



**Definitions:**

Conflict Mineral

Resources which are extracted from an area of conflict or area of high risk and can be sold to protract the conflict.

Supply Chain

A network between a company and its suppliers to produce and distribute a product.

Mai-Mai

Armed militias in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) historically formed to defend and resist against the invasion of Rwandan and Ugandan backed forces, with many exploiting the war for their own benefits.

Exploitation of Conflict Minerals

The usage of conflict minerals by armed militias to help finance conflict in the DRC and neighbouring nations.

DRC conflict free

Designation given to minerals that may originate from the covered countries but did not finance or benefit armed groups.

3TGs

The four most common conflict minerals from the DRC; tantalum, tin, tungsten, gold and their respective ores and derivatives.

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**Introduction:**

As a result of increasing modernisation and globalisation, the planet's requirement for metals such as the 3TGs has increased rapidly. Utilised in sectors varying from consumer electronics and aeronautics to jewelry and industry, a major ramification of this growing demand has been the rise of such conflict minerals as a method to fund armed militias and warlords in areas primarily surrounding the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

With estimated reserves of around \$24 trillion in untapped minerals, the DRC has been the scene of the deadliest conflict since the Second World War, with conflict since 1996 potentially having claimed the lives of anywhere between 3 to 7.6 million people. Further fueling the two Congo Wars (1996-1997 and

1998 - 2002) was this vast wealth of minerals, with the anarchy in Congo at the time being exploited by both regional nations and militias alike.

Following a series of Peace Settlements brokered by South Africa through 2002, the international conflict came to an end, with a democratic government elected in 2003. However, political instability and ethnic tensions have meant that the DRC, especially the region of Kivu bordering Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, has become a hotbed for insurgency with frequent human rights abuses also reported throughout the Congo.

As a result of the atrocities being committed in the Second Congo War, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1258 in 1999 which authorised the deployment of UN Personnel to the Congo; ever since, the United Nations involvement in the nation has increased, with the 2018 figures in the MONUSCO mission in Congo standing at just under 20,000 UN personnel. In 2017, however, the UN Group of Experts on the DRC published a report which detailed how the traceability systems of the 3Ts had reduced exploitation opportunities but still had shortcomings. Gold on its own still had no traceability system and was frequently smuggled out of the Congo, with cases also involving officers at high levels in the government and military factions of Congo.

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## **Key Issues:**

### *Financing of Armed Groups*

The key problem of conflict minerals is the usage of these minerals by armed militias and warlords to finance insurgency in areas such as the Kivu region. As well as this, many of these armed militias have been known to violate international law and employ child soldiers with such human rights abuses having been reported and condemned globally.

### *Ineffectiveness of Traceability of Supply Chains*

Until particularly recently, there were no reliable ways of tracing the origin of a product with materials from the DRC. The UN and The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) announced standards to be met for the control of supply chains in 2017, and since then many companies and firms have worked towards these standards but many have not, with many militias and warlords as a result being able to finance their activities.

### *Smuggling of 3TGs Through Borders*

Nations such as Rwanda are indifferent to the profiteering from Congolese minerals, and have even allowed it to help boost their economic revenues in the past. As such, a key problem is the cross-border smuggling of 3TGs and the means in which the nations allow or tolerate it.

### *Exploitation of Resources by Foreign Actors*

One of the main causes of the strife in the Congo is the interest of foreign parties, particularly neighbouring nations. Countries such as Uganda and Rwanda were part of the original reason for the war in Congo; and following the First Congo War, they were reluctant to give up the mineral rich areas they had acquired, whilst also being wary of Hutu rebels who had perpetrated the Rwandan Genocide on their border within Congo, and as such, they financed and armed pro-Rwandan rebels, with this being a major cause of the Second Congo War. This situation continues to this day, with the Congolese government accusing the Rwandan government of profiting from the looting of minerals.

### *Lack of International Awareness and Action*

As a result of legislation not being introduced until recently, the international awareness and action in regards to conflict minerals is still not at an adequate level to properly address some of the key issues.

Places such as the US, EU and China have taken action to tackle this problem, but all of these nations have faced issues in either the implementation or reluctance to carry forward with legislation.

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### **Possible Solutions:**

- A key issue with conflict minerals is the weak implementation of legislation passed by member nations, therefore, stronger legislation or the restructuring of previous ones can aim towards helping resolve some of the problems.
  - