect it to conflict, and not the scarcity or abundance or value of a particular natural resource” (Alao, 2007: 31). In line with Alao’s claim, this thesis argues that the assumption that the quality and quantity of the resources in Africa are a cause of tensions that may lead to conflict is misleading. Rather (Alao, 2007:32) the quality of government structures governing particular resources are more important determinants. *Chapter Three* makes the claim that the DRC’s weak state structures and its neopatrimonial governance has led to these tensions. Sources of resource governance identified by Alao (2007) include national, regional and global governance institutions.

*The national covers all the legal and cultural issues that govern the management of natural resources; the regional entails the role of international organizations in the conduct of affairs of its members over issues that concern the management of natural resources; while the international covers the activities of key actors such as the World Bank, United Nations, development agencies, international NGOs, and others, on issues relating to the management of natural resources.’(Alao, 2007: 31-32).*

This above extract shows the interdependence of the global political economy and highlights the important role that external actors play in African resource wars and how this persists in part because African states operate within regional and international political economic structures in which the full dynamics are beyond their immediate control. As such, an effective resolution of the conflict in the DRC also requires the involvement of the regional and international actors who are involved in the conflict to be active participants in peace negotiations.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted that all three contemporary resource wars arguments offer useful, albeit limited, lenses through which to understand the DRC Second War. The analysis of the resource wars debates in this chapter has highlighted how resources can play a central role in conflicts as either the triggering or exacerbating factor in conflicts. Further, the chapter recognised the importance of the resource curse debate advanced by Collier and Hoeffler (1998) because it highlights the possible linkages

between primary commodity reliance and the risk of civil wars. In addition, the resource conflict argument is useful for its explanation of how the inception of conflict could be directly attributed to resources. However, its limitation lies in its failure to recognise the convergence of factors which may result in conflict. Ultimately, however, the conflict resource argument, which considers the role of a given resource as a ‘funder’ of conflict, is deemed to be the most useful lens through which to reflect on the role of coltan in the DRC Second War. Significantly, however, the role of any resource in stimulating or sustaining conflict cannot be understood independently of the localised context or, in the contemporary era, global political and economic structures and processes. This is precisely because resources such as coltan are of strategic importance and are a value commodity sought after by those who do not have it in their possession.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **The Historical and Regional Context of the Democratic Republic of Congo and its Conflicts**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter will explore the history of exploitation pertaining to the resource wealth of the DRC, laying the foundation for the exploration of the role assigned to coltan in the DRC Second War discussed in *Chapter Five*. The regional context of the DRC and notably its geographical location within the Great Lakes region of Africa shall be documented, as the DRC is not only centrally located in the Great Lakes but is pivotal

to the on-going conflicts in the region. Furthermore, the regional context of DRC conflicts as well as the DRC Second War (1998-2003), which had inter-state and regional dimensions, shall be discussed. This chapter argues that the DRC Second War cannot be understood independently of broader regional political processes and the history of exploitation both within the DRC and the broader region. This is significant as it highlights how the DRC's natural resources have and continue to play a significant role in the experiences of social and environmental exploitation and in determining the prospects for peace and stability both within the DRC and in the wider region. Furthermore, it shall demonstrate that the political elite and external actors have always used their political power to exploit the resource wealth of the country. This highlights that the exploitation of coltan in the DRC Second War, which will be explored in *Chapter Five*, is a continuation of resource exploitation endemic in the DRC from the 1800s (ICG, 2000: 1).

### **3.2 The history of exploitation in the Democratic Republic of Congo**

The DRC, formerly known as Zaire, has an abundance of natural resources including tantalum, niobium, tin ores, tropical hardwoods and coffee. It is also a major producer of copper, gold, oil and zinc and has 30% of the world's diamond reserves (Draulans and Van Krunkelsven, 2002: 35). In addition, it has a significant amount of bauxite, which is the principle ore used in the production of aluminium (Samset, 2002: 468). The Congo Basin also supports the richest and most diverse species in tropical Africa and is one of the three remaining significant tropical wilderness regions on Earth (Draulans and Van Krunkelsven, 2002: 35). It is estimated that 80% of the Earth's tantalum – a metal derivative of coltan – is found in Africa and of that, over 80% of the world's reserves are found in the DRC. In particular, within the DRC, the Eastern Region is the location endowed with the most resource wealth. Although not a central concern of this thesis, it is still nonetheless important to recognise that the struggle for control of natural resource in the Eastern Region of the DRC has resulted in widespread and ongoing environmental degradation which is itself a cause of insecurity and potential conflict (Lind and Sturman, 2002: 180).

The history of violence and social exploitation in the DRC is undoubtedly tied to this vast resource wealth. This was evident during the brutal reign of King Leopold II

who exploited both the people and natural resources of what was then called the Congo Free State (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1998: 7) in order to augment his own personal wealth. King Leopold's exploitation of the DRC's mineral wealth was unrestrained; he used forced labour camps to exploit ivory, timber and rubber. It is estimated that more than ten million people were killed during his 'ownership' of the Congo Free State although the exploitation continued when the Belgium state took over management of the colony. The ivory, timber and rubber labour camps found in the DRC exhibited some of the most inhumane and brutal working conditions as many individuals died "succumbing to accidents, dysentery, smallpox, beriberi, and malaria, all exacerbated by bad food and relentless floggings" (Hochschild, 1999: 144).

Having witnessed first-hand these atrocities, Edmund Dene Morel, a British writer and journalist initially employed by a shipping company called Elder Dempster and working in collaboration with British consul Roger Casement, established the Congo Reform Association (CRA). The purpose was to request that the British government take action to end the atrocities committed in the Congo Free State under Leopold's rule (Hawkins, 1981: 65). They recognised that the systematic looting of the resource wealth of the Congo Free State sanctioned by King Leopold II was done principally to expand his own commercial empire. Privy to information pertaining to the trade of timber, ivory and rubber Morel and Casement found that the Congolese inhabitants received virtually nothing for their labour. They exposed the commercial enterprise of King Leopold II as slavery of the harshest form, where Africans were forcibly removed from their land and coerced to extract timber and rubber without receiving any kind of remuneration. This was over 75 years after the abolition of the slave trade (Hochschild, 1999: 144, Hawkins, 1981: 66). Documenting their findings in newspapers, notably in the *West African Mail*, where Morel was the editor, (Louis, 1964) they exposed the violent strategies used to compel indigenous Africans to work, including the abduction of women, children and chiefs and the burning of villages and crops. In addition, it was not uncommon for the limbs of resistant workers and hostages –including those of women and children – to be cut off by the Force Publique soldiers. In his campaigning to end the inhumane treatment of the Congolese indigenous people, Morel wrote, "I had stumbled upon a secret society of murderers with a King for a croniman" (Hochschild, 1999: 145). The killing of Congolese indigenous people was of genocidal proportions and "When a village or a district failed to supply its quota of

rubber or fought back against the regime, Force Publique soldiers or rubber company sentries often killed everyone they could find” (Hochschild, 1999: 186). Moreover, often people were forced to work in slave chains, the depravity in which people lived and worked resulted in some succumbing to starvation and diseases. A Belgium scholar by the name of Jules Marchal made a conservative estimate of the profit King Leopold II accrued from the Congo Free State in his lifetime. He suggests that the King amassed profits totalling around 220 million francs, which translates to approximately 1.1 billion United States dollars today (Hochschild, 1999: 228). As indicated above, the exploitation of the Congo and its people continued under the auspice of the Belgium state after it seized control of the colony from the King. It was not until 1960 that the people of the Congo gained independence from Belgium rule (Askin and Collins, 1993: 75).

Following the murder of the first democratically elected Prime Minister of the DRC, Patrice Lumumba in 1961, and the power vacuum that ensued, Mobuto Sese Seko, took control and became the country’s leader in 1965, renaming it Zaire in the process. During his reign, Mobuto, like the Belgians before him, continued to pillage the resources of the country. Accumulating a personal wealth reported to be in excess of \$4 billion by 1997 (Dowden, 2008: 367), Mobuto and his cronies looted the DRC’s revenue and state entities to the point of state disintegration and bankruptcy. Mobuto accrued this fortune through a system of neopatrimonialism defined as “state-society complexes where the machinery of the modern bureaucratic state is infused with ideas about patronage and clientalism. Neopatrimonial regimes are hybrid, uncertain, unstable and usually authoritarian systems of governance” (Williams, 2011: 55, Van Wyk, 2007: 15). Acquiring huge stakes in private corporations operating within the DRC territory, there was virtually no separation between the state’s assets and Mobuto Sese Seko’s. Philosopher Ibn Khaldun gives an aphorism that describes Mobuto Sese Seko’s modus operandi during his tenure in power, “Those who are conquered, always want to imitate the conqueror in his main characteristics—in his clothing, his crafts, and in all his distinctive traits and customs” (Hochschild, 1999: 259). The Mobuto regime was similar to that of King Leopold’s regime, both these leaders exploited the mineral wealth of the country and caused immense human suffering and loss of life during their tenures in power (Marable, 1987: 7). By 1993 the Zairian state functions under Mobuto’s government were non-existent and public services had dwindled to

obscurity (Hochschild, 1999: 250, Schatzberg, 1997: 3). The exodus of Belgian personnel after independence resulted in a professional vacuum in the state and private institutions of the DRC. The Congolese were largely ill equipped to operate the various levers of government resulting in the disintegration of the systems of government from 1960. During Mobutu's tenure in power he did not resolve this institutional and professional crisis (Hochschild, 1999: 250, Schatzberg, 1997: 3).

