

# Dimensions Of The Coltan And Cobalt Resource Curse In The Democratic Republic Of Congo

Author one: Dr B. E. Isheloke, Minerals to metals Research Initiative, University of Cape Town, Cape Town South Africa 7701. Email: [Elisee.isheloke@uct.ac.za](mailto:Elisee.isheloke@uct.ac.za)

Author two: Prof H. von Blottnitz (Pr. Eng); Minerals to Metals Research Initiative, University of Cape Town, Cape Town South Africa 7701. Email: [harro.vonblottnitz@uct.ac.za](mailto:harro.vonblottnitz@uct.ac.za)

## Abstract

Resource-rich countries have been observed to often have lower development achievements. Challenges include but are not limited to envy and interference by super-powerful countries, as well as corruptible practices or incompetence by their political leaders who mortgage the resources of their nation for personal gain and power. The unstable situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo may in large part be related to the “resource curse” as it is theorised. In the past, this resource-rich land had been a victim of its resources even in the times preceding the half-baked independence from the Belgium Kingdom. In those years, the world needed “heveas”, and the production of rubber for the making of industrial plastic, tyres and other products.

Coltan and cobalt are uniquely associated with the DRC, have global strategic and industrial importance, and constitute key minerals concerned with the resource curse paradigm and impact significantly on the DRC’s economy.

The study uses systems analysis methodology building on resource-curse theory to understand the system archetypes at play and identify potential leverage points for intervention. Previous research found that illicit exploitation of coltan was instrumental in fueling conflict in the DRC and was used in conjunction with other blood minerals. Evidence points to a ‘tragedy of the commons’ system archetype at play. Cobalt production is more industrially concentrated and more linked to institutionalized corruption, which may be countered by better governance interventions such as transparency initiatives.

**Keywords:** coltan, cobalt, resource curse, systems analysis, DRC