



AMEC

Asia Middle East Center
For Research & Dialogue

Issue
Number:

2

Asia Middle East **Perspectives**

**Raw Materials and Armed Conflicts: The Cases of
the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan**



Malaysia, - 01, APRIL, 2026

By :
Khadija Lafnouch

eISSN: 3141-0693

Year:

2025

eISSN 3141-0693



9 773141 069007

(i) EDITORIAL BOARD

- **Patron:** Dr Muslim Imran, Director
- **Editor-in-Chief:** Muath Seyam
- **Managing Editor:** Farwina Faroque
- **Editorial Committee:** Andrea Shera Renjani, Mumtaza Chairannisa
- **Author:** Khadija Lafnouch
- **Design & Layout:** Hamed Alsuleiman

(ii) COPYRIGHT PAGE

Title: Asia Middle East Perspectives

Sub Title: Raw Materials and Armed Conflicts: The Cases of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan **Vol. 1, No. 1, November 2025 ISSN:** [3141-0693] © **Asia Middle East Center for Research and Dialogue (AMEC), 2025**

Hak Cipta Terpelihara Tiada bahagian daripada terbitan ini boleh diterbitkan semula, disimpan untuk pengeluaran, atau ditukarkan dalam apa-apa bentuk atau dengan alat apa jua pun, sama ada dengan cara elektronik, sawat, gambar, rakaman atau sebagainya, tanpa kebenaran bertulis daripada penerbit.

All Rights Reserved No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Penyataan Penafian Pandangan yang dinyatakan dalam penerbitan ini adalah pandangan penulis dan tidak semestinya mencerminkan dasar atau pandangan Asia Middle East Center for Research and Dialogue (AMEC).

Disclaimer The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Asia Middle East Center for Research and Dialogue (AMEC).

Diterbitkan oleh / Published by: Asia Middle East Center for Research and Dialogue (AMEC) Megan Avenue 1, 4, Jalan Mayang Sari, Hampshire Park, 50450 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur Email: admin@amecrd.com Website: amecrd.com

Dicetak oleh / Printed by: Asia Middle East Center for Research and Dialogue (AMEC) Megan Avenue 1, 4, Jalan Mayang Sari, Hampshire Park, 50450 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur

Frequency: Monthly

(iii) SYNOPSIS:

This publication, *Raw Materials and Armed Conflicts: The Cases of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan*, explores the ongoing humanitarian crises in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan. The author, Khadija Lafnouch, argues that these conflicts cannot be attributed solely to ethnic or religious divisions but are fundamentally rooted in the exploitation of natural resources and the legacy of colonialism. The study analyzes how competition for critical minerals—driven by the green energy transition and global technology demands—intensifies violence and political instability in these regions. It calls for a fundamental re-evaluation of the relationship between the Global North and South to address the structural inequalities driving these conflicts.

“In Sudan, more than 40,000 lives have been lost, 13 million people displaced, and 30 million are now in need of humanitarian assistance.”¹

“In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, one of the deadliest conflicts since World War II — claiming over six million lives — continues to rage. Driven by the struggle for vast mineral wealth, it has brought unimaginable suffering, especially to women and children.”
— Panzi Hospital, 2025²

¹ “La revue de presse internationale:.” France Culture. 07 juin 2024

² Panzi Foundation. “About Panzi Hospital: A Center of Excellence and a Lifeline for Women in Crisis.” <https://panzifoundation.org/fr/panzi-hospital/>

(iv) Executive Summary:

The conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan cannot be attributed solely to ethnic or religious divisions. A comprehensive understanding requires consideration of multiple interrelated factors; chief among them, the exploitation of natural resources in these resource-rich states. This dynamic of domination and extraction predates colonization and continues to shape the political and economic landscapes of both countries today. In the current global context, the energy transition and the growing demand for critical minerals, driven largely by industrialized nations, have intensified competition over access to these resources. Minerals essential for green technologies and artificial intelligence have become strategic assets, further entrenching instability and fueling violence. A lasting resolution to these conflicts requires a fundamental re-evaluation of the relationship between the Global North and the Global South. Without addressing the structural inequalities and exploitative practices underlying resource extraction, sustainable peace and development in the DRC and Sudan will remain unattainable.