### **3.3 Regional context of the Democratic Republic of Congo conflicts**

The DRC is located in the Great Lakes region of Africa, which also includes the countries of Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and South Sudan. As the product of the 1885 European colonial partitioning of Africa, the region's borders were determined with little regard for geographical or social and ethnic factors, creating conditions that have made the borders of the Great Lakes states a permanent source of insecurity and conflict. A significant outcome of the partitioning of Africa was the coerced dispersion of large ethnic groups into more than one country. European conceptions of what constitutes a nation-state were also super-imposed on to existing social and political relations within states. The border-zones of many Great Lakes states have thus proven to be highly porous with civilian and rebel populations frequently crossing international boundaries. This porosity is both part and product of the history of political instability and inter and intra-state conflict that has marred the region since independence (Githaiga, 2011: 1). In fact, conflicts have not only embroiled multiple regional state and non-state actors but international ones too. The Great Lakes conflicts are caused by a complex array of issues including the inefficacy of states to provide basic human rights for their citizens and diasporic communities disrupting the ethnic dimensions of a given territory (Githaiga, 2011: 1). However, ethnic grievances have become an avenue of justification for going to conflict. Moreover, recent conflicts in Africa have found an expression in so-called ethnic conflicts (Daley, 2006; Shah, 2009). This thesis posits that resources exacerbate ethnic conflicts, as often these legitimate issues are used as a political tool to embark on resource exploitation by actor's emanating from outside and within the DRC.

The successful struggle for independence by African countries resulted in decolonisation. This meant that African states were given sovereignty to govern

themselves. Nonetheless, the precarious situation associated with the partitioning of Africa that was subdued during colonial rule re-emerged and traditional conceptions of loyalty attributed to kith and kinship became prominent yet again. (Mbemba, 2010: 15). For example, prior to colonialism, there was no racial categorisation of Hutus and Tutsi's in Rwanda or elsewhere in the Great Lakes region. Rather the distinction was one of class and members of the Hutu class had the ability to move up into the Tutsi class and Tutsi's could potentially move down into the Hutu class. This was dependant on numerous variables including and not limited to the accumulation of wealth and the status one had built in his or her lifetime (Sanders, 1969: 6). However, following the partitioning of Africa, colonial authorities in Rwanda systematically divided these groups into ethnic groups based on the physical appearance of the people. They favoured the taller and lighter skinned minority Tutsi class as descendants of Caucasians and identified the darker skinned Hutus as the indigenous African natives. Having racialised the distinction in an effective strategy of divide and rule, the colonial authorities legally sanctioned the distinction. As a result of this meticulously engineered plan by the colonisers, the Tutsi (a minority) ruled over the Hutus (majority), and were given a constructed superior status continuously reinforced by the colonial authorities through preferential treatment (Sanders, 1969: 8). "Although invented, this differentiation hardened with the colonial rule of oppression and exploitation. It rigidified and reified the roles of the two communities in the colonial political economy, crystallising differences into cultural and political divides" (Nabudere, 2004: 18). Ethnicity, one of the many legacies of colonial rule, has never been resolved in the Great Lakes region as aforementioned grievances have found continued expression in ethnic tensions and conflict.

The partitioning of Africa was sanctified by the Organisation for African Union (OAU) Treaty in 1963. As such, the colonial constructed borders that polarised stable communities and dislocated existing ethnic and cultural relationships in the region remain largely unchanged (Mbemba, 2010: 5). It is perhaps therefore unsurprising that tensions attributed to these constructed borders remain a constant source of insecurity, as individuals often identify with their nation-state, but also with their kith and kin from whom they have been systematically disconnected (Nabudere, 2004). The Interahamwe and the Banyamalunge are examples of groups who identify with their

nation-state and also with their kith and kin in the Great Lakes region. The significance of this will be returned to later in the chapter.

The Great Lakes region is poverty stricken due to a variety of interconnected factors which include the legacies of slavery and colonialism as well as, conflicts and neo-colonialism. Neo-colonialism denotes the economic, political and cultural domination of a given territory by external actors without direct political control, as was apparent during colonialism (Heywood, 2011: 182). As with the DRC, other countries in the Great Lakes are endowed with valuable natural resources and experience similarly low social and economic development. Moreover, their governments have weak institutional and administrative capacities that are persistently impaired by corruption. In addition, there is a lack of accountability in governance and states are entrenched in the neo-patrimonial system of governance (Mbemba, 2010: 9). For example, Burundi and Rwanda have experienced protracted violence for over two decades. As a result of this insecurity the human rights of citizens in this region are rarely assured. This protracted violence on a regional scale has created an ongoing humanitarian crisis, which undermines the long-term security of the region's states and people. This is evidenced by the 800 000 or more Tutsi inhabitants of Rwanda massacred by the Interahamwe, a Hutu militia group, in the 1994 genocide in the country (Mbemba, 2010: 11). The Great Lakes states exhibit an overabundance of elements, as previously indicated, that can create disorder in the state and have resulted in a plethora of socio-economic problems which include: entrenched, imagined or real ethnic divisions, neo-colonialism, neo-patrimonial regimes, undemocratically elected governments, and the unequal distribution of resource wealth exemplified by the resource exploitation undertaken by King Leopold II and Mobuto Sese Seko (Mbemba, 2010: 11). Furthermore, the easy availability of small arms in the post-Cold War era has further exacerbated armed conflict. In the contemporary politics of the Great Lake states, ethnic disputes are often settled with violence as opposed to peaceful means as evidenced by the conflict in Rwanda.

The involvement of external actors in the security realities of the Great Lake states of Africa will be critically explored in *Chapter Four* and *Five*. However, it is worth noting here that the justification given by external actor's for their involvement in the various conflicts is not always consistent with their actions on the ground. For

example, their peace-building initiatives are often at odds with activities, including the extraction and exploitation of resources that serve an aspect of their national interest. The insistence of external actors to engage in the provision of security in the region is often motivated by the access to resource wealth in any one of the countries of the Great Lakes. Moreover, former colonial powers continue to involve themselves in the internal politics of these states through the provision of military and financial assistance with the primary goal of maintaining their influence in the region (Mbemba, 2010: 13). Bordering nine countries including Angola, Rwanda and Uganda, and with a history of political instability and internal conflict, the DRC is not only centrally located but is pivotal to the on-going conflicts in the region. This is not least because successive governments in the DRC have proven inept at controlling rebel and insurgent activity within their borders. This has enabled a host of internal and external political and military factions to exploit the country's natural resources in pursuit of their own political and economic agendas; a reality particularly in the Eastern Region where the DRC shares common borders with Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda (Weiss, 2000: 3-5).

### **3.4 The Interahamwe and the Banyamalunge**

The Banyamalunge are Congolese ethnic Tutsi's who have inhabited the South Kivu in the Eastern Region of the DRC from as early as the 1880's. The South Kivu region lies very close to the Burundi-Congo-Rwanda border. The Banyamalunge played a pivotal role in the build-up to the DRC First War of the 1990s, which will be noted shortly (Nabudere, 2004). After the 1994 victory of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) led by the Tutsi minority in Rwanda, the Interahamwe fled from the country and entered into the Eastern Region of the DRC. However, there was also an exodus of Hutu civilians who were not part of the belligerents of the genocide that fled and pursued sanctuary in the refugee camps inside the DRC Eastern Region (Emizet and Ndikumana, 2003: 23). During the Rwandan genocide the killings of Tutsi's and a minority of moderate Hutu's and Tutsi sympathisers led to the flight of people into neighbouring countries, notably the Eastern Region of the DRC. After the RPF victory, the Hutu exodus into the DRC refugee camps during this period intensified ethnic hostilities within the DRC Eastern Region not least because members of the Interahamwe militia group also claimed to be refugees when they entered the Eastern Region of the DRC (Emizet and Ndikumana, 2003: 23). This exodus into the DRC Eastern Region became problematic as some of the inhabitants of the DRC Eastern

Region, notably the Banyamulenge and the Tutsi refugees who arrived during the genocide, felt threatened by the influx of Hutus in the region and subsequently ethnic confrontation outside of Rwandan territory took place. The Banyamulenge issue can be viewed as the avenue initially utilised by Rwanda to justify its involvement in the DRC during the 1990s.

