

Sicherheit im Tausch gegen Bodenschätz? So kann das nicht gehen!



Coltan-Abbau in Luwovo in der Nähe von Rubaya, Nord-Kivu¹

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Einleitung Günther Lanier, Ouagadougou 23.7.2025²

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Keine Frage: Es ist allerhöchste Zeit, dass im Osten Kongo-Kinshasas Frieden einkehrt. Nach dem Wiederaufflammen der Kämpfe seit 2022 und bedeutendem Land-Gewinn der von Kigali (Ruanda) unterstützten M23³ (Fall von Goma im Jänner, von Bukavu im Februar 2025) sowie dem Rückzug des kongolesischen Staates aus von der M23 besetzten Gebieten, wurde in den letzten Monaten verhandelt, wobei sich international insbesondere Washington und Doha friedensstiftend betätigten. Kürzlich wurden nun zwei Abkommen unterzeichnet: zwischen Ruanda und Kongo am 27. Juni einerseits und zwischen Kongo und AFC⁴-M23 am 19. Juli andererseits. Bei aller Skepsis ob der Umsetzung sind die Reaktionen überwiegend hoffnungsvoll positiv.

Im The Conversation-Newsletter ist gestern ein Artikel erschienen, der Einwände prinzipieller Natur gegen das Friedensabkommen erhebt. Ich habe bei den beiden AutorInnen um Erlaubnis angesucht, den Artikel ins Deutsche zu übersetzen – es war aber noch keine Zeit für deren Antwort. So schicke ich für meine des Englischen mächtigen LeserInnen den Artikel im englischen Original voraus. Die deutsche Version wird folgen, sobald (und falls) mir die Übersetzerlaubnis erteilt wird.

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Africa's minerals are being bartered for security: why it's a bad idea

<https://theconversation.com/africas-minerals-are-being-bartered-for-security-why-its-a-bad-idea-260594>

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¹ Foto MONUSCO/Sylvain Liechti 18. oder 19.3.2014 (Wikimedia konnte sich offenbar nicht entscheiden 😊), [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SRSG_visits_coltan_mine_in_Rubaya_\(13406579753\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SRSG_visits_coltan_mine_in_Rubaya_(13406579753).jpg).

² Petra Radeschnig gilt – wie stets – mein herzlicher Dank fürs Lektorieren!

³ M23 = Mouvement du 23 mars/Bewegung des 23. März. Am 23.3.2009 wurde ein Friedensabkommen zwischen Kinshasa und der M23-Vorgängerorganisation CNDP unterzeichnet. Die M23 wurde 2012 gegründet, weil sich ihrer Meinung nach Kinshasa nicht an die Vereinbarungen des Abkommens hielt.

⁴ AFC = Alliance fleuve Congo/Kongoflussallianz, eine von der M23 dominierte Koalition.



Kobalt-Kleinbergbau in Katanga, Kongo-Kinshasa⁵

A US-brokered peace deal⁶ between the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda binds the two African nations to a worrying arrangement: one where a country signs away its mineral resources to a superpower in return for opaque assurances of security.

The peace deal, signed in June 2025⁷, aims to end three decades of conflict between the DRC and Rwanda.

A key part of the agreement binds both nations to developing a regional economic integration framework⁸. This arrangement would expand cooperation between the two states, the US government and American investors on “transparent, formalized end-to-end mineral chains”⁹.

Despite its immense mineral wealth, the DRC is among the five poorest countries¹⁰ in the world. It has been seeking US investment¹¹ in its mineral sector.

The US has in turn touted a potential multi-billion-dollar investment programme¹² to anchor its mineral supply chains in the traumatised and poor¹³ territory.

The peace that the June 2025 deal promises, therefore, hinges on chaining mineral supply to the US in exchange for Washington’s powerful – but vaguely formulated – military oversight.

The peace agreement further establishes a joint oversight committee¹⁴ – with representatives from the African Union, Qatar and the US – to receive complaints and resolve disputes between the DRC and Rwanda.

But beyond the joint oversight committee, the peace deal creates no specific security obligations for the US.

The relationship between the DRC and Rwanda has been marred by war¹⁵ and tension¹⁶ since the bloody First (1996-97) and Second (1998-2003) Congo¹⁷ wars. At the heart of much of this conflict is the DRC’s mineral wealth. It has fuelled competition, exploitation and armed violence¹⁸.

