

Narrative Policy Analysis in the Congo:  
Implications for Resource Extraction Policy

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## INTRODUCTION

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, also referred to as the DRC or the Congo, is a country with vast natural resources, including water, fertile land, and profitable minerals such as copper, gold, diamonds, tantalum (coltan), tin, tungsten, cobalt, and uranium. The extractive industries have the potential to support economic growth and development and are of strategic importance to the global economy. The industry could make the Congo one of the richest countries in the world, but the Congo has been unable to reap the rewards of their abundant natural resources due to the high level of violence fuelling and fueled by extraction of mineral resources. The mismanagement of natural resource wealth in the Congo continues to contribute to the conflict in the eastern regions, which in turn prevents the state from taking control of the mineral sector in a vicious cycle (Trefon, 2016). The cause of conflict in the eastern region, the role the natural resource sector, and what can be done to prevent conflict and spur development are a matter of debate. There are differing solutions put forward including mineral tracking and certification schemes, institutional and legal frameworks, company due diligence, and organizational codes of conduct to manage the natural resource sector. How the issues of resource extraction and conflict and the solutions are being presented are a result of dominant narratives being told and re-told.

The dominant narratives about the Congo often portray the country in a one-dimensional way, capturing the cause of conflict in a couple of sentences, and focus on technical interventions that can be pursued as consumers, companies, and donors, to improve the development outcomes of the Congo. Media reports speak of the cost of the ongoing conflict, citing figures of death and destruction, often focusing on the impact on victims. In the dominant narratives, policy can be used to ensure transparency and accountability in mineral supply chains to prevent rebel groups from profiting on conflict minerals or can establish certification schemes to verify ‘conflict-free’ status. Under the dominant narratives, technical solutions such as those presented will end conflict

over natural resources, prevent further human rights violations and could regulate the mining sector to prevent future incidents of violence (de Koning, 2011; Enough Project, 2017; Global Witness, 2009).

Dominant narratives and the impact they have extend beyond the borders of the Congo. Simplistic narratives around natural resources have been around for decades, present in the literature around the natural resource curse and the connections between natural resources and conflict (Auty, 1993; Le Billon, 2014; Ross, 2003). The debates common in literature are used to inform policy, and thus have an impact on government decision-making and beyond. However, following a narrative that lacks complexity covers one aspect of a larger situation (Autesserre, 2012). Put bluntly, simple narratives have led to simple policy. Putting more complexity into policy can be easier said than done, as there is no objective truth or one “correct” narrative. The way narrative is interpreted has the potential to influence the way a subject is viewed and how it is acted upon. Having more complex narratives that challenge what has been developed as common knowledge will not necessarily translate into effective policy in the Congo, but recognizing the consequences of dominant narratives can help move the conversation forward and can limit the damages these imaginings can have.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research will ask how the dominant narratives that surround resource extraction in the Congo have been used in policy. The following questions will be examined: What are the dominant narrative about natural resources and conflict in the Congo? How are dominant narratives formed and why do they take hold? What are the consequences in terms of policy formation and intervention? In answering these questions, the dominant narratives about the Congo will be examined, drawing on the natural resource curse literature, including the perceived connection

between natural resources and conflict, to better understand the policy interventions in the mining sector and the impacts they have had and will continue to have if not prevented.

## METHODOLOGY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A narrative policy analysis drawing on the Narrative Policy Framework will be used to provide structure for the narrative analysis indicating the common elements and how policy narratives in the Congo are formed. A complex examination of the dominant narratives will help to illuminate the consequences of over-reliance on such narratives has had on policy formulation and intervention. A narrative is “essentially a story” and is therefore most often associated with fiction, but narrative also refers to “the ways in which we construct disparate facts in our own worlds and weave them together cognitively in order to make sense of our reality” (Patterson & Monroe, 1998, p.315). Narrative is so embedded in our language and the concepts we use to describe topics in social sciences that we take narratives as universal givens rather than historical, political, and social constructions (Patterson & Monroe, 1998, p.324). Narratives are powerful as they can help us to make sense of the world and become important tools that can orient political action (Autesserre, 2012, p.207; Patterson & Monroe, 1998, p.316). However, they can also provide a narrow view. Simple and seemingly unproblematic narratives are used because they are easier to understand and make complex problems seem solvable with simple, logical, and technical solutions (Autesserre, 2012, p.207; Patterson & Monroe, 1998, p.321). The creation of simple narratives is not a neutral process, many dissenting or marginalized voices are silenced because they do not fit into a “particular conceptualization” or framing of an issue (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 104; Patterson & Monroe, 1998, p.326).

Policy narratives are often used to make sense of complex policy issues (Hampton, 2009, p.239). Narrative policy analysis is a strategy used to identify narratives in policy and to examine how they are used. Roe (1994) argues narrative policy analysis is most useful when looking at

policy issues that are uncertain, complex, and polarized because it allows power and politics to be examined in a more approachable way (p.3). The Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) is a tool within narrative policy analysis focusing on how policy narratives have generalized narrative elements that can be applied across different policy contexts (Jones & McBeth, 2010, p.340; McBeth, Jones & Shanahan, 2014, p.228). There are four common elements in policy narratives. First is the *setting* which provides an outline of the policy problem and provides the relevant policy context including historical, geographical, or institutional analysis (Jones & McBeth, 2010, p.340; McBeth *et al.*, 2014, p.228). Second is the *characters* which play an important role in the understanding of the policy as most narratives have ‘victims’ who are harmed, ‘villains’ who cause harm, and ‘heroes’ that protect victims and provide solutions to problems (Jones & McBeth, 2010, p.341; McBeth *et al.*, 2014, p.228). Third is the *plot* which establishes the relationship between characters and situates them within the policy context. The plot often structures the casual explanation of events that move the narrative forward (Jones & McBeth, 2010, p.340; McBeth *et al.*, 2014, p.228). According to Stone (2012) causal mechanisms are strategically embedded in narratives to convince their audience who or what is to blame in the policy problem (Shanahan, Adams, Jones & McBeth, 2014, p.70). Fourth is the *moral* which presents the solution to the policy problem minimizing the harm for victims and stop the villains (McBeth *et al.*, 2014, p.228). Policy narratives follow a common structure, but these structures are dynamic and evolve overtime as multiple actors reproduce narratives with varying degrees of change (Autesserre, 2012, p.209; De Fina & Georgapoulou, 2008, p.383). Policy is a series of complex and politicized processes often impacted by the current political issues, media, public pressure and lobbying (Diemel & Hilhorst, 2018, p.456). This can cause policy to be “full of multiplicity and contradiction” where narrative is used to suit a context and for a particular purpose. Dominant narratives can sway public

opinion and influence policy, but they can also evolve based on public opinion and changing policy priorities. The policy narratives embedded in policies surrounding resource extraction in the Congo will be evaluated using the NPF and other narrative policy analysis elements.

## ORGANIZATION

This paper will be made up of five sections. The first section will provide a literature review tracing the origins of the natural resource curse and examining the bodies of literature that investigate the motivations of conflict, particularly in the context of natural resources. The second section will present the dominant narratives of the Congo, including how the Congo has been inflicted by the natural resource curse, the motivations for resource conflict and the appropriate solutions. The third section will analysis the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-affected and High-Risk Areas and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) Mineral Tracking and Certification Scheme policy documents to determine the extent to which they have been influenced by dominant narratives and the consequences this has had. The fourth chapter will examine what is missed in dominant narratives, providing an alternative understanding. The final section will conclude that the policies examined have an overreliance on dominant narratives of the Congo and the Great Lakes region which have caused the policies to have inadvertent consequences. Overall, technical solutions to political problems will be ineffective if not properly accounted for.

## CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will examine the major trends in the body of literature surrounding the natural resource curse and the connections between conflict and natural resource endowments as academic scholarship and debate is used to inform policy narratives. The literature review is not

a systematic survey of the vast natural resource curse or conflict and resources literature per se and is instead focused on the main narrative lines or tropes of the literature. The research is primarily based on qualitative sources as they are most useful when examining the common tropes of the literature used to develop dominant policy narratives on resource extraction in the Congo.

## NATURAL RESOURCE CURSE THESIS

It has long been believed that an abundance of natural resources is good for development, particularly from an economic growth perspective (Auty, 1993, p. 1). This is a logical assumption as many of the industrialized countries in North America and Europe developed with the aid of their natural resources (Sachs & Warner, 2001, p.832). However, in the early 1990s, Auty (1993) suggested there was a growing body of evidence demonstrating natural resources were less beneficial to countries with low and middle incomes (p.1). Throughout the postwar period, Auty argued that not only had developing countries failed to benefit from their resource endowments, but resource-poor countries such as those in East Asia, had performed better. Auty's assertions have served as the basis for the natural resource curse thesis as well as a rich body of literature debating its existence and features. The natural resource curse generally refers to the inverse association between natural resource dependence and economic growth (Badeeb, Lean, & Clark, 2017, p.123). Sachs and Warner (2001) developed a strong empirical case for the natural resource curse demonstrating the best performing countries did not often overlap with those with high resource endowments. Further, countries with high resource endowments had not experienced sustained rapid economic growth, not easily explained by factors such as trends in commodity prices (p.828). By the early 2000s, theoretical and empirical literature alike began to take the assumptions of the natural resource curse for granted, assuming there was an inverse association between natural resources and economic growth (Badeeb *et al.*, 2017, p.128). The natural resource

course thesis changed the way scholars, policy analysts, and the general public thought of resources, and consequently shaped the solutions and paths to development for these countries.