In addition, actions by the transitional government of the DRC in 1995 further exacerbated the situation, not least the stripping of the Banyamulenge of their Congolese nationality. Refusing to accept this legislative move, the Banyamulenge petitioned the Rwandan government for assistance, now ruled by the RPF and Tutsi minority. It intervened on the behalf of the Congolese Tutsi's. It arguably used this as a further pre-text for directing its military forces against the perceived potential security threat that could emanate from the DRC refugee camps housing Hutu militias and civilians. As such the Banyamulenge issue can be viewed as the legitimate avenue initially utilised by Rwanda to justify its involvement in the DRC during the 1990s (Emizet and Ndikumana, 2003: 22).

The inability of the DRC state to exercise a monopoly of violence within its borders allowed and exacerbated external conflicts to be exported into the DRC. As previously discussed, the DRC's political, economic and governmental structures are weak, and power is highly centralised. Moreover, the construction of ethnicity is often a key contributing factor in the incumbent leader's distribution of power and public goods. This type of decay in the equitable distribution of power and public goods, where goods are rather distributed based on the ethnicity of the citizens, has culminated in an unequal and uneven distribution of the resource wealth in the DRC (Mbemba, 2010: 18). The Banyamalunge have felt aggrieved in the DRC and were marginalised to the point where their citizenship was almost removed. As a result, in the DRC First War (1996-1997) the marginalised Banyamalunge had legitimate grievances against the Congolese government, which perhaps carried over into the DRC Second War. The RPF, who came into power in Rwanda in 1994, and their military wing, the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), aligned themselves with the disenfranchised Banyamalunge in the DRC. Nonetheless, *Chapter Four* and *Five* will show that the postulated stance of the Rwandan government's involvement in the DRC Second War, which includes participation in the DRC on the grounds of not only limiting the activity of the

Interahamwe within the DRC but to also defend the rights of the Banyamalunge, was a farce (although it was perhaps true of their participation in the First War). In addition, it shall argue that the Rwandan government embarked on massive resource exploitation, particularly of coltan, in the DRC Eastern Region during the DRC Second War. Thus, the ethnic tensions created a shroud and space in which natural resources could be exploited because of the legitimacy it gave Rwanda to enter the DRC.

It must be noted that the Rwandan Tutsi minority's assumption of power under the auspice of the RPF was arguably the direct result of the Tutsi diaspora mobilising in Uganda. A move supported by the then Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. The diaspora first launched attacks against the then President of Rwanda Juvenal Habyarimana's and his regime in October 1990. However, their attacks failed to achieve a regime change in Rwanda in no small part because Juvenal Habyarimana was aided by, amongst others, Mobutu in Zaire (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1998). Thus, the RPF had prior engagement with the DRC government before the Rwandan genocide began. In addition, this documents the close relationship that existed between Uganda and Rwanda during this time. Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja (1998) makes the assertion that the unseating of Mobutu was a move led by Rwanda and its continental alliances including Uganda. Furthermore, this alliance needed a Congolese to legitimise its efforts. It appointed Joseph Kabila, a retired former Congolese revolutionary turned businessman, to lead this coalition (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1998: 13). It could be argued that "Mobutu's fall and Kabila's rise to power in Kinshasa is a direct consequence of the RPF to drive to destroy the UNHCR refugee camps in Kivu, together with the support of the ex-FAR and the Hutu extremist militia was receiving from the Mobutu regime" (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1998: 8). Further, according to Dani Wadada Nabudere (2004)

*A new era in the politics of Africa had come into being. War became not just a politics by other means, but more significantly, it became a politics of export of internal conflicts to neighbouring countries by all means. This form of war enabled countries with internal conflicts to project those conflicts into a single, generalised 'theatre of war', housed in the DRC (Nabudere, 2004: 29).*

### **3.5 The Democratic Republic of Congo Second War (1998-2003)**

It can be argued that natural resources have been central to the on-going conflict in the DRC, including the two major wars of the 1990's that embroiled a number of

neighbouring states within its territory. The DRC First War began in August 1996 when the former rebel leader Laurent Kabila of the *Parti de la Revolution Populaire* (PRP) staged a rebellion under the auspice of the Alliance of Democratic Liberation Forces (AFDL) in the Eastern Region against the incumbent President Mobutu Sese Seko. With the military support of Rwanda and Uganda, whose governments were under threat from insurgents based in DRC territories, Kabila took the capital Kinshasa and overthrew Mobutu Sese Seko. He was sworn into power on the 29<sup>th</sup> May 1997 (Emizet and Ndikumana, 2003: 16). However, the governments of Rwanda and Uganda were dissatisfied with Kabila's efforts to effectively eliminate the bases for insurgency movements in the DRC against their respective governments (Weiss, 2000: 10). Consequently, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 1998 the DRC Second War began and on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August the Rwandan and Ugandan backed military wing of the anti-Kabila revolt, the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD), was formed (Weiss, 2000: 14). A protracted and bloody conflict ensued and despite the support of Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, Kabila was assassinated on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January 2001. However, as the RCD were unable to secure power, Kabila's son, Joseph, took over the leadership of a now highly fragmented country with foreign troops and rebel forces occupying key territories including the Eastern Region (Emizet and Ndikumana, 2003: 23). Returned to in *Chapter Five*, the exploitation of resources in the Eastern Region, and particularly coltan, helped finance the war efforts of many of the actors involved in this conflict.

When Laurent Kabila led the rebel army there was a general consensus that the conflict was a rebellion waged against the tyrannical rule of Mobutu Sese Seko and his treatment of the Banyamalunge, who had powerful regional allies. According to Dani Nabudere (2003), this perception was widely shared by all countries involved (Nabudere, 2003: 2). Nonetheless, in August 1998 when Uganda and Rwandan invaded the DRC and helped establish the RCD, the motives for the Second War expressed by the various actors and their actions on the ground were incoherent at best (Montague, 2002: 112). *Chapter Four* and *Five*, using Rwanda and Uganda examples, shall highlight how the vast invasions of the rebel militias in the Eastern Region of the DRC during the DRC Second War can be viewed as invasions by the various actors to obtain strategically important resources. During this period coltan was arguably the most important ore in the world. Coltan became indispensable to the mass production of hi-tech goods and intricate medical equipment. Consequently, there was a significant

growth in global demand for coltan due to the use of tantalum capacitors in electronic devices including mobile phones, video cameras, notebook computers, pagers, automotive electronics, PlayStations and other portable electronic devices (Burge and Hayes, 2003: 23). As production of these commodities expanded, so too did the demand for coltan (Essick, 2001: 1). As such, the DRC Second War is distinct from other conflicts because of the international and economic significance of coltan and other resources during this period.

The DRC Second War has been labelled Africa's First Continental War due to the scale and scope of the conflict, including the number of state and non-state actors involved in a military capacity or in the peace negotiation efforts. Of the nine countries that share a common border with the DRC, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda do so along the eastern regional side of the country (Weiss, 2000: 3-5). Arguably, motivated by political and economic interests including the protection of their sovereignty and their struggle for the control of the DRC's natural resources, many of the actors engaged in the conflict contributed in various ways to its protraction. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Report of The Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of Congo compiled by Danino et al. (2003) concluded that the Second War was about access to exploit or control trade of coltan, diamonds, copper, cobalt and gold. The report concluded that the exploitation and systematic looting of these aforementioned resources was a result of the participation of the international private sector, neighbouring governments, and rebel forces.