(v) Introduction:

The Berlin Conference of 1885 led to the division of Africa by European powers, with the aim of partitioning the continent for economic purposes, such as access to cheap labor and mineral resources, often acquired by force³. Among these territories were the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which at the time were composed of tribes and not yet organized according to the Westphalian system we know today⁴. The DRC gained independence from Belgium in 1960, while Sudan achieved independence from Egypt and the United Kingdom in 1956. These states, initially serving the needs of European powers, were thus granted independence, but some territories continue to face deadly conflicts. While independence may appear to have been achieved in the eyes of the United Nations, it is necessary to analyze it critically, as it results from complex historical processes shaped by the economic and political interests of former colonial powers.⁵

Sudan's independence was not straightforward. Administered jointly by Egypt and the United Kingdom from 1899 to 1956, the country saw its lands and primary resources exploited by these powers, each pursuing its own interests.⁶ Even after 1922, Egypt claimed sovereignty, while the United Kingdom sought to maintain control. These rivalries contributed to the country's ethnic and religious fragmentation, ultimately leading to the division of Sudan into North and South Sudan. The Egyptian nationalist movement demanded full independence for the Nile Valley, while the British sought to separate Sudan from Egypt to develop agriculture, particularly in the Gezira region north of Khartoum.⁷ This policy aimed to exploit the Nile's waters for cotton cultivation, without Egypt being able to limit British access to these resources. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514 of 1960 officially granted independence to all externally dominated countries, consolidating Britain's position over Sudan. However, this formal independence did not allow effective territorial control, as Sudanese authorities remained strongly influenced by former powers.

The case of the DRC shows similar patterns. As a former Belgian colony, the country was subjected to massive exploitation of its mineral resources by King Leopold II, to the detriment

³ A. M. Vasiliev, D. A. Degterev, and T. M. Shaw, "Decolonization, Postcolonialism, Multiple Modernities, and Persistent East–West Divide in African Studies."

⁴ Alden Young, *Transforming Sudan: Decolonization, Economic Development, and State Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

⁵ Philippe Le Billon, "The Political Ecology of War: Natural Resources and Armed Conflicts," *Political Geography* 20 (2001): 561–584, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298\(01\)00015-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(01)00015-4)

⁶ Anne-Claire de Gayffier-Bonneville, "La rivalité anglo-égyptienne au Soudan: Les enjeux de la décolonisation," *Relations internationales* 2008/1, no. 133 (2008): 71–89, <https://doi.org/10.3917/ri.133.0071>.

⁷ Anne-Laure Mahé, "Soudan: Après la chute d'Omar el-Béchir, les défis de la transition," *Politique étrangère*, no. 2019/4 (Winter 2019): 99–112, <https://doi.org/10.3917/pe.194.0101>

of the local population, leading to severe human rights violations, including slavery and mass violence. As Adam Hochschild emphasizes in *King Leopold's Ghost*, this exploitation resulted in a veritable genocide.⁸ Darfur, rich in primary resources, constitutes another example where resources were at the center of crimes against humanity.⁹ These examples demonstrate that natural resources play a decisive role in humanitarian crises and armed conflicts.

Modern civil wars are defined as “an armed conflict between the government of a sovereign state and one or more organized groups capable of substantial resistance”¹⁰. Several factors have contributed to the increase in civil wars in the 20th and 21st centuries: decolonization, which left states with contested authorities; the end of the Cold War, which resulted in a decline in superpower financial support; and the reduction of peacekeeping operations coupled with the collapse of authoritarian regimes. Today, the main hotspots of civil wars include Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Chad, the DRC, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Mali, and Ukraine.

Two main factors explain the outbreak of these conflicts: ethnicity and economy¹¹. Ethnicity is not a natural cause of conflict but a social and political construct. Anthony Smith defines an ethnic group as a collective sharing a common name, beliefs, and ancestry, shared cultural elements, collective historical memories, and attachment to a territory. Ethnicity is often instrumentalized to divide and mobilize populations for strategic purposes. The economic factor manifests as the “resource curse”: resource-rich states develop rentier economies at the expense of public institutions, limiting state control over their territory and favoring the emergence of rebellions. These mechanisms are particularly evident in peripheral, hard-to-access regions, such as certain areas of Sudan and the DRC, where post-colonial resource management has contributed to the persistence of civil conflicts¹².

Limiting the analysis to an ethnic dimension would be reductive: ethnicity is often used as a tool by elites to control populations and exploit resources at low cost. It is therefore important to ask: have these states truly benefited from their independence? Who truly profits from primary resources? What tactics are employed in these mining-related conflicts? The answers

⁸ Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998)

⁹ Amnesty International, “This Is What We Die For”: Human Rights Abuses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo Power the Global Trade in Cobalt (London: Amnesty International, 2016).

¹⁰ Nicholas Sambanis, “What Is Civil War? Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 6 (2004): 814–858.

¹¹ Charles Philippe David and Olivier Schmitt, *La guerre et la paix*, 4th ed. (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2020).

¹² Philippe Le Billon, “The Political Ecology of War: Natural Resources and Armed Conflicts,” *Political Geography* 20 (2001): 561–584, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298\(01\)00015-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(01)00015-4).

to these questions show that current civil conflicts are not generated by ethnic factors but by economic ones, with ethnicity serving as a political lever to divide and exploit resources cheaply¹³.