The causes and the impacts of the natural resource curse are interrelated, with the economic and political implications overlapping. Having significant resource endowments, or resource rents, that can be captured will often lead a state to experience “rentier effects” which worsen quality of institutions and governance (Busse & Gröning, 2013, p.2). This is based on both the taxation effect and the spending effect. The taxation effect occurs when increased revenue from resource rents enables the government to be less accountable and transparent as they do not tax their citizens. This halts the progress of developing a more democratic or representative political system and weakens state-society relationship as without taxation, many governments believe there is no need for representation, allowing corrupt leaders to maintain their power (Badeeb *et al.*, 2017, p.127; revenue from resource rents to be spent on patronage activities and other forms of corruption (Busse & Gröning, 2013, p.2; Collier & Venables, 2010, p.5). This causes corruption to be institutionalized, preventing the restructuring or reshaping of extractive institutions (Webersik & Levy, 2016, p.40). Corrupt governments do not serve their citizens equally. Resource revenues increases the power of elite, fostering grievances and widening inequalities (Badeeb *et al.*, 2017, p.126; Brunnschweiler & Bulte, 2009, p.653; Deacon & Rode, 2012, p.4; Ross, 2003, p.25). Corruption, crony capitalism, and the establishment of patronage networks worsen the quality of political and economic institutions.

Poor political decisions and predatory or extractive institutions can cause poor economic outcomes. Many resource dependent countries suffer from Dutch disease, an effect where natural resource exports crowd out other economic activity, making it difficult for resource-based economies to sustain export led growth (Auty, 1993, p.5; Badeeb *et al.*, 2017, p.125; Collier, 2007,

p.40; Sachs & Warner, 2001, p.835). Natural resource price booms increase domestic income and demand for goods, which in turn increases inflation and appreciates the real exchange rates, making other exports uncompetitive internationally. This crowding out of other exports limits economic diversification and causes states to further depend on the commodity sector (Matti, 2010, p.402). The over reliance on the commodity sector causes governments to delay modernizing the structure of the economy as a new, diversified structure could create alternative sources of economic and political power (Dunning, 2005, p.452). Resource revenues go through boom-and-bust cycles, where the market price of a good will fluctuate. Market volatility or instability makes it difficult to effectively measure expected resource revenues and consequently hampers economic planning (Badeeb *et al.*, 2017, p.125). When the price of a resource is high during a boom cycle, governments experience low barrier borrowing from foreign lenders as they have collateral in resource rents. Increased funds will cause leaders to spend excessive amounts to fund large scale infrastructure or vanity projects fueled by corruption and patronage. However, during bust cycles, when the value of their resource crashes, foreign debts are called in and the state reserves are depleted, causing a lowered standard of living and less development (Badeeb *et al.*, 2017, p.125; Collier, 2007, p.41). Economic instability and mismanagement often lead to political instability which may increase the likelihood of discontent or conflict (Collier & Venables, 2010, p.7).

The role of institutions in determining how natural resources affect economic growth has been an important feature in the resource curse literature (Badeeb *et al.*, 2017, p.126). Institutions are influenced by resource wealth which enables weak governance and a mismanaged economy. At the same time, institutions can determine how natural resource wealth will impact the economy and the political system (Deacon & Rode, 2012, p.3; Le Billon, 2014, p.17). Resource abundance does not worsen development outcomes or cause political and economic instability on its own;

weak natural resource governance and a lack of inclusive institutions do (Bruch, Muffett & Nichols, 2016, p.5). Many states with weak governance have built up a predatory institutional system where the central authority perpetuates inequality, disregards human rights, and continues unsustainable extraction of natural resources to maintain their position of power (Bruch *et al.*, 2016, p.10). Menaldo (2016) reframes the debate, claiming states do not fall victim to a natural resource curse, but rather an “institutions curse” (p.78). States are inflicted with an institutions curse when the ‘rules of the game’ or the shared beliefs that make up institutions, are harming the population (Menaldo, 2016, pp. 78-80). Contrarily, states with inclusive institutions experience consistent economic growth as they manage their resources in an equitable way furthering development (Daniele, 2011, p.559; Le Billon, 2014, p.214; Menaldo, 2016, p.77). Institutions help beat the curse; but inclusive institutions are hard to develop when the elite are benefiting from predatory systems and remain unaccountable to their people. The solution provided by the international community revolves around statebuilding, with the assumption states will develop more inclusive or democratic institutions if they are incentivized to do so with foreign aid, capacity building, technical assistance and the like (Le Billon, 2014, p.215).

The institutional perspective to the natural resource curse can explain some predatory behaviour and poor development outcomes, however, it places the blame for economic and political mismanagement directly on the inflicted state, obscuring the role the international capitalist system can play in their bad behaviour. Dominant interests often support and benefit from the poor behaviour of many resource rich states (Obi, 2010, p.489). The institutional and other common framings of the natural resource curse often fail to consider the ‘curse’ as a “political and economic construct, a product of a particular constellation of extractive transnational social forces, histories and hegemonic power relations...” (Obi, 2010, p.489). There is too much attention

given to how resource can cause poverty, corruption and conflict instead of focusing on the historical construction of grievances and the other potential cause for conflict.

While many scholars still believe in the ideas behind the resource curse, they do not claim resource-rich economies would be better off without their resources as it is still believed natural resources can promote development when managed effectively through sufficient institutions (Badeeb *et al.*, 2017, p.124). Similarly, Auty (2007), Bannon and Collier (2003), Basedau (2005), Deacon and Rode (2012), Le Billon (2014) among others, do not see the curse as inevitable. The resource curse has been acknowledged to be an oversimplification (Basedau, 2005, p.23) as the political economy of individual states are distinct, but it has remained as the dominant narrative of resource-based countries as it is a relatively simple proposition.

#### NATURAL RESOURCES CONNECTION TO CONFLICT

Authors such as Ross (2003), Collier (2007), and Le Billon (2014) link natural resources to conflict. There are many cases which have shown natural resource and conflict to be connected but the extent to which natural resources contribute to conflict, either in financing or motivation, is still debated with Le Billon stating “the central question is not whether resources and wars are connected, but how” (p.10). Humphreys (2005) lays out six mechanisms that could explain the relationship between natural resources and conflict, including the ‘greedy rebels’, ‘greedy outsiders’, ‘grievance’, ‘feasibility’, ‘weak state’, and ‘sparse networks’ mechanisms.

The “greedy rebels” mechanism explains that rebel groups will participate in “quasi-criminal” activity to gain wealth from natural resources (Collier, 2007, p.33; Humphreys, 2005, p.511; Ross, 2003, p.25). Rebel groups are “pulled” into conflict motivated by greed, where they can enrich themselves through conflict, as war has become a very profitable endeavor (Brunnschweiler & Bulte, 2009, p.652; Le Billon, 2014, p.17; Wennmann, 2011, p.266). Under this mechanism, rebel groups are considered rational and opportunistic actors, exploiting natural

resources to obtain excessive rents, seeking to take over the state to control access to resources rather than to reform state institutions (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004, p.565; Daniele, 2011, p.546; Le Billon, 2014, p.13).

The “greedy outsiders” mechanism focuses on the role neighbouring states and companies play in fostering or engaging in conflict for access to natural resources (Humphreys, 2005, p.511). This occurs through inter-state conflict; where a country invades another to gain control over strategic resources, or through intra-state conflict; where rebel groups are bankrolled by foreign governments or diaspora communities (Bannon & Collier, 2003, p.4; Le Billon, 2014, p.12). One benefit in supporting conflict in another state is for what Ross (2003) has termed as “booty futures”; the sale of resource futures, or rights to mineral rich land or operations when the rebel group is successful in taking over the state (p.32).

The “grievance” mechanism highlights conflicts motivated by real or perceived grievances of citizens and rebel groups (Humphreys, 2005, p.511). Grievance motivations stem from perpetuated horizontal inequalities in access to natural resources, profits or resource rents, or benefits based on different characteristics or identity markers with real or imagined disadvantages “pushing” actors into conflict (Le Billon, 2014, p.17; Wennmann, 2011, p.266). Natural resource extraction has many externalities including land appropriation, migration, and overcrowding (Humphreys, 2005, p.511; Le Billon, 2014, p.13; Wennmann, 2011, p.266). Grievances are most pronounced in communities bearing the brunt of extraction but not being included in the benefits because of elite capture and patronage politics (Lujala, 2014, p.121). The differences between greed and grievance motivations are often confused when looking at rebel group activity. For instance, recruitment into rebel groups is framed as opportunistic, however, many recruits join up with rebel groups because they have few employment options and are often living in poverty (Ross,

2003, p.21; Webersik & Levy, 2016, p.49). Unemployment and poverty result from real economic grievances against predatory political institutions and should not categorize actors as opportunistic.