However, this exploitation was made easier by the condition of DRC governmental structures. It can be argued that the DRC does not constitute as a state as it is only recognised as one based on juridical principals (such as having a defined territory) as opposed to having empirical components of statehood, which denote a state exists by virtue of performing key functions within its defined territory (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982: 3). The DRC has been deconstructed around several de facto sovereign states within its territory. These de facto sovereign states are easy targets for not only rebel militias from within the DRC state, but also from external actors, such as the RPF. As a result of the porosity of the DRC borders; the events within neighbouring states that triggered mass refugee flight across international borders and the intermixed ethnic

and cultural groupings in the Great Lake region of Africa, any resolution to the conflict or reconciliation arguably requires all the countries involved to be part of the solution (Nabudere, 2004: 2). During, prior and post the Second War, the fragmentation of the DRC created and enabled an environment for the economic exploitation of its resource wealth by external regional actors evidenced by the control of different parts of DRC territory by varying groups during this period.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

The exploration of the history of exploitation pertaining to the resource wealth of the DRC and the simultaneous analysis of the regional context of the DRC helped identify that the DRC conflicts of the 1990s had inter-state and regional dimensions. In line with Nabudere's (2004) argument, the conflicts largely found expression in the historical ethnic tensions prevalent in the Great Lakes Region and were compounded by the economic incentives of capturing resources by rebels and individual states, whether working concurrently or exclusively. Thus, the DRC conflicts of the 1990s were international conflicts that were fought within the borders of the DRC (Nabudere, 2004). This also highlighted how the motives expressed by the varying actors for their participation in the DRC Second War and their actions on the ground were incoherent at best (Montague, 2002: 112). Moving forward, *Chapter Four* and *Five* will use Rwanda and Uganda as examples of how regional incursions by rebel militias in the Eastern Region of the DRC during the DRC Second War can be viewed as invasions by the various actors to obtain strategically important resources, notably coltan.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **The Economic Significance of Coltan**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

By analysing their involvement in the DRC, this chapter shall argue that the regional actors involved in the DRC's Second War, notably Rwanda and Uganda accrued economic benefits from their participation in the conflict. The purpose is to highlight the economic benefits they accrued as a justification for their ongoing involvement in

the Eastern Region. Furthermore, this chapter will demonstrate that coltan is also a noteworthy international commodity. Therefore, an understanding of the Second War and its perpetuation must be cognisant of the implications of global trade demands and the role of the international private sector. The chapter further argues that the DRC coltan mining industry and the DRC's weak state structures also informed the role of coltan in the conflict.

#### **4.2 The market significance of coltan**

Coltan is one of the resources linked to the DRC Second War and the DRC Eastern Region in particular, as large coltan deposits are to be found in the area. Otherwise known as columbite-tantalite, coltan is a combination of two mineral ores and tantalum is a metal extracted from these ores after processing (Nest, 2011: 3). It is this tantalum which has become an important commodity, particularly in the communication and technology sectors due to its unique combination of characteristics. These include its ability to conduct electricity, its high melting temperature and anti-corrosive qualities (Nest, 2011: 8). Therefore, and as previously indicated, coltan has become indispensable to the mass production of hi-technology goods and intricate medical equipment such as x-ray film, surgical instruments, hip replacements, orthopaedic implants and heart pace-makers (Burge and Hayes, 2003: 23, Nest, 2011: 9). There has been a significant growth in the global demand for coltan due to the use of tantalum capacitors in electronic devices (Burge and Hayes, 2003: 23, Nest, 2011: 9). As production of these commodities expands so too does the demand for tantalum, giving it its nickname 'magic dust' in the electronics and high technology sectors (Essick, 2001: 1). In the absence of a comparable product the demand for coltan is likely to continue to grow exponentially in the foreseeable future given the popularity and expanding markets in such goods (Mantz, 2008: 44).

Michael Klare (2002) makes a valid claim that the global market's demand for a particular resource or mineral has the ability to proliferate conflict in a region where there is a prevalence of that particular resource or mineral. As previously indicated, the global consumption of products that contain coltan is extremely high. There is a global market for coltan – a part of which is regulated and taxed, such as in Australia. The DRC is a major contributor to this global market, yet production is not regulated. This

is in part because it comes from a politically unstable and volatile region where the state does not have effective control of its resources. The following section shall argue that this is part of the attraction of DRC coltan for a number of actors.

### **4.3 Suitable conditions for exploitation:**

#### **4.3.1 The Democratic Republic of Congo's coltan mining industry**

The significance of coltan in armed conflict is that it can be mined with relative ease, using shovels and sieves (Burge and Hayes, 2003: 11). This makes it a highly accessible resource. Moreover, there is an absence of a central and regulated market for the mineral. In addition, value of exchange is subject to the dealer at a given transaction (Burge and Hayes, 2003: 11). In such contexts, the lack of a central authority to regulate prices makes it easy for 'predator economics' to emerge. This is a situation where conflict becomes inseparable from the pursuit of resource control by different actors, including rebel groups, as the illegal exploitation of resources become primary sources of revenue for groups engaged in conflict (Samset, 2002: 3). Abiodun Alao (2007) argues that the absence of good governance and management of natural resources is one of the largest contributors to conflict in natural resource rich African states. Moreover, he argues that conflicts in Africa over natural resources could emerge if a country's citizens try and exert control over resources that they had previously not had any control over (Alao, 2007). Conflict could arise if the existing structures in a country are seen as an inappropriate avenue to address citizens resource concerns. As previously mentioned in *Chapter Three*, since the rule of King Leopold II the political elite of the DRC have largely profited from the resources of the DRC at the expense of the masses. Thus, consecutive leaderships have proven ineffectual at addressing the resource needs or equitable distribution of resources to the citizenry opening a space for groups to seek redistributive justice or control of the resources independently of the state, and on occasion, with force.

According to Jeffrey Mantz (2008: 44) the coltan mining system is a largely disorganised system of production in the DRC Eastern Region. Nearly all contemporary coltan mining operations in the DRC are anarchistic, entrepreneurial and are principally controlled by regional militias. Therefore, the accessibility of coltan is a variable that must be studied when analysing conflict in the DRC Eastern Region. The way coltan is

produced and traded in the DRC Eastern Region generated definite prospects for profit making by armed militias, as its accessibility makes it a ready source of financing. Moreover, as an unbranded generic product, it is near impossible to ascertain the origins of coltan (Nest, 2011; Jackson, 2009). Consequently, coltan originating in the DRC can easily be sold as coltan originating from elsewhere. Combined, these characteristics make coltan production during conflict advantageous for rebel forces who can easily exploit the resource and disguise its origins when trading (Nest, 2011: 69). Moreover, as an unbranded generic product, international companies can evade criminal charges associated with the illegal or conflict-based exploitation of such resources. This chapter argues that the international private sectors purchasing of coltan funded the military operations of the actors involved in the DRC Second War, notably Rwanda and Uganda (Jackson, 2009; Nest, 2011). The status quo of this trade appears to have offered a 'win-win' situation for these parties, with little consideration of the broader social and security implications for the state and people of the DRC and the wider region.

Australia is a coltan producing country. However, Australia's coltan production, sale and distribution is extremely different to that of the DRC's. The Australian coltan industry is stable. This is perhaps due to the Australian coltan industry's use of forward contracts juxtaposed against the chaotic nature of spot buying of coltan in the DRC coltan industry. In the Australian coltan industry, coltan traders and producers have pre-existing legally binding contracts to regulate the production and trade of coltan. Pre-existing contracts diminish the fluctuation price of coltan. Furthermore, the DRC's coltan industry operates largely on a cash basis, and commodities bought in the DRC's 'spot buying' system are paid for in cash. Cash transactions can easily be concealed, as they do not leave a paper trail (Nest, 2011: 57). As such, the characteristics of the DRC's coltan mining operation, which include the lack of a central market to regulate prices, prices determined at an individual transaction basis and operations based on cash transactions, all culminate in making the coltan industry in the DRC appealing to anyone that has power, influence and control of a region to easily exploit it for their own ends. Arguably, therefore, the way coltan is produced and traded in the DRC's Eastern Region generates definite prospects for profit-making for armed militias, given the evidence presented above.

### **4.3.2 The DRC's weak state structures**

Max Weber defines a state as, “a corporate group that has compulsory jurisdiction, exercises continuous organization, and a monopoly of force, over a territory and its population, including all action taking place in its jurisdiction” (Jackson and Roseberg, 1982: 2). The DRC's statehood falls short of Weber's state criteria, yet it is still internationally recognised as a state. Nonetheless, this is a western conception of a state, and often African states exist outside of this framework. This conception of the state is challenged by Jonathan Hill (2005) who argues that African state identities are constructed using a western model that attributes negative aspects of statehood to Africa and positive aspects of statehood to western states. However, this argument still has utility as an analytical tool when analysing the institutions of the DRC state. As previously indicated, broader geopolitical and historical forces led to the DRC state structures being in their current form and these need to be addressed to prevent the perpetuation of a blame narrative.

According to Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg (1982) a state fulfills the criteria if it meets both the empirical and the juridical components of statehood. Broadly defined juridical principals of statehood denote a state's legitimacy based on a demarcated territory accepted and reinforced by other states and international organisations, such as the United Nations (UN) and regional blocs, such the South African Development Community (SADC) and European Union (EU). Empirical components of statehood denote a state's existence due to its performance of key functions within its territory (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982: 3). Applying this definition to the DRC state, it becomes apparent that the DRC is recognised as a state based on juridical principals, such as, having a defined – albeit contested – territory. This is a legalised approach, which is endorsed by international organisations such as the UN and emphasised by the concept of state rights, which proclaim that a state is an entity that has the right to govern and command control in a defined territory (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982: 3). The DRC state falls short on the empirical components of statehood, which identify a legitimate state as a region with an effective government with centralised and administrative organs that is legitimate in the eyes of the public (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982: 5). The DRC's lack of empirical statehood is underpinned by the entrenched patrimonial system of governance and the ability of even the smallest of militia groups to destabilise its government (GSDRC, 2013).