I. Mineral Exploitation Made Possible by a Favorable Military and Political Context

A. The Role of Central Politics in the Countries in Question

1) A Political and Economic Transition (20th Century) – Benefiting Former Colonies

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514, which granted independence to formerly colonized peoples, should not be interpreted as a guarantee of true political and economic autonomy¹⁴. The new states inherited profound political instability, exacerbated by the imposition of the Westphalian state system, which brought historically distinct tribes together on a single territory, sometimes with no social or cultural ties.¹⁵ This instability was reinforced by the installation of leaders and governors serving the interests of former colonial powers, ensuring the continuity of economic exploitation post-independence.¹⁶

This political and ethnic construction, inherited from colonization, often led to the exclusion of certain populations. In the United States, for example, a central role was played in the secession of South Sudan through joint support for the Sudanese government and the South Sudanese rebel movement (Sudan People's Liberation Movement), culminating in the 2005 peace treaty.¹⁷ The official justification relied on a racial and ethnic discourse, attributing conflicts to a legacy of slavery. However, the understanding of Arab-Saharan slavery cannot be reduced to the European slavery lens, as Adam Hochschild emphasizes in *King Leopold's Ghost*.¹⁸ Reducing the conflict to a racial opposition, as is often done, obscures the historical and economic complexity of the Sudanese crises.

¹³ Heather J. Sharkey, "Arab Identity and Ideology in Sudan: The Politics of Language, Ethnicity, and Race," *African Affairs* 107, no. 426 (January 2008): 21–43, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27666997>

¹⁴ United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 1514 (XV), Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, December 14, 1960.

¹⁵ Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

¹⁶ Crawford Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994)

¹⁷ Douglas H. Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016)

¹⁸ Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998)

The division of Sudan into North and South allowed former powers to strategically control the Nile and primary resources, to the detriment of local populations. Amir Idris, in *Historicizing Race, Ethnicity, and the Crisis of Citizenship in Sudan and South Sudan*, considers that the conflict results from a citizenship crisis: “Postcolonial states adopted definitions of indigeneity, inherited from the colonial era, to frame their own definitions of citizenship.”¹⁹ This approach excludes certain populations and fuels the foundations of civil wars. Citizenship comprises three dimensions: legal, political, and as membership in a political community. Idris emphasizes the third dimension, which is essential for understanding systemic exclusion and identity conflicts.²⁰

These identity and racial constructions were reinforced by colonial propaganda and the prejudices of Western missionaries and administrators, as illustrated by Reverend J. Lowrie Anderson, who considered Arabs practical and Blacks less stable and easier to influence.²¹ These views legitimized the division of Sudan and facilitated control over the populations and resources of the South. Similarly, the DRC, a former Belgian colony, saw its resources exploited by administrators trained to serve colonial interests, as Adam Hochschild shows for Leopold II’s Congo.²²

Territorial division also altered traditional land management systems. According to Jean-Philippe Colin and Charlin Rangé (*Les dimensions intrafamiliales du rapport à la terre*), land relations were historically structured around the family nucleus and neighborhood relations²³. The colonial state, by imposing centralized administration, disrupted this millennia-old system, transforming relationships with land and resources.

After independence, local politicians often pursued policies serving Western interests. Alden Young, in *Transforming Sudan – Decolonization, Economic Development and State Formation*, shows that the generation of independents (1954–1958), educated at Western universities such as Oxford, managed major economic projects like the Gezira Scheme, centralizing over 50% of state revenue and ensuring economic control aligned with interests inherited from colonialism²⁴. Even Sudanese economists, such as Sa’ad al-Din Fawzi, had to frame their

¹⁹ Amir Idris, *Historicizing Race, Ethnicity, and the Crisis of Citizenship in Sudan and South Sudan* (London: Routledge, 2018)

²⁰ Ibis

²¹ Quoted in Amir Idris, *Conflict and Politics of Identity in Sudan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

²² Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998)

²³ Jean-Philippe Colin and Charlin Rangé, “Les dimensions intrafamiliales du rapport à la terre,” *Économie rurale* 280 (2004)

²⁴ Alden Young, *Transforming Sudan: Decolonization, Economic Development, and State Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

analyses around unstable political and institutional constraints, with Northern elites favoring a vision of national development focused on economic growth rather than regional redistribution²⁵.

Finally, instability and limited development conditions are exacerbated by the influence of international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. While their goal is to assist financially struggling states, their policies impose market opening and economic liberalization, often to the detriment of local populations, particularly economic minorities²⁶.