The “feasibility” mechanism outlines how natural resources are used to finance and sustain conflicts, regardless of whether they motivated the conflict (Humphreys, 2005, p.511). Conflict is expensive and is not feasible without financial backing or means to obtain it. When natural resources can be captured, conflict becomes financially and military feasible (Le Billon, 2014, p. 13; Lujala, 2014, p.126). The extent to which a resource can be used to finance the conflict depends on what has been termed “lootability” or the ability of actors to cease and sell the resources through illegitimate sources during times of conflict (Brunnschweiler & Bulte, 2009, p.653; Lujala, 2014, p.122; Webersik & Levy, 2016, p.40). This is seen to have an “opportunity effect” where revenues, both legitimate and illegitimate, are captured by different actors as an opportunity to fund their activities (Le Billon 2014: 17). Lootability can also impact the structure of rebel movements as high value lootable resources can cause groups to fracture to enrich themselves, sparking warlordism (Lujala, 2014, p. 126).

The “weak state” mechanism occurs when the state is too weak to prevent conflict, particularly conflict that arises based on group grievances (Humphreys, 2005, p.512). Corruption and patronage can cause natural resources to have an “institutional weakening effect”, ultimately causing a lack of legitimacy of state institutions as states no longer need to be accountable to their citizens due to a lack of taxation (Bruch *et al.*, 2016, p.44; Brunnschweiler & Bulte, 2009, p.652; Busse & Gröning, 2013, p.2; Le Billon, 2014, p.16; Lujala, 2014, p.122; Ross, 2003, p.24).

The “sparse network” mechanism reflects the small clusters of economic activity in the country with few continues outside the capital as a result of low levels of diversification and Dutch disease effects preventing robust manufacturing and service sectors (Humphreys, 2005, p.513).

This causes grievances among the population as benefit from resource extraction is often taken out of the region and used to serve the political and military elite in the capital (Humphreys, 2005, p.513; Lujala, 2014, p.122). The enclave nature of many extraction activities enable them to continue during conflict as they are not dependent on other sectors, often making it key to financing conflict on both sides (Bannon & Collier, 2003, p.7). This mechanism further explains both how natural resources can be the cause of conflict and help to sustain it.

Humphreys disputes Collier and Hoeffler's (2004) claim greed of rebel groups caused conflict over natural resources (p.565), providing more complexity to the greed and grievance debate. Humphreys (2005), Keen (2001, 2012), Cramer (2002) and other authors have further added to the debate by pushing back against the dichotomous nature of the argument, arguing it was rare for a conflict to have a sole motivation. Cramer adds to the debate as he outlines how greed and grievance are correlated, with greed behaviour often starting off as well-founded grievances (p.1853). Keen also relates the two concepts, focusing on how the greedy can manipulate the grievances of others (Cramer, 2002, p.1853). These debates were an important step forward in the literature as they questioned the dichotomous nature of the motivations of conflict and has allowed the narratives of resource conflicts to be questioned.

## **CHAPTER 2: NARRATIVES OF THE CONGO**

The dominant narratives that influence the policy narratives in the Congo follow the structure outlined in the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF). Although all narratives concerning the Congo do not have the exact same setting, characters, plot, and moral, they have common elements that form policy narratives on resource extraction.

## SETTING

The setting of narratives provides the outline of the policy problem and provides the relevant contextual information. Narratives of the Congo argue the main policy problem in the Congo are related to mineral resources being used to motivate and sustain conflict. In order to provide context as to why minerals are used to fuel conflict, the idea of the natural resource curse and greed-based motives for conflict are drawn on. The Congo is rich in mineral resources including copper, gold, diamonds, tantalum, tin, tungsten, cobalt, and uranium, as well as other strategically important resources such as oil and timber (Daniele, 2011, p. 563). Despite the vast amounts of natural resources, resource wealth has not translated into country wealth or development. Trefon (2016) refers to the Congo as being “a rich country with poor people” (p.2). The Congo is often seen as the prime example of the natural resource curse with Lalji (2007) stating; “nowhere has the mismanagement of abundant natural resources manifested itself more visibly than in the DRC” (p.34). The Congo is said to have many of the features of the natural resource curse as it suffers from high rates of corruption, overblown public expenditures due to political pressure to spend rather than save or invest revenue, and low political will and institutional capacity to effectively manage their resources (International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2019, p.10). Between 2014 and 2017, natural resource extraction accounted for 95% of export earnings, 25-26% of GDP, and about a third of government revenue (IMF, 2019, p.11). The mining industry has significant macroeconomic impacts on the rest of the economy as non-resource-based sectors remain underdeveloped due to poor economic policy and incentives for rent-seeking behaviour (Trefon, 2016, p.119). The Congo began to succumb to Dutch disease under Mobutu’s rule, where between 1961 and 1978, the Congo’s (then Zaire), percentage share of the top three exports (all minerals, topped by copper) grew from 52% to more than 91% of total exports (Dunning, 2005, p.465). Mobutu’s lack of diversification was a calculated political decision that maintained his grip

on political power, causing both fiscal and economic volatility (Dunning, 2005, p.453; Lalji, 2007, p.34). While resource rents from copper were high, Mobutu appropriated the rents and used foreign funding toward major infrastructure projects that served to legitimize him as an “African big man” to regional and western leaders, but did little to help the development of the country (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002, p.143; Trefon, 2013, p.150). The downturn in copper prices ultimately threatened Mobutu’s power as his extensive patronage networks could not be maintained, politically destabilizing the country (Dunning, 2005, p.471; Matti, 2010, p.405;). In the Mobutu period, the legacy of corruption and patrimonial politics was solidified on the foundation of lootable resources. It has been estimated that while in power, Mobutu and his associates plundered between \$4 and \$10 billion of the country’s wealth (Dunn, 2003, p.140; Matti, 2010, p.403). The “institutionalized theft and corruption” (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002, p.152) did not end with the end of Mobutu’s rule, with Matti (2010) stating that “while Mobutu's personal corruption was significant, the establishment of a political tradition of corruption and patrimonialism was more pervasive” (p.405). Patrimonialism and clientelism were alive and well under the Kabila regime, preventing the establishment of transparent or accountable institutions (Lalji, 2007, p.34; Matti, 2010, p.405; Wennmann, 2011, p.113). Appropriation of public resources for personal and political status and wealth has established as the dominant economic and political system of the Congo, leaving no room for resource wealth to be used toward development (Trefon, 2016, p.150).

Natural Resource abundance and the ill effects it has had on the Congo have also been linked to the conflict the country has witnessed. The Congo experienced two wars, the First Congo War (1996-1997), and the Second Congo War (1998-2003), and has continued bouts of conflict in the eastern region since 2003 (Le Billon, 2014, p.159). The human cost of the conflict in the Congo has been staggering with the BBC (2019) estimating the ongoing conflict has claimed up to six

million lives as a direct result of fighting and the accompanying disease and malnutrition. The BBC reports the “fighting was fueled by the country’s vast mineral wealth, with all sides taking advantage of the anarchy to plunder natural resources”. Although other, more complex causes of conflict are acknowledged, the illegal exploitation of mineral resources is portrayed as the main source of violence in the dominant narratives of the Congo (Autesserre, 2010, p.63; Autesserre, 2012, p.210; de Koning, 2011, p.4). The unregulated nature of extractive sectors and the lack of government control over the eastern areas of the country have allowed greedy actors to gain unrestricted access to minerals and establish lucrative trading networks (Global Witness, 2009, p.51). The “militarization of mineral commodity chains” has been enabled by the failure to prevent foreign and local rebel groups from taking control, has maintained the instability in the eastern regions and will continue to displace local populations, and drive violence and vast human rights violations if the conflict is not ended (Achu Samndong& Nhantumbo, 2015, p.11; de Koning, 2011, p.4). The setting for many policy narratives have remained linked to mismanagement of natural resources causing conflict in the country where many actors including rebel and other armed groups, including the Congolese army, and outside actors such as neighbouring countries, western governments, and foreign companies, have put their ambitions for power and greed above protection of local populations and country development.

## CHARACTERS

The characters in policy narratives play a key role in the audience understanding and relating to the narrative. The characters often fall into common narrative tropes including the presence of ‘villains’, ‘victims’, and ‘heroes’. In the policy narratives concerning resource extraction in the Congo, there are often changing casts of main characters depending on the purpose of the narrative and who is telling it. Main actors often play different roles or characters in different narratives, however, the main grouping of characters are as follows. The ‘villains’,

those that cause harm, or the policy problem, have become seen as responsible for the extraction of natural resources, and by extension, the conflict in the Congo. The first group of actors that could be labelled as ‘villains’ are the rebel groups. This includes groups such as the defunct Alliance des Forces démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo (AFDL), Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple (CNDP) and the local Mai Mai groups (Global Witness, 2009). Rebel groups are seen to have been motivated to start the conflict in the Congo to take control over resource extraction and fuel their own greed. In the most recent conflict, the Congolese armed forces; Forces armées de la république démocratique du Congo (FARDC), have begun to be seen as perpetrators in the conflict based on their involvement in the illicit extraction and trade of minerals, sometimes at the expense of their protection of local communities (de Koning, 2011, p.26). Neighbouring countries, Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi are often seen in a villainous light as they have funded rebel groups, have taken control over mineral extraction operations, and because they allow the illicit trade of conflict minerals to pass through their borders (de Koning, 2011, p.10; Global Witness, 2009, p.15). Western governments and companies have also been cast in a villain role as they have not done enough to prevent the conflict over resources (Autesserre, 2010, p.18; Trefon, 2016, p. 122). International consumers can also be seen as a cause in the conflict based on their demand for consumer electronics (Trefon, 2016, p. 132).