The military and police services of the DRC are fragile and ineffectual. As previously discussed, these state entities lack the proficiencies to effectively subdue various armed factions, such as the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD), who are prepared to use violence. Moreover, the DRC does not exercise a monopoly of violence within its borders denoting its existence as a juridical state (Nest, 2011: 67). As a consequence of the weakness of these essential state forces in the DRC, neighbouring forces, such as those from Rwanda and Uganda, are not discouraged from invading DRC territory. Additionally, the absence of effective state policing structures enables local armed groups, particularly those aided by external actors, to embark on coltan exploitation. As such, the thesis posits that the DRC's statehood is legitimised through recognition from other international actors who recognise that the DRC has legal territorial boundaries (Nkiwane, 2001). Furthermore, as previously discussed in *Chapter Three*, African states are further destabilised by the existence of traditional cultural ethnicities that overlap more than one country (Migdal, 2004). An example is the Banyamalunge who form part of the greater Banyarwanda ethnicity. According to Mahmood Mamdani (2002)

*The Banyarwanda are first and foremost a cultural identity. Speakers of a common language, Kinyarwanda, they live both within Rwanda and outside its boundaries, particularly in Uganda and Congo. Together, they number roughly twelve to fourteen million persons. As such, they are East Africa's largest ethnic group (Mamdani, 2002: 494).*

This above quotation by Mamdani (2002) highlights the complexity of the African state. Recalling the discussion of the Banyamalunge in *Chapter Three*, these groups are similar to that of the Banyarwanda and the Kinyarwanda in that they live both within and outside the DRC, most notably in Uganda and Rwanda. This dual identity complicates allegiances as they are often both loyal to their ethnic populations as well as their nation-states.

#### **4.4 The international private sector's role in the DRC Second War**

Jeffrey Mantz (2008) makes the assessment that the global demand for coltan is undeniably linked to an exploitative structure that subordinates African labourers and forces them to toil for resources, including coltan, without remuneration for their labour. He argues that this is no different to the transatlantic slave trade (1500s-1800s) that had its roots in the then Congo (Mantz, 2008: 43). Stephen Jackson (2003) suggests that

the conflict in the DRC's Eastern Region led to "the mutation of political military objectives into military ones" (Jackson, 2003: 4). He suggests a creation of a war economy during this period. This was demonstrated by:

*Domination of primary resource extraction, intermediary activity and export – including gold, diamonds, tantalum, niobium and tin ores, tropical hardwoods and coffee – by military and militia actors backed by regional powers and multinationals (Jackson, 2003: 4).*

The above statement implicates multinational corporations and alludes that the global demand for coltan gave the actors engaged in the DRC conflict a market for the looted mineral. This suggests that the international private sectors purchase of the spoils of war helped to fund the military operations of the actors involved in the conflict. The UN Report of the Panel of Experts (2003) revealed that the various armed factions in this conflict were funded by international financial organisations situated in Rwanda, Uganda and a number of developed countries including the United States of America (USA). Banque Bruxelles Lambert in Belgium and Citibank based in New York were identified as being involved in the network that handled the financial processes of among others, Aziza Kulsum (alias Madame Gulamali), an infamous arms and minerals trader and a former general manager of RCD-Gomas *Société Minière des Grands Lacs* (SOMIGL) (Emizet and Ndikumana, 2003: 26). The use of international banks to facilitate transactions by rebel groups implicates these multinational actors in this conflict and also indicates that they benefitted from the funds obtained from coltan trading.

#### **4.5 A critical assessment of Rwanda and Uganda's involvement in the conflict.**

The following section shall critically reflect on the role of Uganda and Rwanda in the DRC in the Second War. As discussed, they have ethnic ties with the people of the DRC Eastern Region. They have also been consistently active in the DRC conflicts in recent times and have profited from coltan emanating from the DRC Eastern Region. Thus, it is necessary to consider their role in the Second War of the DRC and related trade in coltan.

Laurent Kabila was able to successfully overthrow the Mobutu Sese Seko regime with the assistance of Rwanda and Uganda in 1996 under the auspice of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDLP). During the assaults

of the various armed forces and their occupation of DRC land, international investors regarded rebel held territory as *de facto* sovereign states and thus open for investment in mining resources (Jackson, 2002: 1). These processes of illegitimate investment in the region were created throughout the AFDLP invasion of the DRC led by Laurent Kabila, with the military assistance of Rwanda and Uganda. Many international corporations altered deals established under the rule of Mobutu Sese Seko, essentially crowning Laurent Kabila as the *de facto* leader of the then Zaire while he was still a rebel leader in control of a minor portion of the country (Montague, 2002: 106). The UN Report of the Panel of Experts (2001, 2002, 2003) asserted that planning and organisation were required for the systematic exploitation of the resource wealth of the DRC during the Second War. This exploitation was possible due to, “the pre-existing structures developed during the conquest of power of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire” (UNSC Report: 2001).

Despite their alliance, in July 1998 Laurent Kabila terminated military cooperation with Rwanda and Uganda. Subsequently, the Rwandan and Ugandan governments supported an anti-Kabila insurgency in August the same year, which culminated in the inception of the Second War. These two countries played a major role in the ensuing war as they had a military presence in the DRC Eastern Region and indirectly played a vital role in funding rebel militia groups (Emizet and Ndikumana, 2003: 23). The Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF) and the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) as well as the Congolese rebel movements they both supported – notably the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) and the Congolese Liberation Front (CLF) – all systematically exploited the mineral wealth of the regions they controlled through selling the deposits to western markets (Montague, 2002: 104). Dena Montague (2002) illustrates the complex association between the conflict in the DRC, its mineral resource endowment, and the international financial interests of regional and western states, as all playing a role in the inception and the perpetuation of this conflict. The exploitation of the DRC’s natural resources helped reduce the constraints in financing the war efforts of these actors. *Chapter Five* will give a detailed account of how coltan exploitation made this possible. The DRC Second War generated positive economic outcomes for Rwanda and Uganda and the various rebel factions active within the DRC territory; a point of significance returned to in *Chapter Five*. The profit seeking potential of the Second War motivated not only the rebel faction’s leadership but motivated the actions of

private corporations and regional and political actors during this conflict (Samset, 2002: 464, Emizet and Ndikumana, 2003: 23).

*Banque de Commerce, du Developpement et de l'Industrie* (BCDI) was established by the AFDL in 1996 to facilitate AFDL related transactions. The BCDI headquarters are now in Kigali Rwanda and are fundamental to the financial steadiness of Rwanda. The main shareholders of this corporation are the members of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) (Montague, 2002: 106). As previously mentioned, Rwanda possesses private corporations with intimate government and military affiliations to expedite the extraction of resources. Rwanda “elected local rebel faction leaders and field commanders to serve as conduits for illicit trade originating from the occupied territories of the eastern DRC” (Montague, 2002: 106). The close affiliation of these companies to the Rwandan government and military gave them a virtual monopoly over the resources extracted from their corresponding regions (Montague, 2002: 106). Rwanda, Uganda and their associated militia groups traded resources from the DRC Eastern Region as resources originating from their own respective countries. These countries traded with Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan, the United States of America and Russia (Montague, 2002: 112). This type of activity further implicates the international private corporations based in these countries as well as the countries themselves in the inception and aggravation of this conflict. Over 34 corporations emanating outside the DRC were acknowledged by the United Nations as importing minerals originating from the DRC via Rwanda during this conflict (Montague, 2002: 113).

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that the DRC’s political and economic infrastructure, and particularly that pertaining to its coltan industry is a disorganised, anarchic system of production. These unstable conditions allowed external actors in the DRC Second War, including regional and international countries and multinational corporations, to embark on the exploitation of the DRC’s resource wealth. Furthermore, it has conveyed that as long as the DRC’s state structures are ineffectual, rebel movements will have the ability to establish profitable relationships with multinational corporations (Montague, 2002). Additionally, as previously discussed, in the absence of a

comparable product, demand for coltan will increase in the foreseeable future. Thus, the incentive to capture and control coltan mining operations in the Eastern Region of the DRC will continue unless international corporations and international actors adhere to promoting good governance in the DRC and the ethical trade of coltan (Mantz, 2008).