2) Central Powers Under the Grip of Corruption – To the Detriment of the Local Population

In Sudan, following the 2021 coup d'état, a military council led by two generals took control of the country. General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, head of the armed forces, de facto assumed the presidency, while General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo leads the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The RSF, created in 2013,²⁷ originated from the Janjaweed militia that had fought rebels in Darfur and was accused of ethnic cleansing against the non-Arab population in the region (BBC). Dagalo strengthened this military force and involved it in international conflicts, notably in Yemen and Libya, while also developing local economic interests, such as controlling certain gold mines in Sudan.

The current conflict does not affect the entire Sudanese territory uniformly. Fighting is concentrated in strategic areas where the two leaders exercise control based on natural resources, notably gold and oil. Northern Sudan, for instance, contains agricultural zones along the Nile, while oil is mainly found in the South, and the strategic Red Sea port remains a key stake. This unstable situation turns the Sudanese state into an economic prey, where local militias profit from resources at the expense of the civilian population.

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ William Easterly, *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006).

²⁷ BBC News, Sudan conflict: Who are the Rapid Support Forces?

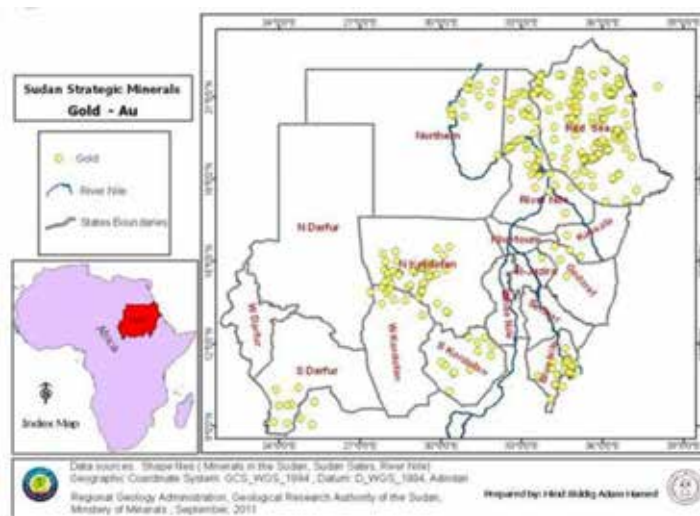
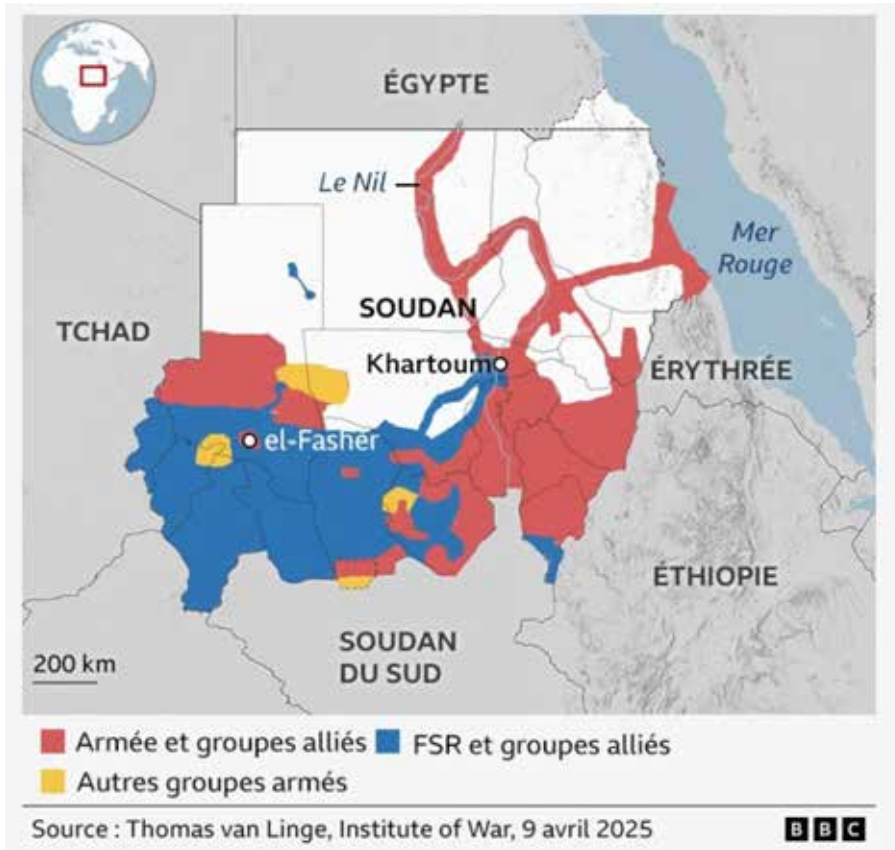