Regardless of which actors are cast as the ‘villain’, women and girls are frequently cast as the ‘victims’. ‘Victims’ are those who are harmed by the problem and by the ‘villains’. Sexual violence has been widespread in the conflict with Congo being referred to as the “rape capital of the world” and the “most dangerous place on earth to be a woman” (Autesserre, 2012, p.214). This framing has been used more often in the current conflict in the eastern region than in past conflicts,

particularly by advocacy groups (Autesserre, 2012, p.214). This is not to say there are no other victims in the Congo conflicts, but they are not spoken of nearly as much.

Many of the actors labelled as ‘villains’ also have the ability to act as ‘heroes’ or the actors who will protect victims and provide solutions to the policy problem. International companies can prevent the conflict in the Congo by ensuring they are sourcing from certified conflict-free mines and ensure their due diligence throughout their supply chain. Similarly, consumers and governments can use their influence to lobby companies to take appropriate measure when sourcing minerals from the Congo (de Koning, 2011, p.1; Eichstaedt, 2011, L1767; Enough Project, 2017, p.3). This will help these actors become part of the solution rather than part of the problem. The role these characters have had in relation to the conflict in the Congo will be further explained in the following section concerning the common plot points.

## PLOT

The plot of policy narratives establishes the relationships between the characters and situates them in the setting of the policy. The plot also provides causal explanation to the policy problem. In the narratives of the Congo, it is assumed natural resource extraction has motivated and sustained conflict in the country. In part, increase in conflict can be caused by the mismanagement of resources which have led the Congo to fall under the natural resource curse as explained in the setting. However, there are a series of additional causal mechanisms that are used to explain the occurrence of conflict over resources in the Congo, while maintaining the same policy problem and contextual setting.

## GREEDY REBELS MECHANISM

The first dominant plot point used to explain the connection of conflict in the Congo and natural resources is what Humphreys (2005) referred to as the “greedy rebels” mechanism (p.511). Under this mechanism, it is explained the rebel groups under Laurent Kabila during the First Congo

War were not seeking revolution but rather fought for power over the country to access the vast natural resources the country had to enrich themselves and their networks, particularly those who helped Kabila seize power (Basedau, 2005, p.18). Collier (2007) utilizes this understanding, when he writes about Kabila once telling a journalist all he needed to take the Congo was \$10,000; to recruit a militia, and a satellite phone; to make deals with foreign backers on mineral concessions (p.21). Collier highlights the greed of rebel groups, calling rebel groups “good at public relations” as they are able to appear just in their conquests, but that it was difficult to find “well-founded grievances” (p.22). To further this point, he states; “rebels usually have something to complain about, and they don’t they make it up” (p.24).

Throughout the Second Congo War, rebel groups formed to oppose the governments of Laurent (1997–2001) and Joseph Kabila (2001–2019), following the same strategies. Although the rebel groups would not have as much success in taking control of the country, they were able to take over the illegal or unregulated mineral trade to exercise control over particular regions or “spheres of influence” (de Koning, 2011, p.2; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002, p.227). The Congolese government and armed forces have been unable to stop rebel and other militia activity in the eastern region, allowing them to consolidate their economic bases without significant challenge (Global Witness, 2009, p.4). The FDLR have been able to illegally operate mines unchecked, enabling its leaders to gain wealth at the expense of natural resource wealth being drained out of the Congo (Global Witness, 2009, p.38). The examples from both the First and Second Congo Wars solidifies rebel groups as ‘villains’ in this re-telling as they are acting for greed and not based on the greater good of the Congo. It is recognized by organizations such as Global Witness that rebel groups form for a series of “diverse and complex factors, often rooted in local dynamics”, but it has been

claimed rebel groups are lured away from their original objectives toward the prospects of economic opportunism, corruption, and patronage politics (Global Witness, 2009, pp.16-17).

During the ongoing conflict in the east, it has become clear the Congolese armed forces, the FARDC, are involved in the extraction and trade of illicit minerals. Categorizing the FARDC alongside rebel groups as complacent, and even as villainous, is a causal shift in many policy narratives as it recognizes the role the government has played in the conflict, either by endorsing military looting, or in their inability to prevent it, which is largely absent from earlier accounts. The FARDC have been present at mineral extraction sites for some time with the stated purpose of preventing rebel groups from looting, protecting civilian populations, and to cut off rebel supply chains. However, the FARDC have been participating in the mineral trade, often using resources from areas under their protection (de Koning, 2011, p.26). Although high-ranking military officials claim looting only occurs at the lower levels as soldiers act in their own self-interest, Global Witness claims looting is widespread and well-organized, where the funds are channeled up the military hierarchy to enrich the military elite (Global Witness, 2009, p.25). To further the point the military has greed-based motives of self-enrichment, it has been shown that FARDC troop deployments are often focused around large mines or trading centres, often placing smaller communities with fewer resources vulnerable to looting by other armed groups. According to the UN Group of Experts, as cited by de Koning (2011), a number of villages in Walikale, North Kivu were left unprotected when they were looted and where mass rapes took place in July 2010 as the FARDC units were competing for control of Bisie mines (p.26). This portrayal further complicates the roles actors play, providing an explanation for what has occurred without a sharp distinction between who the 'victims', 'villains', or 'heroes' are.

## GREEDY OUTSIDER MECHANISM

Another common plot in policy narratives concerns what Humphreys (2005) refers to as the “greedy outsider” mechanism, where third parties enable and participate in the conflict as a way to gain access to natural resources causing or worsening the issues of resource extraction in the Congo (p.511). In the case of the Congo, the greedy outsiders include several prominent characters such as neighbouring countries; Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi, western governments, and international companies. According to the narrative, the “lusting foreigners” greed has precipitated a multinational war in the Congo (Lalji, 2007, p.34). The neighbouring countries of Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi have been involved in the conflict in the Congo following their backing of Kabila to overthrow Mobutu at the start of the First Congo War (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002, p.215). Although mineral extraction may not have been the cause of conflict, most external forces financed their war efforts with revenues from the Congo’s resources (Global Witness, 2009, p.70; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002, p.9). Once Kabila had successfully taken over the country with assistance from Rwanda and Uganda, their leadership believed themselves to be “entitled to determine the Congo’s destiny” and wished to maintain their control over the mineral resources in the country (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002, p.215). When Kabila resisted, foreign forces and foreign-funded Congolese rebel groups attacked the country to retain their control over natural resources. In recent years, explicit government involvement from Rwanda lessened, however the Rwandan elite continue to profit through sponsored rebel groups such as the FDLR (Global Witness, 2009, p.70). In addition to direct involvement in the conflict, neighbouring countries have remained complacent in the trade of illegal mineral resources as they allow supposed conflict minerals to pass through their borders and into supply chains without doing their due diligence to prevent the illegal trade (Global Witness, 2009, p.15). It is likely countries have continued to support rebel groups and allow for the trade to continue in their borders because they have been provided no

incentive to ensure minerals are certified conflict-free as they can levy export duties regardless of mineral origin (de Koning, 2011, p.10).

Along a similar vein, some policy narratives highlight the role western governments have played as they fail to adequately address the conflict in the Congo because they are more concerned about consistent access to strategically important mineral resources than they are about the fate of the Congo, as the Congo itself is not considered of strategic importance (Autesserre, 2010, p.18; Trefon, 2016, p. 122). It is argued because western actors put a strategic importance on minerals such as coltan during the tech boom, the western media has also downplayed the impacts of the mineral trade on the conflict in the Congo, obscuring western involvement and complacency (Lalji, 2007, p.35). Western governments could also do more to ensure companies headquartered in their countries are following due diligence and other requirements to ensure their minerals are conflict-free. It is believed companies hold a lot of power in the illicit trade of minerals, as their refusal to purchase conflict minerals can stop the money supply to rebel and other armed groups. By not ensuring all minerals are considered conflict-free, international actors are enabling the more profitable illegal trade to continue (de Koning, 2011, p.27). A recurrent argument of international companies is that it would be “extremely difficult or impractical for them to track every stage of their supply chain and obtain information about the suppliers and origin of every single component”, particularly as they have large numbers of suppliers and even more sources of supplies (Global Witness, 2009, p.63). To do so would require a new way of doing business, a solution often called for by civil and advocacy groups such as Global Witness and the Enough Project. Under this narrative, it is not only governments and companies that should be involved, as international consumers are enabling these practices as they are not lobbying against them (Trefon, 2016, p.132). Eichstaedt (2011), a prominent journalist, writes; “the lives and deaths of

these millions of Congolese are linked to us all. Each time we use our mobile phone, use a video game console, or open a tin can, we hold the lives and deaths of the eastern Congolese in our hands” (L124). It is believed International consumers should lobby international companies to ensure their supply chains are conflict-free.