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **The role of coltan in the DRC Second War**

*Coltan is a conductor in a dual sense: of digital capacitors for cell phones or PlayStations, but also of the broader social and political economic processes that underlie the global production of knowledge. Indeed, in both a material and symbolic sense, this ore is a veritable source of information production in the digital age. As such, coltan holds importance for understanding the conflicting and diffuse global role of the digital age, as a source hope and creativity on the one hand; and as an instrument of terror, regimentation, and routinisation on the other. (Mantz, 2008: 36).*

#### **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter shall be investigating the role attributed to coltan in the DRC Second War. It makes the claim that coltan was part of the greater war economy that included natural resources such as diamonds, gold and timber. In addition, by giving the more likely causes of the inception of the conflict, it shall argue that coltan was not the root cause of the DRC Second War. This chapter posits that the main role attributed to coltan in the DRC Second War was providing funding for some of the military and militia actors

active in the DRC Eastern Region thus providing an incentive for the continuation of the conflict. As discussed in the *Chapter Four*, this is a result of the ease with which coltan can be mined and because of its demand as a primary resource in the production and manufacturing of electronic goods. Moreover, during the period of the Second War, the global demand for coltan also increased (Nest, 2011: 12). This, in turn, motivated actors involved in the coltan industry, including the private multinational actors who trade, sell, buy and distribute this commodity, to continue in its trade despite the context of war in which it was being extracted (Hayes and Burge, 2003: 23).

## **5.2. Coltan as the root cause of the DRC Second War**

The coltan issue has been exaggerated and exploited by various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and activists' alike. The coltan issue has been romanticised and there has been factual inaccuracy pertaining to its role in the DRC conflict (Nest, 2011: 2). As Nest (2011) argues, the exploitation of coltan cannot be understood as the only or even the primary cause of the DRC Second War but rather, as the independent assessment highlights, coltan is one amongst a number of resources which functioned as an aggravator and financier of conflict, as opposed to a trigger.

The cause of the DRC Second War cannot thus be reduced to one issue. Perhaps more appropriately, the DRC Second War was caused by varying issues that included the fight for the control of natural resources that included coltan, the fight for the control of agricultural land, the Rwandan and Ugandan government's perception of the threat emanating from within the DRC territory as well as the underlying ethnic tensions that resulted in grievances of particular groups being used as objects of justification used by the elites to embark on war (Nest, 2011: 4). There is no empirical evidence to suggest that the absence of this particular commodity would have meant no DRC Second War (Nest, 2011: 5). Nevertheless, the significance of coltan did increase between 2000 and 2001 due to the dramatic price escalation, which caused 'coltan fever' (Nest, 2001: 5).

Rwanda and Uganda's postulated reasons for invading the DRC are perhaps more probable causes of the DRC Second War than coltan exploitation. Their stated reason for invading the DRC was the protection of their sovereignty under threat from the military campaigns of the Interahamwe and ex- Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR),

present in the DRC borders since the Rwandan Genocide (Nest, 2011: 75, Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2004: 13). This subordinates the claim that the exploitation of coltan was the cause of the DRC conflict. Perhaps more appropriately, the unresolved African crises of what constitutes a state or, more importantly, what constitutes a citizen of a particular state, are key questions in identifying what the root cause or causes of African conflicts are, and need to be resolved. Resource and economic dimensions of conflict are also important but they often occupy a secondary factor in conflict (Prunier, 2009: 1). Prunier (2009) emphasizes this when he states that,

*The violence of the so-called Congolese conflicts, which for while became a continent wide war, was the product of unsettled questions that the Rwandese genocide had brushed raw. What is a country in Africa? What is a legitimate government? Who is a citizen? Why do we live together? Whom should we obey? Who are we? Who are the 'others' and how should we deal with them? None of these questions had been answered, except by the dry legalistic proviso of the Organization of African Unity charter guaranteeing the intangibility of former colonial powers (Prunier, 2009).*

### **5.3 Coltan fever**

'Coltan fever' was the result of the increased price of coltan. "In early 2000 tantalite ore was selling at between \$30 to \$40 per pound, by September 2000 it was selling for over \$100 per pound, and by December 2000 it was selling for up to \$300 per pound, depending on the concentration of tantalum pentoxide. By October 2001 prices were back to \$30 to \$40 per pound" (Nest, 2011:12, Jackson, 2001: 1). During this period there was a global demand for electronic products such as mobile phones, personal computers and gaming consoles which, as previously discussed, required tantalum capacitors (Nest, 2011: 12).

Even with the complex interrelated reasons for the cause of this conflict, the consequence of 'coltan fever' cannot be ignored. Coltan exploitation during 'coltan fever' cannot be viewed as the by-product of the war, but as the objective of the continued and increased conflict in the DRC Eastern Region during this period (Nest, 2011: 36). Akin to the gold and silver rush, which occurred in numerous African states in the nineteenth century, 'coltan fever' resulted in the entry of a large number of people into coltan mining. Conflict during this period in the Eastern Region of the DRC, where the coltan mines are located, was motivated more by the economic outcomes of coltan exploitation than political or strategic considerations (Nest, 2011: 66).

#### **5.4 The Greater War Economy and Coltan**

Stephen Jackson (2003) introduces the idea of the war economy in this conflict. Simply defined, the war economy denotes the economic activities that occur once a conflict has started (Jackson, 2003: 4, Samset, 2002: 464). In the DRC Eastern Region the war economy was characterised by the “domination of primary resource extraction, intermediary activity and export – including gold, diamonds, tantalum, niobium and tin ores, tropical hardwoods and coffee – by military and militia actors backed by regional powers and multinationals “ (Jackson, 2003: 4).

During this period various businesses, the political and economic elites of some African states as well as military leaders had an interest in the continuation of the conflict. Thus, once the war had started, resource extraction became the focal point of the war and not the by-product of it. The abundance of natural resources in the DRC meant that the conflict could finance itself (Samset, 2002: 464). As such, the exploitation of coltan and other resources can be viewed as influencing the continuation of the DRC Second War. It is the explanatory factor for the continuation of the conflict as opposed to being the explanatory factor for the cause of the conflict (Samset, 2002: 465). Moreover, the underlying ethnic tensions amongst various groups was viewed as a justification used by the elites who benefit from the continuation of war, to gather support from those who were affected negatively by conflict (Samset, 2002: 465, Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2004: 15).

Stephen Jackson (2003:4) echoes Ingrid Samset’s (2002) view that the cause of the DRC Second War was not for explicitly economic reasons, albeit, as the war progressed, economic objectives superseded political ones or, alternatively, economic and political objectives fused into one (Jackson, 2003: 4). According to Jackson (2003) the fusion of economic and political objectives in this conflict was characterised by the realignment of strategic military objectives to coincide with the capture and exploitation of leading mineral deposit locations. Furthermore, the different armed factions shifted from their stated claims of protecting various vulnerable ethnic groups and protecting their sovereignty “to protection-racketeering and economic exploitation of populations and resources” (Jackson, 2003: 5). Thus, the positive economic

outcomes from resource exploitation in some regions encouraged the various armed groups to continue their military occupation of those particular regions (Jackson, 2003: 5).

The war economy would not exist without the aid of emerging and developed economies that buy coltan and other minerals emanating from the DRC. Emerging and developed countries are guilty of perpetuating this conflict through buying the coltan that funded varying armed groups. What needs to be articulated is that during the conflict, multinational corporations continued trading coltan and in doing so enabled the illegal exploitation of coltan to continue. If there was no market for coltan and other resources, it would be very unlikely that armed groups would fight to capture and control the regions where these resources are located.

#### **5.5. Funder of War: A factor in the perpetuation of the DRC Second War**

The emergence of the DRC Second War, the DRC's weak state structures and its resource abundance all provided an opportunity for resource exploitation once the conflict had started. Moreover, coltan demand and its accessibility during the 'coltan fever' made it the perfect resource for armed groups to exploit in order to fund their military activities. Nest (2011) identifies that,

*During the military campaign (in the first war) foreign mining companies courted Alliance leaders; one private investor even lent Laurent Kabila a corporate jet. Some mining companies signed agreements with the Alliance that granted them rights to vast tracts of land; even before the Alliance forces had reached Kinshasa. The alliance used the revenue from selling minerals rights that it did not yet own to finance its military campaign (Nest, 2011: 74).*

This pattern of military financing continued during the DRC Second War. Militia groups competed for the control of natural resources, including that of coltan mining, as a means to finance their prolonged military offenses. As a result, the fighting for the control and exploitation of coltan and other resources played a part in the aggravation and continuation of the DRC Second War. According to Samset (2002) the exploitation of strategic natural resources in the DRC that include coltan, diamonds and gold perpetuated the continuation of the DRC Second War. He asserts that,

*The motivation and feasibility of resource exploitation largely explain why external military contingents have remained active in the country since August*

*1998. Driving forces of war can be identified among elites of Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe, for whom DRC resources have proven decisive to sustain positions of power (Samset, 2002: 464).*

## **5.6 Rwanda and Uganda**

Rwanda and Uganda were implicated in the UNSC Report of the Panel of Experts (2001, 2002, 2003). In the reports, Rwanda was accused of trading coltan from the DRC and falsely claiming it to be mined in Rwandan territory (UNSC Report of the Panel of Experts 2003, Nest, 2001). Although Rwanda does have coltan deposits, these are meagre when compared to the DRC's. However, despite the Report's claim, the inability to ascertain the origins of coltan means that it is impossible to give a concrete figure of the amount of coltan emanating from the DRC Eastern Region. The defiance on the part of the actors involved in the illicit trade during the Second War to admit that the origins of their coltan was from the DRC further undermines efforts to ascertain such information (Nest, 2011: 22).