Figure 3: Localisation des ressources en or du Soudan (Ministry of Minerals, 2011)

The situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) exhibits similar dynamics. Since 2016, Amnesty International has denounced corruption within central authorities and local military forces.²⁸In the DRC, the Code of Conduct on artisanal mining defines in Article 21

²⁸ Amnesty International, DRC: Corruption in the Mining Sector (2016)

artisanal mining as “any activity by which a Congolese national extracts and concentrates mineral substances using artisanal tools, methods, and processes, within an artisanal mining area limited in surface and depth, up to a maximum of thirty meters.”²⁹ The code specifies that only adults holding a valid permit may carry out this activity, under penalty of sanctions by the government.

However, these legal provisions are insufficient: they do not take into account the health and safety of miners, remain silent on cobalt handling, and impose no standards for mine construction or organization. Additionally, the government does not create enough Artisanal Mining Zones (ZEA), which forces miners to work in unauthorized areas or illegally enter industrial sites to access cobalt and other minerals. These regulations reveal a complete disconnect between the government and local realities.³⁰

A direct consequence of these gaps is child labor, a violation of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which the DRC is a party.³¹ Arthur’s testimony, collected by Amnesty International, illustrates this point: “I worked in the mines because my parents couldn’t afford to pay for food and clothes for me. Papa is unemployed, and mama sells charcoal.”³² This exploitation occurs in a context of widespread structural corruption: local authorities profit from resource extraction, tolerating and effectively organizing illegal activities in the ZEA. Volunteers from Amnesty International and Afrewatch have observed mines controlled by police officers, who regulate access and supervise operations, thereby ensuring the continuity of an exploitation system supported by central authorities.³³

Whether in Sudan or the DRC, central powers serve only their immediate interests, to the detriment of local populations. The abundance of natural resources in these states, combined with elite corruption and a lack of institutional oversight, fuels conflicts specifically centered on competition for these resources, exacerbating political and social instability.

²⁹ République Démocratique du Congo, Code de conduite pour l’exploitation minière artisanale, Article 21 (2018)

³⁰ Amnesty International. (2019). This Is What We Die For: Human Rights Abuses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo Power the Global Trade in Cobalt. Amnesty International

³¹ United Nations. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). United Nations Treaty Series, vol. 1577, p. 3.

³² Ibid

³³ Ibid

B. Specific Typologies of Conflicts Related to Primary Resources

Currently, both the DRC and Sudan are experiencing bloody conflicts, largely linked to their abundant mineral resources. In this regard, Welsch notes that recent armed conflicts are often connected to the exploitation of natural resources. A study conducted between 1989 and 2002 across 54 countries showed that an abundance of mineral resources significantly increases the likelihood of internal armed conflict, whereas the productivity of “normal” production and the quality of governance reduce this likelihood. Relevant productivity variables include agricultural capital and human capital, rather than manufactured capital. In other words, “it is not the abundance of natural resources in general that fosters conflict, but the abundance of non-renewable resources”³⁴. The availability of renewable agricultural resources, such as pastures, croplands, or forests, tends instead to reduce the incidence of armed conflict by increasing labor productivity.

These theoretical observations apply to the Sudanese and Congolese cases. In Sudan, during British colonization, the main issue was the exploitation of farmland near the Nile. After decolonization, new strategic resources were discovered, notably oil, and conflicts enabled the illegal exploitation of gold. The DRC, on the other hand, has been described by Sam Kean as “the richest country in the world and simultaneously the poorest.” It possesses all the primary resources needed for modern industries, artificial intelligence, and the energy transition. Yet, despite this wealth, it remains plagued by violent conflicts.³⁵ Focusing solely on ethnic or religious causes would be a simplistic reading: these violences are primarily the consequence of economic and historical factors.

Philippe Le Billon, in his theory of “political ecology,” distinguishes between conflicts related to resource scarcity, mainly renewable, and those linked to the abundance of non-renewable resources. In scarcity cases, actors fight to ensure survival. In abundance cases, conflicts are driven by greed, as resources provide armed groups with the “loot” necessary to acquire military equipment. These conflicts often become economic: the trade of natural resources structures the economy of armed groups and transforms a political agenda into a private agenda.³⁶

³⁴ Welsch, Christophe. *Natural Resources and Armed Conflict: A Quantitative Analysis*. Journal of Peace Research, 2008

³⁵ Kean, Sam. *The Richest and Poorest: An Analysis of the Democratic Republic of Congo*. Scientific American, 2017.