This latest peace deal introduces a resources-for-security arrangement. Such deals aren’t new in Africa. They first emerged in the early 2000s as resources-for-infrastructure transactions. Here, a foreign state would agree to build economic and social infrastructure (roads, ports, airports, hospitals) in an African state. In exchange, it would get a major stake in a government-owned mining company. Or gain preferential access to the host country’s minerals.

⁵ Fotoauswahl GL (ich glaube nicht, dass die Erlaubnis zum Wiederveröffentlichen von The Conversation-Artikeln Fotos inkludiert). Östlich von Kolwezi. Foto International Institute for Environment and Development 9.12.2020, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Artisanal_cobalt_miners_in_the_Democratic_Republic_of_Congo.jpg.

⁶ <https://www.state.gov/peace-agreement-between-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-and-the-republic-of-rwanda/>.

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/27/rwanda-drc-peace-deal-us-trump-m23>.

⁸ <https://www.state.gov/peace-agreement-between-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-and-the-republic-of-rwanda/>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview>.

¹¹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/after-tariffs-us-dangles-billions-dollars-congo-mineral-investment-2025-04-03/>.

¹² <https://www.miningmx.com/news/battery-minerals/60787-us-progressing-minerals-deal-in-congo/>.

¹³ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4874641/>.

¹⁴ <https://www.state.gov/peace-agreement-between-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-and-the-republic-of-rwanda>.

¹⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cgly1yrd9j3o>.

¹⁶ <https://www.tuftsdaily.com/article/2025/04/blood-in-blood-out-the-bleeding-congo>.

¹⁷ <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violence-democratic-republic-congo>.

¹⁸ <https://theconversation.com/the-way-that-minerals-are-mined-affects-conflict-in-eastern-congo-120833>.

We have studied mineral law and governance in Africa for more than 20 years. The question that emerges now is whether a US-brokered resources-for-security agreement will help the DRC benefit from its resources.

Based on our research on mining¹⁹, development²⁰ and sustainability²¹, we believe this is unlikely.

This is because resources-for-security is the latest version of a resource-bartering approach that China and Russia pioneered²² in countries such as Angola, the Central African Republic and the DRC.

Resource bartering in Africa has eroded the sovereignty and bargaining power of mineral-rich nations such as the DRC²³ and Angola²⁴.

Further, resources-for-security deals are less transparent and more complicated than prior resource bartering agreements.

DRC's security gaps

The DRC is endowed with major deposits²⁵ of critical minerals like cobalt, copper, lithium, manganese and tantalum. These are the building blocks for 21st century technologies: artificial intelligence, electric vehicles, wind energy and military security hardware. Rwanda has less mineral wealth than its neighbour, but is the world's third-largest producer of tantalum²⁶, used in electronics, aerospace and medical devices.

For almost 30 years, minerals have fuelled conflict and severe violence, especially in eastern DRC²⁷. Tungsten, tantalum and gold (referred to as 3TG) finance and drive conflict as government forces and an estimated 130 armed groups vie for control over lucrative mining sites²⁸. Several reports and studies have implicated the DRC's neighbours²⁹ – Rwanda and Uganda – in supporting the illegal extraction of 3TG in this region.

The DRC government has failed³⁰ to extend security over its vast (2.3 million square kilometres³¹) and diverse territory (109 million people³², representing 250 ethnic groups). Limited resources, logistical challenges and corruption have weakened³³ its armed forces.

This context makes the United States' military backing enormously attractive. But our research shows there are traps.

What states risk losing

Resources-for-infrastructure and resources-for-security deals generally offer African nations short-term stability, financing or global goodwill. However, the costs are often long-term because of an erosion of sovereign control.

Here's how this happens:

- certain clauses³⁴ in such contracts can freeze future regulatory reforms, limiting legislative autonomy
- other clauses³⁵ may lock in low prices for years, leaving resource-selling states unable to benefit when commodity prices surge
- arbitration clauses often shift disputes to international forums³⁶, bypassing local courts
- infrastructure loans are often secured via resource revenues used as loan security³⁷. This effectively ring-fences exports and undermines sovereign fiscal control.

¹⁹ https://juta.co.za/catalogue/mineral-law-principles-and-policies-in-perspective_23052.

²⁰ <https://ideas.repec.org/a/bpj/lawdev/v11y2018i2p801-841n20.html>.