However, it can be argued that coltan aggravated conflict as the Ugandan army, the Ugandan Peoples Defence Force (UPFD), and the Rwandan army, the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), used it to finance their military campaigns during the Second War. Not only did Rwanda and Uganda finance their war efforts through the exploitation of coltan – amongst other minerals – but they also gained net profits, which further encouraged them to continue their war efforts. Thus, coltan exploitation undermined peace efforts because it was a primary financier and *sustainer* of conflict (Samset, 2002: 465, Ndikumana and Emizet, 2003: 24, UNSC Panel of Experts Reports 2001-2003). According to Samset (2002),

*Following their 1998 conquest of the Eastern DRC, the armies of Rwanda and Uganda helped by the Congolese soldiers in (RCD), spent a year practically emptying stockpiles of money and valuable goods found in the occupied territory. In this phase of large-scale plunder, the acquisition of diamonds was relatively less important than coltan, timber and coffee. The loot was transferred to Kampala and Kigali from where some of it was exported. Dispossession was presumably encouraged, sometimes organized and coordinated, by high-ranking army commanders of Rwanda and Uganda, with the consent of key officials in their respective governments (Samset, 2002: 470-1).*

In Rwanda coltan exploitation did not only benefit the Rwandan Patriotic Army, the Rwandan economy also benefited from this exploitation during the DRC Second War. Rwanda is estimated to have profited to the amount of \$250 million from coltan

originating from the DRC in just over a year and a half between 1999-2000 (UNSC Report of the Panel of Experts 2003, Samset, 2002). Evidence shows that at the bare minimum Ugandan export emanating from the DRC amassed 7,1% and 8,4% respectively during the period between 1999 and 2000 (UNSC Reports of The Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of Congo, 2001-2003, Samset, 2002: 471). This reinforces the argument that the positive economic outcomes for Rwanda and Uganda, mainly coming from coltan exploitation during the DRC Second War, provided a disincentive for peace and encouraged the RPA and the UPFD to tighten their respective strongholds in the Eastern Region of the DRC (Samset, 2002: 471, Montague, 2002: 112).

Interestingly, Uganda was one of the African states that exhibited the most consistent economic growth rates during this period. Moreover, it has been proven that the exploitation of DRC minerals during its occupation of DRC land during the Second War aided in its consistent economic growth rates. According to Samset (2002),

*Partly due to taxes on DRC minerals providing Uganda with some US\$5m a month, exploitation has significantly improved the country's balance of payments. In fact, increased revenues from taxing and exporting DRC resources coincide with a considerable GDP improvement in 1998, which was sustained in 1999. While donors limit the level of Uganda's military budget to 2 per cent of GDP, the overall economic growth allowed an actual expansion of that budget. DRC resources have thus indirectly spurred the growth in Uganda's military spending, which in turn has facilitated Ugandan control in vast areas in the Congo (Samset, 2002: 472).*

Rwanda and Uganda were both able to exploit the resource wealth of the DRC through military means. As a result, permanent and complete withdrawal of their military forces and their support of Congolese rebel forces under their control would have curtailed their profitmaking (UNSC Report of the Panel of Experts, 2003, Samset, 2002). For example, Rwandan President Paul Kagame stated that the DRC Second War was a, “self-financing war” (Jackson, 2003: 6), even though the Rwandan Army’s occupation of the DRC Eastern Region was very costly. The official budget of the Rwandan army during this period to keep 25 000 troops in the DRC was roughly \$51,6 million. The Rwandan army had a total budget of \$63 million. Nonetheless, it was able to dispatch an additionally 20 000 troops. This dispatching of an additionally 20 000 troops perhaps proves Paul Kagame’s statement to be true, that the war was indeed self-financing (Jackson, 2003: 6).

*Amongst other commodities, coltan: has permitted the Rwandan army to sustain its presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The army has provided protection and security to the individuals and companies extracting the mineral. These have made money which is shared with the army, which in turn continues to provide the enabling environment to continue the exploitation (Jackson, 2003: 4-5)*

Prior to Uganda's involvement in the DRC First War, according to Jackson (2003: 6), coltan production in Uganda totalled 0 tons (t) in 1996. Following its involvement in the country, coltan production increased in the subsequent years to 2,57t in 1997, 18.57t in 1998 and 69.5t in 1999, after which no further information is available (Jackson, 2003: 6). Rwanda controlled most of the Kivu region in the Eastern Region of the DRC during the DRC Second War. This region is rich in coltan and gold. Rwanda, much like Uganda, experienced a significant export surge once the war broke out. For example, Rwanda's gold production in 1996 totalled a meagre 1 kg. The following figures represent the gold production in kgs for the subsequent years: 1997: 10; 1998: 17; 1999: 10; 2000: 10. The following figures represent coltan production in tons: 1996: 97; 1997: 224; 1998: 224; 1999: 122; 2000: 83 (Jackson, 2003: 7). These figures show a correlation between the increase in the production of coltan in Uganda and gold and coltan in Rwanda during the conflicts in the DRC. It is on this basis that it can be deduced that the Second War of the DRC was highly profitable for these two states.

According to Samset, (2002) the DRC government structures were ineffectual and the only viable means that Joseph Kabila had to finance his war efforts and his regime was through the exploitation of the country's resources. Thus, Kabila added to the exploitation of resource wealth in the DRC (Samset, 2002). Kabila was able to finance his war efforts by setting up a monopoly on exports where he could, by heavily taxing the most dominant companies operating within the DRC, and by distributing mining concessions to international companies and states which could assist him and his regime in military terms (Samset, 2002: 473). Thus, Kabila encouraged the exploitation of resources by foreign troops. The countries that supported his regime militarily – notably Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola – also received huge mining concessions and access into the DRC's resource rich regions (Samset, 2002: 473).

### **5.7 Methods of Exploiting Coltan**

The various armed combatants used violence and the threat of violence to compel non-combatants to agree with their mining arrangements (ICG, 2003: 138). They utilised violent strategies including rape, murder and torture not only on rival militia groups but also on non-combatants. During the DRC Second War, militia groups embarking on coltan and other resource exploitation utilised military and non-military means to guarantee access and control of the DRC resource sector (ICG, 2003: 138). For example, these violent means were utilised to displace the citizens of resource rich regions of the South Kivu to make way for coltan production. Some of the villages in coltan rich areas in Kalonge and Bunyakiri were completely emptied (ICG, 2003: 24). In addition, the armed combatants in the DRC utilised violence to pillage stocks from functioning coltan mines and to further exercise control of these mines. For example, “looting of stockpiles happened on a large-scale in November 1998 when the RCD removed 2,000 to 3,000 metric tons of coltan ore from the stocks of SOMINKI (Société minière et industrielle du Kivu) in South Kivu” (ICG, 2003: 24). As such, armed groups were able to finance themselves through exploiting considerable quantities of coltan. However, “smaller, but still significant quantities of coltan already mined by others are regularly targeted in militia and military violence in the Kivus. FDLR hidden in Katoyi forest frequently raid the productive coltan area of Kibabi” (ICG, 2003: 25).

According to Jackson (2003:4) these armed groups used strategies that included forced labour and prisoner groups to unearth the minerals and embark on large scale looting of minerals and assets. This gives further evidence in support of the claim that the military action of the participants in the conflict was sustained largely by the profits accrued from the resource exploitation which included the exploitation of coltan (Jackson, 2003: 4). In the DRC Eastern Region’s political and economic landscape during the Second War, violence was the central form of political discourse; those who exercised it dictated the terms of engagement, whether they were local or regional actors (Jackson, 2003: 3). The UN Report of The Panel of Experts (2003) uncovered the intricate and systematic means of exploiting the mineral wealth of the DRC utilised by the various actors. This included an organised system of embezzlement, tax fraud and extortion, the use of stock options as kickbacks and diversion of state funds. This replaced the looting that used to be physically carried out by the armies. As such, the sophistication of this looting closely resembles organised crime syndicates. Three

groups were identified by the panel as being elite networks largely controlled by the governments of Rwanda, the DRC and Uganda. These networks possessed the following commonality; they consisted of a small core of political, economic and military leaders of the aforementioned countries as well as rebel leaders in control of some territories. Due to their political, military and business links these networks were able to control a large segment of the commercial activities that were related to the legal or illegal exploitation of resources in the DRC (The UN Report of The Panel of Experts, 2002)

### **5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that the plausible inception of the DRC Second War cannot be attributed to coltan. It has highlighted that as the war progressed, coltan, along with other resources, became an important funding tool for the various armed groups. War is a costly business and coltan exploitation provided the military of Rwanda and Uganda, as well as the various other military forces, a source of funding to continue their war efforts (Nest, 2011: 66). The more plausible reason for Uganda and Rwanda's invasion of the DRC was the threat of insurgent action emanating from within the DRC borders, targeting their respective governments, as the DRC housed the radical Hutu's responsible for the Rwandan genocide. However, during the 'coltan fever' coltan exploitation became the objective of the war effort (Nest, 2011: 73).