³⁶ Le Billon, Philippe. *Political Ecology of War: Natural Resources and Armed Conflicts*. Routledge, 2012

Sudan illustrates this transition. During British colonization, it fell under resource scarcity, with access to farmland near the Nile being the main concern. In the 1970s, and especially from 2010 onwards, gold became a new strategic resource, with the introduction of affordable metal detectors and the expansion of artisanal mining activities across the country, notably in the Eastern Desert, the Nile Valley, the Red Sea region, and Darfur, with the discovery of the Jebel Amir deposit in 2012. This abundance led to new political destabilizations and transformed the nature of conflicts, shifting them from territorial or agricultural issues to economic stakes linked to gold.

Zimmerman summarizes this dynamic by stating that “resources are not, they become.” The example of diamonds perfectly illustrates this idea: an industrial material with limited uses, its economic and symbolic value was socially constructed, turning it into a prized resource, a symbol of purity and eternal love. Today, diamonds have become the “best friend” of belligerents, fueling conflicts and the ruin of countries such as Angola, the DRC, or Sierra Leone. As Le Billon emphasizes, mining and conflicts in several African countries are not mere accidents: they are part of the historical continuity of colonization, where the primary beneficiaries are Northern countries, which organize an international trade in these resources while pursuing trade and foreign policies distinct from their domestic policies.³⁷

Thus, conflicts in these states cannot be separated from their history. According to Le Billon, these conflicts are not only motivated by scarcity or greed but are the historical product of social construction and a political economy of resources.³⁸ Geographic position, the creation of markets, and value chains—based on the social construction of desirable resources—determine the nature of these conflicts. These economic interests sometimes lead armed actors to succumb to greed and trigger coups or civil violence, as illustrated by the current Sudanese conflict or the 1997 coup in Congo-Brazzaville by Denis Sassou Nguesso against elected President Pascal Lissouba, closely linked to the control of oil rents.

C. A Military Context Favoring the Lack of Empathy from External Actors

The causes of the Sudanese and Congolese conflicts are deeply historical, and one of the main reasons lies in the exploitation of natural resources. Philippe Le Billon emphasizes that the economic agenda related to these resources strongly influences the course of conflicts, particularly through their “criminalization” when financial motivations outweigh political

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Zimmerman, Larry. Resources and Social Construction in Conflict. *African Studies Review*, 2010.

ones.³⁹ This analysis applies equally to Sudan and the DRC, where belligerents and certain state authorities see their survival and power closely linked to mining, often at the expense of the local population.

The economic aspect incentivizes soldiers, local commanders, and political backers to maintain a profitable conflict. This logic generates a form of anarchy in which violent competition is exacerbated by the economic and political opportunities provided by the conflict: opportunities that are impossible to obtain in times of peace or even after a victory.⁴⁰ Peace becomes even more distant with the intervention of external powers seeking their own share of resources. Le Billon notes that “access to resources acts as a divisive factor among international actors.” This division intensifies when bilateral actors accommodate local anti-reform interests to secure commercial benefits, particularly for their companies.⁴¹

Thus, states become protectors of private interests, further complicating the conflict. In contemporary armed conflicts, flows of private capital play a more decisive role than foreign aid: they prioritize the commercial interests of transnational corporations over local populations.⁴² Notable examples include the French companies ELF and TOTAL, or the Canadian company Talisman, whose activities have been linked to conflicts and human rights violations.⁴³

This impunity in exploitation is facilitated by the permissive or cynical attitude of external actors, including certain advocacy NGOs. The absence of effective counterbalances and public exposure of abuses perpetuates a nearly uninterrupted cycle of violence⁴⁴. It is therefore essential that local and international NGOs fully play their role, demanding transparency and accountability from international companies, particularly when the resources they exploit are directly linked to conflicts.

³⁹ Le Billon, Philippe. *Political Ecology of War: Natural Resources and Armed Conflicts*. Routledge, 2012.

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Le Billon, Philippe. *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance*. Routledge, 2001

⁴³ Manby, Bronwen. *The Role of Multinational Corporations in Conflict Zones*. Human Rights Watch Report, 2000

⁴⁴ Amnesty International. *Accountability and Transparency in Resource Exploitation*. Amnesty International Report, 2018

II. The Green Transition in Northern Countries as a Source of Tension in Southern Countries

Global warming and the revolution driven by artificial intelligence have led to significant technological innovation in Northern countries. These transformations have triggered a green transition, encouraging these countries to produce and consume goods necessary for this energy transition, such as electric vehicles.

However, this transition often comes at the expense of Southern countries, where essential materials for this energy revolution are located, such as lithium and cobalt. Aware of the impacts of mining in contexts of corruption and weak regulation, several legislations have been implemented to limit resource-related conflicts. Among them, Section 1502 of the Dodd-Frank Act (2010, United States) aims to prevent the financing of “conflict minerals” from the DRC by holding companies accountable for the supply chains of their suppliers⁴⁵.