### FEASIBILITY MECHANISM

The last common plot point regards the “feasibility mechanism”, which explains how natural resources make conflict possible as they provide rebel and state groups with the funding they require to begin and sustain conflict. Regardless of the characters or the context, it has become hard to dispute resources have been used to fund, sustain, and worsen conflict in the Congo and elsewhere (Autesserre, 2012, p.211; Collier, 2007, p.21; Daniele, 2011, p.564). Breaking away from the greed motivation, authors such as Basedau (2005), Autesserre (2010, 2012), and Le Billion (2014) question whether resources are the root cause of conflict as is often suspected, while also agreeing resources prolong conflict. Lootable resources easily appropriated and hard to trace are linked to the conflict in the east (Basedau, 2005, p.25). Daniele (2011) argues alluvial diamonds in the Kasai and Kivu regions were the main source of finance for conflict between the years of 1998-2003 (p.564). Although it is questionable the foreign governments of Rwanda and Uganda invaded the country only to loot its resources, the resources provided an important financing strategy for their cross-border activities, prolonging the time they spent in the country (de Koning, 2011, p.15; Le Billion, 2014, p.36). Another interesting case of looting concerns gold, particularly gold passed through Burundi. The gold produced in South Kivu and exported through Burundi is often looted and passed off as Burundian gold. As Burundi is profiting off the export of conflict gold, they have a stake in the conflict and could act to prolong it (Global Witness, 2009, p.74).

## MORAL

In policy narratives the policy solution is often framed as the moral of the story. The moral of several policy narrative in the Congo has been to prevent mineral resources from being used to fuel conflict through regulation in the mining sector, statebuilding, and consumer activism. By regulating the industry and adding in transparency and accountability measures it is assumed conflict over resources will be prevented as rebel and other armed groups will be cut off from supply chains and therefore no longer able to profit from illicit capture of resources (de Koning, 2011, p.28; Trefon, 2016, pp.132-133). As the extractive industries in the Congo often lack transparency and accountability, many international initiatives are built on improving and formalizing the monitoring the supply chain of key minerals (de Koning, 2011, p.28; g7+, 2014, p.38). Some initiatives include the Dodd-Frank Provision on Conflict Minerals, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Certification Mechanism, the Kimberly Process, and the OECD issued Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas (African Development Bank (AfDB), 2016, pp.25-27). Enforcing the need for transparency will displace rebel and armed groups from the supply chain, but corporations still need to ensure their due diligence and disclose where their minerals and other supplies come from, maintaining strict refusal on suppliers who purchase from mines controlled by armed groups or that cannot provide a conflict-free certification (Eichstaedt, 2011, L1767). Monitoring of the trade of minerals needs to be complete and unbiased, with all actors working together to ensure conflict minerals do not reach market (Lalji, 2007, p.37). Preventing the illegal trade of minerals can help to prevent the conflict in the eastern region as long as national and international actors follow and work toward the same goals. Congolese and international actors share the objective of wanting steady, transparent, and conflict-free trade in minerals (de Koning, 2011, p.1). Working toward state and peacebuilding objectives will help to reconstitute state

authority and enable the Congolese government to exercise control over the region (Autesserre, 2012, p.211). A growth in legal trade of minerals in the Congo will increase government revenue which can be invested into creating functioning institutions with increased capacity building and extended focus on rule of law (de Koning, 2011, p.26). There are also pushes from advocacy groups such as the Enough Project to involve consumers in making decisions to buy conflict-free and in demanding companies ensure their supply chains are clean. In a campaign video published in 2017, the founding director of the Enough Project; John Prendergast, connects anyone who purchases cell phones, laptops, or other products requiring minerals connected to the conflict in the Congo. Prendergast goes on to state “but because we’re connected, we can do something about it”, amplifying that consumers are able to pressure and lobby companies because they hold “enormous influence over the behaviour of companies”. The statements have held true as consumer influence and pressure has caused a change in behaviour in some consumer electronics companies notably Apple and Google; particularly in regards to their compliance to due diligence and on their advocacy efforts including in their enforcement of Dodd-Frank mineral provisions (Enough Project, 2017, p.3). The moral of policy narratives has continued to focus on certification and transparency and statebuilding measure to build up the capacity of the Congolese state, with additional support and pressure coming directly from consumers.

### WHY NARRATIVES TAKE HOLD

Narratives are shaped and re-shaped over time by advocacy groups, perpetuated by media, and solidified in policy. Based on policy analysis literature and critiques of the narratives of the Congo, there are three main reasons why the narratives presented above have taken hold. First, the narratives are built on simple causes of conflict with clear solutions. Second, the narratives fit into the “Heart of Darkness” trope, under which many view the increased levels of violence as ‘normal’. Third, the solutions rely on western intervention and statebuilding. Narratives of the

conflict in the Congo have established a series of frames that shape our views on what will be defined as a problem, what events or consequences will be highlighted, and how they will be interpreted to find a solution (Autesserre, 2012, pp.206-207). Put in terms of the NPF, narratives are determined or framed by which setting, characters, plot, and moral are used. Narratives orient action, authorize or legitimize methods of intervention, and determine what should be paid attention to (Autesserre, 2012, p.207). Narratives are more persuasive and resonate more with the public and can be used more effectively by activists to raise money and lobby governments when they are simple and emotional (McBeth *et al.*, 2014, p.235). Campaigns and policies often draw on the frame of conflict minerals and greedy rebels as it is simple, understandable, and something that had been told often enough to make sense to those not familiar with the context of the Congo (Autesserre, 2012, p.211). Solutions framed around consumer activism and support are also effective as they draw consumers into the problem, making it resonate more as many will want to be part of the solution (Autesserre, 2012, p.211). Narrative persuasiveness often appeals to emotion, framing the consequences of the conflict around victim impact stories. This method has been very successful in drawing attention to the high rates of sexual violence in the Congo. The narrative surrounding sexual violence has been able to capture attention so completely as there is an emotional impact as it concerns violence against those socially constructed to be most vulnerable, women and girls, and because it is a sort of violence audiences can understand because sexual violence is something that occurs everywhere (Autesserre, 2012, p.215). Wide-spread sexual violence is seen as more extreme than other forms of violence because it is considered taboo even in the context of war, Eichstaedt (2011) writes of the epidemic of sexual violence in the Congo as defying “description and explanation” (L1076) and “the result of a total social breakdown brought on by war” (L988). This understanding of the Congo as a place that defies

explanation or rationale is used effectively in the narratives of conflict being caused by natural resources as it seems to fit well into what is already understood about the Congo.

The second reason these narratives have taken hold is based on the reader's confirmation bias, where individuals are quicker to understand and believe something that already matches their beliefs and knowledge (McBeth *et al.*, 2014, p.232). The images that shape how the west has understood the Congo come from many different places, Dunn (2003) presents a list including; "*Heart of Darkness*; Tarzan; *National Geographic*; media reports on the Ebola virus, AIDS, famine, or continuing 'tribal violence'" among other examples (p.5). The most influential has been "the Heart of Darkness" trope; where the Congo is portrayed in a stereotypically primitive and backward way as it was portrayed in Joseph Conrad's novella of the same name. Many authors still refer to the Congo as the Heart of Darkness to underscore how poorly the country has developed, invoking the idea the country has not made progress since it was colonialized; where "the Congo's horror is unchanged" (Lalji, 2007, p.34). Eichstaedt (2011) likewise mentions "the story Conrad told about the Congo has not changed much over the century. It continues to be a land of chaos, carnage, and plunder" (L3508). Even when authors do not directly refer to the Congo as the Heart of Darkness, it is common for Congo to be portrayed as chaotic, backward, primitive, and lacking rationale (Dunn, 2003, p.5; Eichstaedt, 2011, L1159). By employing the trope of the Heart of Darkness, the Congo is also seen as an inherently violence place, where barbarism and savagery fit into the western stereotypes and justify western intervention (Autesserre, 2010, p.77). This has also led to a "normalization of violence" where the "constant pattern of violence against populations by people in power" is not seen as political but rather criminal and greed filled (Autesserre, 2010, p.75). Because the violence in the Congo fits into what the west already assumes about the Congo, the country has come to "symbolize the failures of a post-colonial Africa plagued

by civil war, corrupt governments, health crises, and dire poverty” (Dunn, 2003, p.9). As the Congo has been unable to break out of the violent cycle, western intervention is justified.

Western intervention and re-constitution of state authority in the eastern regions of the country are seen as the way to stop the illegal trade of minerals and therefore end the conflict (Autesserre, 2012, p. 218). In another case of confirmation bias, statebuilding under western authority makes sense as a solution because we have seen it many times before fitting well into the white-savior complex. The idea the west should help to solve problems in Africa is a common one. For instance, Collier (2007) states that “[The Congo] is likely to be stuck in a conflict trap no matter how many times it rebrands itself unless *we do something about it*” (emphasis added, p.34). Quotes such as these reinforce the Congo as a “failed” or “fragile” state that is helpless or hopeless until they reach a level of modernity or development in the western image (Autesserre, 2012, p.208; Dunn, 2003, p.14). Western intervention has often led to the causes, consequences, and solutions to the conflict in the eastern region to be considered from a top-down perspective, maintaining the dominant narratives and sidelining narratives or discourses that do not fit into their understanding (Autesserre, 2010, p.45). Forwarding a narrow understanding or narrative cannot capture the required complexity, causing “well-meaning international efforts” having unintended or inadvertent consequences (Autesserre, 2012, p.204).