In addition, this chapter has argued that regardless of the causes of the DRC Second War, by 2000, whether or not these were present at the outset or not, the war had principally economic motives for its continuation (ICG, 2003: 23, The UN Report of The Panel of Experts 2001-2003). The role of coltan in the DRC Second War is highly complex. This chapter has sought to evidence why coltan exploitation can be understood as a plausible motivation for the continuation of conflict. As such, coltan acted as an aggravator and financier of the DRC Second War. However, it is acknowledged that this conflict was complex and multiple factors informed its perpetuation. Thus, it would be incorrect to attribute the continuation of the Second War to the exploitation of coltan alone (Nest, 2011: 67).

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Conclusion and implications of the thesis findings, Recommendations and Current context**

#### **6.1 Conclusion and implications of the thesis findings**

The thesis provided a comprehensive analysis of the role attributed to coltan in the DRC Second War and found that coltan in the DRC Eastern Region during this period was part of a greater system at work, notably the war economy. It argued that the relative scarcity of coltan during the Second War and its concomitant notably high demand played a crucial role in the continued, mining, sale and distribution of this commodity. However, underlying issues such as the inefficiency of the state to provide for its citizens played a role in the inception of the conflict that found expression in the historical ethnic inequalities prevalent in the Great Lakes.

*Chapter Two* of the thesis gave an in-depth analysis of the resource wars literature and enabled us to understand where coltan fits into the resource wars debates. Three related approaches pertaining to the resource wars debates were looked at, notably the resource course debate, the resource conflict argument and the conflict resource argument. The debates were used to emphasise that coltan is one of many resources that could influence conflict in the DRC. These three related approaches argued that coltan could either trigger or prolong conflict. In addition, the chapter posited that poor resource governance adds to the grievances associated with resources that could lead to conflict. This implies that the resource governance of the DRC exemplified by the weak state structures needs to be reconstructed and enhanced in order to foster ethical, accountable and efficient resource governance.

*Chapter Three* identified that the DRC conflicts of the 1990s had inter-state and regional dimensions, which were potentially caused by the economic incentives of capturing resources by rebels, states, and private corporations. These parties used existing historical ethnic tensions in order to prolong and exacerbate the conflict. The chapter also emphasised that the DRC conflicts of the 1990s were international conflicts that were fought within the borders of the DRC state (Nabudere, 2004). This chapter argued that the motives expressed by the varying actors for their participation in the DRC Second War and their actions on the ground were incoherent at best (Montague, 2002: 112). The implications of the findings in this chapter dictate that the solutions to the on-going DRC conflicts require extensive national, regional and international actors, as the DRC conflicts have the aforementioned dimensions. Furthermore, the underlying historical ethnic inequalities need to be revisited and addressed, as they are often used as a means to engage in conflict.

*Chapter Four* highlighted how the DRC's unsophisticated, anarchic coltan industry as well as the unstable political economic situation made it easy for the varying actors to exploit coltan in the Eastern Region during the DRC Second War. It also provided a critical assessment of Rwanda and Uganda. The findings of this chapter correlate with the findings of *Chapter Two*, particularly that the state structures of the DRC need to be reconstructed and enhanced. A bolstered DRC state with an effective military would provide fewer opportunities for its neighbouring states to embroil themselves in its state issues. Furthermore, its military capabilities would serve as a deterrent to armed combatants previously willing to use force against it.

*Chapter Five* identified that coltan was not the root cause of the DRC conflict. It showed the complex and interrelated reasons for the plausible cause of the DRC Second War which found expression in historical ethnic inequalities. In addition, it showed that coltan was indeed a factor in the conflict; however, its role was that of a funder and prolonger of the conflict through its use by rebels and armies to finance their war efforts. This thesis has ascertained that there exists a multi-layered web of interconnectedness amongst the different actors that were involved in the DRC Second War including elite networks that involved businessmen, politicians and military leaders. The only visible common denominator between them is the benefits they derived from their war efforts.

This study highlighted that the vast invasions of the rebel militias in the Eastern Region of the DRC can be viewed as invasions led by multinational conglomerates through African actors to obtain strategically important resources. During this epoch of history coltan was arguably the most important ore in the world. The implications of these findings correlate with *Chapter Three* and dictate that underlying historical ethnic inequalities need to be revisited and addressed, as they are often used as a means to engage in conflict by varying actors.

## **6.2 The Current Situation in the DRC**

It is important to reflect on the current situation in the DRC and to assess what this means for the coltan issue. The central countries involved in the DRC conflict signed The Agreement for a Ceasefire in the Democratic Republic of the Congo known as the Lusaka Accord in 1999. It was an ambitious agreement that called for the cessation of fighting and the disengagement of external countries operating within the DRC (Nabudere, 2004). However, the Lusaka Accords failed to bear tangible results and led to the Peace Accord being signed in Pretoria in December 2002. It was endorsed a year later in 2003 in Sun City, South Africa. This latter agreement involved a ceasefire and established a power sharing transitional government until elections were held in 2006. Joseph Kabila was successfully elected as president of the DRC and re-elected again in 2011. The Peace Accord was largely successful except for in the Eastern Region where conflict continued through internal rebel groups and through proxy rebel groups created or funded by external actors who wished to maintain their stronghold in the region. This conflict did not subside for years. In 2010 this led to the intensification of the United Nations peacekeeping Mission in the Congo (MONUC), which was established in 1999. Later its name was changed to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) and a more robust plan of action was adopted in order to protect civilians. The situation appeared to stabilise until the emergence of a rebel group known as M23. Following this, the UN adopted the UN Security Council Resolution 2098 (2013) “which allowed for a Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) with the responsibility of neutralizing armed groups” (Hendricks and Lucey, 2013). Currently, the DRC Eastern Region appears to be stabilising and various multinational organisations and external states are assisting in the DRC’s Security Sector Reform (SSR) as well in the Disintegration, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) processes of the country (Hendricks and Lucey, 2013).

In light of these developments, the prospect for the stabilised and legal trade of coltan in the DRC Eastern region are positive following the cessation of the intense perpetual violence in the DRC Eastern region. The prospects for the coltan trade are inextricably linked to the success of the DRC's SSR as well the DDR processes. The thesis maintains an optimistic outlook on the DRC coltan issue moving forward, as it believes the strengthening of DRC institutions is plausible given the relative stability of the DRC Eastern region.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

Un-protracted violence still continues in the DRC even though it is on a relatively minor scale. What is necessary to ensure long-term peace and create conditions for a stable coltan mining industry are peace building initiatives that build successful state and civil society institutions. The DRC is still vulnerable to conflict unless state and civil society institutions for peaceful disputes are established. This is a long-term process that requires international and local actors to safeguard these institutions and cooperate with them. Furthermore, the establishment of these institutions will also legitimise conflict dispute mechanisms that can be utilised by disputing parties. Stability in the DRC will enhance the coltan mining industry and limit the prevalence of illegal mining, as actors will not be able to engage in illegal mining with impunity. This is because institutions of governance that limit illegal activity will exist. In addition, what is also critical in averting conflict related to resources is the emergence of responsible resource governance or resource management by the political and business elite in the DRC as well as by external actors (Hendricks and Lucey, 2013).

Lastly, more research relating to African resource wars is needed. There is a need for further research on this topic, more particularly research that looks at grassroots actors and places an emphasis on what is happening on the ground. This was beyond the scope of this thesis but a departure from a focus on sovereign states and multinational corporations would be a valuable next step. This would allow alternative perspectives to gain more prominence in the resource wars debate which may in turn prompt a re-evaluation and greater reflection on the nature of the arguments presented. The reasons for the engagement of many actors in the DRC conflicts are still highly contested and personal accounts of ordinary individuals could allow for a more holistic and potentially richer understanding of the causes, dynamics and longevity of the DRC conflicts and others in Africa.

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