Yet, this law has significant limitations. It only concerns the so-called 3TG minerals: tantalum, tin, tungsten, and gold; thereby excluding other materials essential for the green transition, such as lithium or certain diamonds. Sudan, for example, is not covered by these provisions. To address these gaps and improve their image with consumers, companies have gradually incorporated “responsible sourcing” into their corporate social and environmental responsibility policies, based on the principle of due diligence. According to the OECD, “due diligence is the process that companies must carry out to identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for the actual or potential negative impacts of their operations, supply chains, and other business relationships.”⁴⁶ This principle aims to hold companies accountable for how resources are extracted.

In practice, however, these measures are far from effective. The Congolese conflict, for instance, is exacerbated by the green transition toward a decarbonized economy led by Northern countries. The development of electric vehicles has increased the exploitation of non-conflict minerals, particularly cobalt, 60–70% of which comes from the DRC.⁴⁷ Despite the EU adopting a similar text to Section 1502 in 2014, the situation on the ground remains catastrophic, with resources continuing to be exported to wealthy countries while conflicts and human rights violations persist.

⁴⁵ United States Congress. Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, Section 1502. 2010

⁴⁶ OECD. OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas. OECD Publishing, 2016.

⁴⁷ Kean, Sam. *The Richest Country and Its Paradoxical Poverty*. Penguin Books, 2019.

Raphaël Deberdt and Philippe Le Billon identify five major limitations to the implementation of responsible sourcing. First, the scope of artisanal mining: this activity supports the livelihoods of over 40 million people worldwide. In eastern and southeastern DRC, the International Peace Information Service visited nearly 3,000 extraction sites in 2020 and found that tracing minerals through complex chains involving hundreds to thousands of suppliers is extremely difficult⁴⁸. Second, the geographical scope: Section 1502 only concerns nine countries bordering the DRC, immediately excluding other states affected by mining conflicts, such as Sudan.⁴⁹

Other identified limitations include market access, hindered by high taxes and corruption; the integration of certification mechanisms; and the ability of companies to implement technological solutions to ensure traceability and compliance. These obstacles illustrate that the green transition in Northern countries can exacerbate tensions in Southern countries, fueling resource-related conflicts and increasing economic and social imbalances.

Conclusion

Congolese and Sudanese conflicts cannot be reduced to religious or ethnic disputes. They are primarily the result of mining exploitation, directly inherited from colonization. Today, these countries face severe human rights violations, exacerbated by our massive consumption of resources. It is essential to rethink our relationship with others and adopt a comprehensive, in-depth analysis to understand the real causes of these conflicts.

The exploitation of land and resources in Southern countries led to colonization and the establishment of economic and political systems that sustainably disadvantage local populations. The absence of sustainable development policies, in which all parties could benefit fairly, fuels conflicts and weakens the affected states. This issue will become even more pressing in the future, especially in the face of global warming, where essential resources such as water will become increasingly scarce and sources of additional tension.

⁴⁸ International Peace Information Service (IPIS). Mineral Supply Chains and Conflict: Eastern DRC Mining Sites Report, 2020

⁴⁹ Deberdt, Raphaël, et Philippe Le Billon. "Challenges of Responsible Sourcing in the Global Minerals Supply Chain." *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2021, pp. 555–572.

Bibliography

Books and Reports

1. International Monetary Fund. *Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa – Holding Steady*. Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, October 2025.
2. Young, Alden. *Transforming Sudan: Decolonization, Economic Development, and State Formation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
3. Hanotaux, Gabriel. *Le Soudan perdu et reconquis: Histoire de la nation égyptienne*. Paris: Académie française.
4. David, Charles Philippe, and Olivier Schmitt. *La guerre et la paix*. 4th ed. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2020.
5. République Démocratique du Congo. *Rapport du Projet Mapping concernant les violations les plus graves des droits de l’homme et du droit international humanitaire commises entre mars 1993 et juin 2003 sur le territoire de la République Démocratique du Congo*. August 2010.
6. Amnesty International. “*This Is What We Die For*”: *Human Rights Abuses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo Power the Global Trade in Cobalt*. London: Amnesty International, 2016.
7. Agence européenne pour l’orientation et l’information économiques. *Lettre économique de l’AEOI: Soudan*. September 2024.