Just because these narratives have been the ones to take hold and we can understand how, it does not mean they can be taken unproblematically. Using language and topics that resonate with western audiences can gain attention, but it can also have unforeseen consequences. For instance, the increased attention on sexual violence has caused it to become a “buzzword” organizations can use to obtain funding, diverting funds away from other forms of violence such as mass killing and child soldier recruitment (Autesserre, 2012, p.214; Eriksson Baaz & Stern,

2010, p.12). As sexual violence is now prominent in media reports in the west, rebel groups have used it as a tactic to gain notoriety or as a political bargaining tool to get themselves as seat at the negotiating table (Autesserre, 2012, p.216). It has also led to the commercialization of sexual violence, where women have claimed they are survivors to access services such as medical care and other services and to “establish themselves as legitimate recipients of humanitarian aid” (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2010, p.54). This can be damaging as it may cause more suspicion of survivors and may even led to efforts to discredit them which could provide further trauma. Similarly, seeing the Congo as inherently violent, chaotic, backward, and uncivilized/uncivilizable provides a justification for western intervention (Autesserre, 2010, p.77; Dunn, 2003, p.6). Paradoxically, the narrative recognizes the role the west has played in the sustained conflict while also relying on western intervention to “solve” the problem (Dunn, 2003, p.174). Viewing the Congo through western understanding of modernity and development can often lead to alternative or competing views to be silenced (Autesserre, 2012, p.208; Dunn, 2003, p.14). This causes many things to be excluded from the dominant narratives including alternative causes of conflict in the region, well-founded grievances, and the role that natural resources could play in the peacebuilding process.

### **CHAPTER 3: POLICY INITIATIVES IN THE CONGO**

Policy initiatives continue to be constrained by their overreliance on dominant narratives that provide a narrow understanding of the conflict and of the Congo itself (de Koning, 2011, p.3; Trefon, 2016, p.133). Policy responses towards natural resource extraction in the Congo have continued to be founded on preventing the illegal extraction and trade of minerals through traceability and certification schemes (Diemel & Hilhorst, 2018, p.454). The influx of policy initiatives, both regional and international, have reinforced the negative image and reputation of

mineral extraction in the Congo, with the initiatives created to address the conflict minerals bringing more international attention and therefore more international scrutiny (Matthysen & Montejano, 2013, p.35). In the Congo, there have been inadvertent consequences of policy interventions built on the dominant narratives. This section will examine two prominent policy interventions in the Congo; the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-affected and High-Risk Areas and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) Mineral Tracking and Certification Scheme, to determine the amount the drafting of the policies have relied on dominant policy narratives and how this has had inadvertent consequences.

#### OECD DUE DILIGENCE GUIDANCE

The OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-affected and High-Risk Areas (henceforth referred to as the OECD Guidance) is a multi-stakeholder initiative on the responsible extraction of minerals from conflict-affected and other high-risk areas was adopted by OECD member states and non-member adherents on 25 May 2011, with subsequent supplements and reaffirmations released in the third edition in 2016 (OECD, 2016, p.3). It was developed through a series of stakeholder meetings between 2009 and 2011 by the OECD in cooperation with the UN Group of Experts on the DRC, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and private sector and civil society actors (Dam-de Jong, 2020, p.24). The purpose of the OECD Guidance is to help companies respect human rights and avoid contributing to conflict through their sourcing decisions (OECD, 2016, p.4). The OECD Guidance is not legally-binding, but rather “reflects the common position and political commitment of OECD member and non-member adherents” (OECD, 2016, p.4). The OECD Guidance focuses on the role companies can play to ensure their due diligence in the mineral supply chain. The OECD Guidance provides a five-step process to establish strong company management systems, identify

and assess risk in the supply chain, design and implement strategies to respond to risk, carry out independent third-party audits, and report annually (OECD, 2016, pp.17-19). The OECD Guidance is the international standard for responsible mineral sourcing. It was codified into domestic law in the Congo in 2012 (Global Witness, 2017a, p.3).

#### ICGLR MINERAL TRACKING AND CERTIFICATION SCHEME

The ICGLR Mineral Tracking and Certification Scheme also known as the Regional Certification Mechanism (RCM) is a mineral certification process to prevent non-state armed groups and public or private security forces from interfering illegally at any point along the supply chain or committing serious human rights abuses related to this supply chain. The purpose of the scheme is to provide conflict-free mineral chains in and between member states in the Great Lakes Region with “a view to eliminating support to armed groups that sustain or prolong conflict, and/or otherwise engage in serious human rights abuses” (ICGLR, 2011, p.5). The RCM is made up of ten articles that collectively determine the designated minerals for certification and how mineral exports can be certified as ‘conflict-free’ including mine site certification, chain of custody tracking, and export procedures, as well as administrative details such as the obligation for members to follow the process as of 15 December 2012, the use of a common ICGLR database for tracking across borders, and rules around third party verification, roles and responsibilities of the mineral chain auditor, and the appeals procedure (ICGLR, 2011, pp.17-63). It is one tool in the Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources (RINR) started by regional member states in 2009 to break the link between illicit mineral revenue and rebel financing and re-establish and promote sustainable peace and development in the Great Lakes Region (Das, 2017, p.408). Other initiatives include harmonization of national extraction laws across the region, the promotion on artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) and the administration of a whistle-

blowing mechanism (AfDB, 2016, p.25). The Regional Certification Mechanism was adopted into Congolese law in 2012 (Diemel & Hilhorst, 2018, p.458).

#### NARRATIVE POLICY ANALYSIS OF THE OECD GUIDANCE & ICGLR RCM

In analyzing the OECD Guidance and the ICGLR RCM through the NPF as a tool of narrative policy analysis has shown both policies have relied on dominant narratives to formulate their policies, maintaining a similar narrative structure, with similar setting, characters, plots and morals. In terms of their setting and context, both the OECD Guidance and the ICGLR RCM see the main policy problem in the Congo (and Great Lakes Region) as an issue of illicit mineral extraction causing conflict and other human rights violations. Following along with the context dominant policy narratives, the OECD Guidance has stated that mineral supply chains “by their nature” have higher risks of significant adverse impacts such as “financing conflict or fueling, facilitating or exacerbating conditions of conflict” (OECD, 2016, p.14). Both policy initiatives are focused on severing the problematic link between the extraction industry and conflict and stress the consequences of continuing business as usual, as it has led to serious human rights violations, including sexual violence (Diemel & Hilhorst, 2018, pp.460-461). Although neither policy explicitly states that conflict over resources is the main source of conflict in the region, they also do not examine other potential causes of conflict. The policies have similar characters as the policy narratives focusing on the ideas of ‘greedy rebel groups’ including state forces who engage in illegal activity as their main ‘villains’. The OECD Guidance “will not tolerate any direct or indirect support to non-state armed groups through the extraction, transport, trade, handling or export of minerals” and “agree to eliminate...direct or indirect support to public or private security forces who illegal control mine sites” (OECD, 2016, pp.21-22). Similarly, the ICGLR states “that armed groups engaged in illegal activity and/or serious human rights violations can include both rebel movements ... and otherwise legal armed units from the army or police or other national force

acting illegally” (ICGRL, 2011, p.2). For ‘heroes’, the two policies take a different approach from each other, but still fit into the broader policy narratives. The OECD Guidance places companies who follow due diligence guidance and have appropriate transparency in their supply chains and the governments that ensure their companies follow the guidelines in the role of heroes. The ICGLR RCM has their member governments in the Great Lakes Region as the main solvers of the problem when they follow the certification process to ensure no conflict-free minerals enter or exit their borders. Both policies also see the Congolese government as playing a key role in the processes as a “legitimate and capable actor” (Diemel & Hilhorst, 2018, p.465). For the plot, both policies follow the plot thread that greedy rebel groups including state forces engaging in illegal activity, have caused conflict over mineral resources in the Great Lakes Region. They also follow the idea of the feasibility mechanism, where rebel groups will only continue to cause conflict and commit human rights violations if it is feasible to do so through the sale of illicit minerals. It is believed conflict can end if rebel groups are displaced from mineral supply chains. This leads well into the moral of these policies which focus broadly on the legal trade of mineral resources from the Congo in order to provide steady, transparent, and conflict-free minerals to international companies. The OECD Guidance focuses on transparency in company supply chains and appropriate risk management, whereas the ICGLR RCM focuses on the certification process within state to ensure their minerals can be sold and certified as conflict-free.

### CRITIQUE OF POLICY APPROACHES

When using the methods of narrative policy analysis is not to determine whether policy is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ but to look more deeply into the narratives it has relied on and what impact they could have had on the policy. Both the OECD Guidance and the ICGLR RCM rely on the dominant narratives of resource extraction in the Great Lakes Region, often stemming from the Congo. The over-reliance on these narratives have caused them to have some problems in their

design and implementation. This has caused the policies to be missing complexity when examining the role of the state, have slow and inconsistent implementation, have a narrow view on the connection between resource extraction and conflict in the Congo, and have had unintended consequences, impacting the livelihoods of many in the Congo.