²¹ https://www.e-elgar.com/shop/gbp/state-governance-of-mining-development-and-sustainability-9781784712631.html?srsltid=AfmBOopgZXHIrT6GFMMc9DDkOliV8cA2WvDUUb_yq9YS4U3fM4T_vP52.

²² <https://www.csis.org/analysis/central-african-republic-mine-displays-stakes-wagner-groups-future>.

²³ <https://int.nyt.com/data/documenttools/01911-sicomines-workingpaper-landry-v6/fd147a81df0bb6b9/full.pdf>.

²⁴ <https://saia.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Occasional-Paper-201.pdf>.

²⁵ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview>.

²⁶ <https://www.rmb.gov.rw/updates/news-detail/rwandas-critical-minerals-for-the-green-transition>.

²⁷ <https://cdr.e.u-tokyo.ac.jp/Quarterly/Vol1.pdf#page=33>.

²⁸ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301420721004037>.

²⁹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301420721004037>

³⁰ <https://theconversation.com/the-un-is-under-attack-in-eastern-congo-but-drc-elites-are-also-to-blame-for-the-violence-187861>.

³¹ <https://www.eac.int/eac-partner-states/drcongo>.

³² <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=CD>.

³³ <https://jgbc.scholasticahq.com/article/72664-cobalt-and-corruption-the-influence-of-multinational-firms-and-foreign-states-on-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo>.

³⁴ <https://www.iisd.org/articles/insight/hidden-clauses-tax-investment-policy-reform>.

³⁵ <https://dailyjus.com/world/2023/09/arbitration-involving-offtake-agreements-industry-and-damages-considerations>.

³⁶ <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-investment-treaty-regime-and-public-interest-regulation-in-africa-9780192896179?cc=it&lang=en&>

³⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/markets/asia/chinas-collateral-demands-curbing-emerging-countries-ability-manage-finances-2025-06-25/>.

Examples of loss or near-loss of sovereignty from these sorts of deals abound in Africa.

For instance, Angola's US\$2 billion oil-backed loan from China Eximbank in 2004³⁸. This was repayable in monthly deliveries of oil, with revenues directed to Chinese-controlled accounts. The loan's design deprived Angolan authorities of decision-making power over that income stream even before the oil was extracted.

These deals also fragment accountability. They often span multiple ministries (such as defence, mining and trade), avoiding robust oversight or accountability. Fragmentation makes resource sectors vulnerable to elite capture³⁹. Powerful insiders can manipulate agreements for private gain.

In the DRC, this has created a violent kleptocracy⁴⁰, where resource wealth is systematically diverted away from popular benefit.

Finally, there is the risk of re-entrenching extractive trauma. Communities displaced for mining⁴¹ and environmental degradation⁴² in many countries across Africa illustrate the long-standing harm to livelihoods, health and social cohesion.

These are not new problems. But where extraction is tied to security or infrastructure, such damage risks becoming permanent features, not temporary costs.

What needs to change

Critical minerals are “critical” because they’re hard to mine or substitute. Additionally, their supply chains are strategically vulnerable and politically exposed. Whoever controls these minerals controls the future. Africa must make sure it doesn’t trade that future away.

In a world being reshaped by global interests in critical minerals, African states must not underestimate the strategic value of their mineral resources. They hold considerable leverage.

But leverage only works if it is wielded strategically. This means:

- investing in institutional strength and legal capacity to negotiate better deals
- demanding local value creation and addition
- requiring transparency and parliamentary oversight for minerals-related agreements
- refusing deals that bypass human rights, environmental or sovereignty standards.

Africa has the resources. It must hold on to the power⁴³ they wield.

³⁸ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/369931643829886430/pdf/Resource-Backed-Loans-in-Sub-Saharan-Africa.pdf>.

³⁹ https://rucforsk.ruc.dk/ws/portalfiles/portal/104723086/Elite_capture_and_the_development_of_natural_resource_linkages_in_Mozambique.pdf.

⁴⁰ <https://time.com/4545223/why-you-cant-call-congo-a-failed-state/>.

⁴¹ <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003139614-7/mine-community-displacement-resettlement-south-africa-hanri-mostert-gaopalelw-mathiba>.

⁴² <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0252433>.

⁴³ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/building-new-market-counter-chinese-mineral-market-manipulation>.