Book Chapters

8. Fazi, Thomas. “From Central Bank Independence to Government Dependence: Monetary Colonialism in the Eurozone.” In *Economic and Monetary Sovereignty in 21st Century Africa*, edited by Maha Ben Gadha, Fadhel Kaboub, Kai Koddenbrock, Ines Mahmoud, and Ndongo Samba Sylla. London: Pluto Press, 2021. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv244ssnb.11>.
9. Cross, Harry. “Banking, Business, and Sovereignty in Sudan (1956–2019).” In *Economic and Monetary Sovereignty in 21st Century Africa*, edited by Maha Ben Gadha, Fadhel Kaboub, Kai Koddenbrock, Ines Mahmoud, and Ndongo Samba Sylla. London: Pluto Press, 2021. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv244ssnb.6>.

10. De Beule, Filip, and Daniël Van den Bulcke. "China's Opening Up, from Shenzhen to Sudan." In *The New Presence of China in Africa*, edited by Meine Pieter van Dijk. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46n2kj.4>.
11. Ongolo, Symphorien, and Max Krott, eds. *Power Dynamics in African Forests: The Politics of Global Sustainability*.

Journal Articles

12. Mahé, Anne-Laure. "Soudan: Après la chute d'Omar el-Béchir, les défis de la transition." *Politique étrangère*, no. 2019/4 (Winter 2019): 99–112. Paris: Éditions Institut français des relations internationales. <https://doi.org/10.3917/pe.194.0101>.
13. Mamdani, Mahmood. "Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43, no. 4 (October 2001): 651–664. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2696665>.
14. Idris, Amir. "Rethinking Identity, Citizenship, and Violence in Sudan." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 2 (May 2012): 324–326. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41475022>.
15. Idris, Amir. "Historicizing Race, Ethnicity, and the Crisis of Citizenship in Sudan and South Sudan." *Middle East Journal* 73, no. 4 (Winter 2019): 591–606. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26933113>.
16. Sharkey, Heather J. "Arab Identity and Ideology in Sudan: The Politics of Language, Ethnicity, and Race." *African Affairs* 107, no. 426 (January 2008): 21–43. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27666997>.
17. Vasiliev, A. M., D. A. Degtarev, and T. M. Shaw. "Decolonization, Postcolonialism, Multiple Modernities, and Persistent East–West Divide in African Studies."
18. Stoop, Nik, Marijke Verpoorten, and Peter van der Windt. "More Legislation, More Violence? The Impact of Dodd-Frank in the DRC." *PLOS ONE*.
19. Silná, Zuzana, and Zuzana Kittová. "International Trade in Conflict Minerals: Solutions for the EU Regulatory Framework." *Stavebnický Časopis* (2014). <https://doi.org/10.2478/stcb-2014-0059>.
20. Greenfield, Aaron, and T. E. Graedel. "The Omnivorous Diet of Modern Technology." *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*.
21. Deberdt, Raphaël, and Philippe Le Billon. "Conflict Minerals and Battery Materials Supply Chains: A Mapping Review of Responsible Sourcing Initiatives." *The*

- Extractive Industries and Society* 8 (2021): 100935. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2021.100935>.
22. Welsch, Heinz. “Resource Abundance and Internal Armed Conflict: Types of Natural Resources and the Incidence of ‘New Wars.’” *Ecological Economics* 67 (2008): 503–513. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2007.11.021>.
23. Le Billon, Philippe. “The Political Ecology of War: Natural Resources and Armed Conflicts.” *Political Geography* 20 (2001): 561–584. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298\(01\)00015-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(01)00015-4).
24. De Gayffier-Bonneville, Anne-Claire. “La rivalité anglo-égyptienne au Soudan: Les enjeux de la décolonisation.” *Relations internationales* 2008/1, no. 133 (2008): 71–89. Éditions Presses Universitaires de France. <https://doi.org/10.3917/ri.133.0071>.
25. Hanai, Kazuyo. “Conflict Minerals Regulation and Mechanism Changes in the DR Congo.” *Resources Policy* 74 (2021): 102394. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S030142072100059X>.
26. Elagiba, Nadir Ahmed, Muhammad Khalifa, Abbas E. Rahma, Zryab Babker, and Suad Ibrahim Gamaledin. “Performance of Major Mechanized Rainfed Agricultural Production in Sudan: Sorghum Vulnerability and Resilience to Climate since 1970.” *Agricultural and Forest Meteorology*. Elsevier.
27. Dalla Via, Nicola, and Paolo Perego. “Determinants of Conflict Minerals Disclosure Under the Dodd–Frank Act.” RSM Erasmus University, Rotterdam; Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Italy.

News Articles

28. England, Andrew. “Glimpse of Better Life Recedes as Investment in Sudan Slips Away: Despite Its Oil and Mineral Wealth, Conflict and Poor Leadership Have Held Back Africa's Largest Nation.” *Financial Times*, September 7, 2004.
29. *Le Monde*. “La communauté internationale se doit d’agir pour mettre fin aux souffrances du peuple congolais.” June 6, 2025.