As stated above, the policies examined see the state as being a legitimate and capable actor in the prevention of resources being used to fund conflict. There is an acknowledgement state forces can participate in the illegal trade of minerals, but the understanding in the policy is that government or military looting occur at lower levels. It also assumes the state and military are only a threat to natural resource wealth and development when mines are taken over. The policy assumes the state to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. It has been estimated that between 2013 and 2015, more than \$750 million of mining revenues paid by companies to state bodies were lost. Global Witness (2017b) have made the case through their investigations and interviews, that this money was most likely funneled into the “dysfunctional state-owned mining company” or distributed through the patronage network of former president Joseph Kabila (p.6). Regardless of where the money actually ended up, it never passed through the treasury and was never able to be used for the benefit of Congolese citizens. The role of the Congolese state should not be taken as all negative, as according to Global Witness (2017a) the Congo’s Ministry of Mines was the only ministry in the region to post company due diligence reports on their website, which at least signals an effort toward more transparency in the mining sector (p.3).

Although there has been improvement in company due diligence and some increased transparency in the mining sector, the policies have seen slow and inconsistent implementation in the Congo and the rest of the Great Lakes region. It is important and commendable the Congo has made both policies law in their countries, but as Global Witness states; “without proper

enforcement these laws mean little” (2017a, p.23). The ICGLR RCM has been mandatory since December 2012 but the structural weakness of the ICGLR secretariat and the lack of political will among its member states have caused it to remain ineffective with minerals from the Congo continuing to be smuggled through neighbouring states (Das, 2017, pp.408-409). The secretariat of the ICGLR remains weak as there is a lack of domestic and regional good governance and because states such as the Congo, do not have effective infrastructure or technical capacity to manage the database system and administrate other elements of the program (Das, 2017, p. 409). The sustainable implementation of complex policy initiatives requires active participation of the Congolese government but most public servants in the Congo lack the necessary capacity or know-how to effectively manage the initiatives (Matthysen & Montejano, 2013, p.40). Member states continue to lack political will to commit to a functioning transparent certification system because it is “controlled by governments that have been involved in the conflict minerals trade for years and thus have both limited political will and capacity to implement the certification on their own” (Enough Project, 2011, p.12; Matthysen & Montejano, 2013, p.38). The Enough Project has quoted a civil society member in the Congo as saying; “This traceability system is just to show to you foreigners...nothing will change”, demonstrating the want of member state governments to maintain the status quo (Enough Project, 2011, p.12). Problems in implementation has had the inadvertent consequence of companies avoiding investing in the Congo because they face difficulties in practicing their due diligence and avoiding risk; effectively boycotting the Congo (Enough Project, 2017, p.14). The lack of certification of mines and the subsequent boycotting, livelihoods of many Congolese have been impacted (Das, 2017, p.412).

The objectives of both policies are to demilitarize mineral supply chain and ensure minerals exported from the Great Lakes Region are certified conflict-free. Neither policy explicitly states

ending the conflict in the Congo is their main objective, but the policies are built on the assumption de-militarizing the supply chain and by ensuring armed groups are not financed through the sale of mineral resources, the conflict will slowly be stopped. In spite of the efforts made in the policies, there has not been a significant reduction of violence in the Congo since their implementation (Das, 2017, p.411). Parker and Vadheim (2017) argue regulation has not reduced violence committed by militias as, at least in the short term, as policy has increased the likelihood armed groups will loot and commit violence against civilians as international intervention cuts off their revenue source and usual incentives for prevention of such behaviour (p.44). There also appears to be a difference in effectiveness of the policy depending on the mineral. There has been progress made in the mining of tin, tantalum and tungsten, however, instead of lessening the amount of conflict, it has caused illegal armed groups to shift their attention towards the artisanal gold sector, where there is still less regulation as implementation has faced increased challenges as gold is notoriously difficult to trace as it can easily be melted down and mixed with licit exports (Diemel & Hilhorst, 2018, p.458; Parker & Vadheim, 2017, p.2; Schütte, 2019, p.675). A common critique cited by Schütte (2019) is that regulations in the Congo have, at best, addressed the symptoms of conflict by addressing one of the ways conflict is financed, but it has failed to reduce militarization in the eastern region of the Congo (p.675).

There have been a series of the consequences of policy initiatives on the livelihoods of Congolese mining communities and small-scale Congolese mineral traders (Diemel & Hilhorst, 2018, p.458; Schütte, 2019, p.675). These consequences should be considered inadvertent, as the actions of international companies and governments along with those of the Congolese government, were purposeful in their efforts to lessen the impact of conflict due to mineral resources in the Congo, but the effects the policies would have were not (Shanahan *et al.*, 2014,

p.72). The increased scrutiny in the mining sector in the Congo in anticipation of the implementation of several international initiatives, former president Joseph Kabila imposed a *de facto* ban on mineral extraction in the Kivus from September 2010 to March 2011, which had “a paralyzing effect on the regional economy and a dramatic impact on living conditions” as it made small-scale mining illegal and caused the production of the 3T minerals to significantly drop (de Koning, 2011, p.9; Trefon, 2016, p.133). The ban was intended to accelerate demilitarization of mining area but it was unsuccessful as rebel factions took over mining operations that were “banned” and former miners joined rebel factions because of the lack of alternative once their livelihood was deemed illegal (Das, 2017, pp.411-412; de Koning, 2011, p.4). Although armed groups often take advantage of informality and illegality, the informal nature of much of the mining sector is not the core cause of conflict. The ban missed the crucial point that mining provides livelihoods to many people who work in and around artisanal mines, who do technically operate illegally, but are not directly involved in the conflict (de Koning, 2011, p.3). Although the mining ban has been lifted, due diligence requirements have caused companies to focus on “legal” or “licensed” traders, pushing ASM producers out of the supply chain. Displacing the ASM sector will not stop the conflict in the eastern Congo but does significantly impact the Congolese people, as it is estimated that 20 million people rely on the ASM sector in the Congo (AfDB, 2016, p.27).

In order to address the consequence of artisanal miners being displaced, there have been attempts to bring them back into the system through formalization of the sector. The OECD Guidance recognizes due diligence measures are more difficult to follow in the ASM sector but suggests that companies mitigate their risk of adverse impact to legitimate artisanal miners by supporting the host country efforts at formalization (OECD, 2016, p.27). In 2017, the ICGLR released a guide of best practices for formalization of the ASM sector. In the Congo, artisanal

mining has been legalized in Artisanal Exploitation Zones (ZEAs) where miners can extract minerals in a given area as long as they have the required permit (ICGRL, 2017, p.5). However, they still face challenges in formalization because the complicated permit process is misaligned with what is occurring on the ground, the ZEAs not having adequate amounts of minerals to support the livelihoods of miners, the administration of traceability being difficult; particularly in gold mining, and because the government lacks the knowledge and capacity to effectively manage the sector to meet international requirements (ICGLR, 2017, pp.7-8). The dominant narratives often exclude the artisanal mining sector as it is complex and there are no straightforward and technical solutions that will protect Congolese livelihoods while promoting the highest degrees of transparency and accountability.

The critique of the policy thus far has focused on the unintended or inadvertent consequences of the OECD Guidance and the ICGLR RCM particularly on the ASM sector. However, the policies are also less effective because they are missing a complex and deeper understanding of the areas they operate in. They could be more effective if they were able to examine other causes of conflict, discuss legitimate grievances, and look at how natural resources can be used toward peacebuilding objectives.

#### **CHAPTER 4: THE TROUBLE WITH NARRATIVES OF THE CONGO**

When narratives are simplified much of the context is lost. Pieces are often left out because they do not fit in the re-telling of certain narratives for a pre-determined purpose, or because adding a layer of complexity would cause them to become too complicated, and thus harder to communicate to the public and to use in advocacy. The more complex elements will not make their way into policy as adding in this complexity would cause numerous policy problems and numerous policy ‘solutions’ or paths to intervention. Instead, policy often relies on pre-determined narratives

such as the natural resource curse to explain the context. When discussing resource extraction and the issues it has caused, it seemingly makes sense to exclude much of the context around history, state formation, and identity, but the resource sector in the Congo is embedded in the political economy and has been since colonialism and the state was formed. A greater understanding of the Congo beyond the Heart of Darkness trope is useful and may provide insight into the situation, preventing further inadvertent consequences and “misunderstanding of local realities” (Trefon, 2016, p.150). This section will provide a brief overview on what has been left out of dominant narratives and some of the consequences it has had or might have in the future.

#### ADDITIONAL CAUSES FOR CONFLICT

Conflict over access to natural resources is not the only source of conflict in the Congo. Simplifying the narratives of the Congo into focusing solely on resources as cause of conflict has drawn attention away from other important causes of conflict which can help to provide more context as to why the Congo continues to be in conflict even though they are no longer at war and present more of the political side of the conflict. It can also provide more explanation to the policy problem and therefore better inform the policy solution. Narratives of resource extraction have labelled Congo’s neighbouring countries of Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi as ‘greedy outsiders’ as they are portrayed as invading the Congo in order to gain access to their natural resources, continue to fund rebel groups once their formal armies had left, and continue to allow conflict minerals to pass through their borders for profit. This understanding fails to take into account the regional political and ethnic tensions of the Great Lakes Regions, particularly during the 1990s and how these tensions played out at both the state and regional level. Politics in the Great Lakes Region are driven by “politics of exclusion” where one ethnic group feels excluded from economic and political power (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002, p.216). The most prominent example of this playing

out is during the Rwandan genocide in 1994, where feelings of inequality and ethnicity were mobilized towards violence; where 800,000 to 1,000,000 individuals were killed in a three month period in a genocide led by factions of the Rwandan national army and a Hutu extremist group, the Interahamwe (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002, p.223). Following their defeat, member of the defunct national forces and Hutu extremist groups escaped across the border into refugee camps in the Congo (then Zaire) (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002, p.224). Over the next two years, the Hutu extremists regrouped and again began killing Tutsis in Rwanda and the Congo, all while under the protection of Mobutu (Dunn, 2003, p.2; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002, p.224). After appealing for international support, but receiving nothing, Paul Kagame and his Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) invaded the refugee camps in the eastern region of the country, dismantling them. It was around this time that Laurent Kabila received Kagame's support and became the leader of the AFDL, ultimately overthrowing Mobutu and becoming president of the newly renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo (Dunn, 2003, p.3). Soon disillusioned by his foreign backers, Kabila soon dismissed all Rwandan and Ugandan forces from the Congo, a move that would ultimately spark the Second Congo War. Both the First and Second Congo Wars are often seen as resource wars, however, they have undeniable political and regional dimensions to them. They cannot be understood in isolation from broader regional and geopolitical dynamics.

Another cause of violence in the Congo has been at the local level. The dominant narrative fails to acknowledge the "distinctly local problems" such as conflicts over land, mineral resources, traditional power, local taxes, and the relative social status of specific groups and individuals (Autesserre, 2010, p.175). There are two main assumptions made about the local conflict in the Congo. First, the micro-level conflicts were a result of the macro-level cleavages of the country. International actors, particularly the peacekeeping forces believed micro-level tension would be

solved if there were macro-level settlements and an end to conflict (Autesserre, 2010, p.11). However, when some of the macro-level causes of conflict were ‘settled’ the local-level tensions never defused, causing the east of the Congo to remain unstable and in a consistent state of conflict (Autesserre, 2010, p.165). The second assumption was that local level violence was apolitical and criminal. Decentralized violence was viewed as criminal, where the actors were motivated by greed taking advantage of the absences of state authority in the eastern region of the country (Autesserre, 2010, p.72). Autesserre (2010) disputes this assertion, stating most of the localized violence was not linked to any wider criminal agenda and that the violence was not wholly apolitical, being motivated by “identifiable political, social, military, or economic causes” (p.74). Localized violence rarely contributed to wider incidents of violence.

## GRIEVANCES

There have always been legitimate grievances in the Congo toward mineral extraction. The extraction in the Congo has many externalities common to other extractive countries including land appropriation, migration, and overcrowding (Le Billon, 2014, p.13; Trefon, 2016, p.131; Wennmann, 2011, p.266). These externalities are often worsened as communities and provinces that bear the brunt of extraction are often not adequately compensated. As an example, the former province of Katanga received USD 12 million in mining royalties in 2014, however, according to the revenue sharing formulas mandated by the government, the province should have received close to USD 33 million (Iwerks & Toroskainen, 2017, p.3). Unresolved ambiguity over land use and ownership also causes friction between ASM and industrialized mining as statutory law from the capital often clashes with the customary law that often governs ASM, often making small-scale extraction illegal without the proper certification (Garrett, 2016, p.378; Trefon, 2016, p.150). However, many miners have no choice but to navigate the challenging environment of ASM and

even operate illegally as there are few alternative livelihoods or opportunities for formal employment in many rural areas of the Congo, particularly in the east (Trefon, 2016, p.149). Lack of economic opportunity and criminalization of ASM has caused some “ordinary people’ without political objectives to join local militia groups in order to make money (Autesserre, 2010, p.154). The recruitment into armed groups is often seen to be based on greed motives as they often make money “through looting, rackets, and blackmail” (Autesserre, 2010, p.154). However, the lack of economic opportunity should be seen more as a push factor than the allure of money being a pull factor in this situation. This further solidifies the debates of Keen and Cramer, as motivation is often a combination of greed and grievance.

## RESOURCES FOR PEACE

Natural resources often play a role in the conflict, but they can also be used as a tool toward peace. Wennmann (2011) discusses how natural resources can serve as a tool for peace and post-conflict reconstruction. Natural resources have been framed as “a problem for peace and an enabler for armed conflict”, however, they can also be used to help to end conflict by being integrated into peace and power-sharing agreements and as a tool for post-conflict reconstruction when managed under effective and inclusive institutions (p.267). In the Congo, economic dimensions of the conflict were only vaguely addressed in the 2002 peace settlements. The settlements often focused more acutely on power sharing, as it was well known that whoever held the power also controlled the resources (Wennmann, 2011, p.272). Many leaders of rebel groups factions were integrated into the government as a tool to keep them at the negotiating table (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002, p.234). This helped to solidify that rebel groups could fight and loot their way into positions of power, however, taking this as a technical problem ignores the political aspects of power sharing and natural resource extraction. It has also been suggested that if the role of natural resources in

the conflict was addressed, many groups would not have participated as they had more to gain by maintaining the “shadow economy” that they created through the illegal exploitation of natural resources (Wennmann, 2011, p.272). Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002) has argued that public control of the country’s resources and their use in development is essential; “they are part of the struggle for national liberation and democratic governance” (p.28). Natural resource management must be placed in a central role in peace processes to ensure that resource wealth will be used for development and to ensure the state does not fall back into old patterns of exclusion. The process of maintaining durable peace and effective resource exploitation is “far from straightforward” because it is a political process charged with balancing the wants of many powerful actors with differing views, causing it to be omitted from dominant solutions because it is too complex to capture in a technical solution (Le Billon, 2014, p.189; Wennmann, 2011, p.266).

This section has outlined three things that have been missing from the dominant narratives surrounding resource extraction and conflict in the Congo. It is important to remember that there are many more issues not covered, and many more voices not heard. It is also important to remember that there is no ‘true’ or ‘correct’ narrative, as narratives by their nature are the ways in which we understand and construct our social worlds. Narratives serve many different purposes and are used towards diverging ends. With that being said, policy in responsible sourcing of minerals and transparent supply chains could benefit from a deeper understanding of the Congo and alternative causes, motivations, and solutions to the conflict. Although this is by no means an exhaustive portrayal of the realities of the Congo, it may serve to be a step forward in our understanding of how more robust narratives could inform more robust policy.

## CONCLUSION

Narratives serve an important purpose in policy, helping to make sense of complex problems, orienting action, and justifying intervention. Due to frequent retellings, narratives become universal givens, and become difficult to challenge. However, dominant narratives leave important contextual pieces out of telling and retellings to maintain easy to understand stories that often lead to simplified and technical solutions. Complexity is often avoided in narratives because too much complexity can be overwhelming and can prevent any action from being taken as no one solution will cover all aspects of the problem. Narratives often rely on common elements or tropes that come from the media, advocacy groups, and academics. The most common of these tropes that shape narrative in the Congo are the natural resource curse and the greed and grievance motivations in conflict. Using narrative policy analysis tools such as NPF has allowed two prominent resource extraction policies in the Congo to be examined. Both the OECD guidance and the ICGLR RCM are policies meant to ensure conflict minerals from the Great Lakes Region do not enter supply chains and eventually make their way into consumer electronics. The policies both utilize a series of narratives common to the Congo. They include a setting that frames the policy problem as an issue of illicit mineral extraction causing conflict and other human rights violations, has characters common to the plots surrounding resource extraction, features a plot that frames the conflict as driven by rebel and outsider greed, and a moral that relies on international and regional actors to enforce transparency and proper risk management in resource supply chains. These policies have been critiqued based on their overreliance on narratives causing them to view the state as part of the solution without regarding how embedded many state elites are in the problem as reflected in the slow and inconsistent implementation of the policies, often based on a lack of political will; in their narrow focus on the cause of conflict in the region; and the inadvertent consequences such policies have had on the small and artisanal mining sector. It is unsurprising

that the dominant narratives of the Congo have solidified themselves in policy as they have been able to take hold as a result of the narratives being simple and persuasive, appeal to the reader's confirmation bias by fitting the narrative into what readers think they already know about the Congo, invoking the 'Heart of Darkness' trope, and because it relies on western intervention. It would be equally simplistic to label these policies as "bad" policies based on their reliance on narratives, because they are not bad policies. Both policies were a step forward in the right direction because they established international forums where actors could work together toward a common goal of preventing the spread of conflict minerals. However, they were ultimately technical solutions to deeply political and multifaceted problems. The policies could be improved by utilizing more complex narratives that examine and provide solutions for other causes of conflict including regional and ethnic conflict and local level conflict; by ensuring a more robust understanding of grievances faced by mining communities and the poor economic opportunities in the eastern region pushing former miners into rebel and other armed groups, and by further developing the idea that natural resources can be used for peace not just for conflict. The policies would also be improved by the recognition that these are political problems, and that no one policy is going to solve the entire problem. Having more complex policies will not be a silver bullet solution to reorient natural resource extraction in the Congo toward development objectives over the current experiences of patronage, corruption, and mismanagement. Narratives can be dismissed as just stories, but narratives can be a powerful political and social force, orienting action and determining how policy problems are viewed and acted upon. The case of the Congo and the implications narratives have had on policy have demonstrated the need for comprehensive and complex narratives, as simple narratives have led to simple policy.

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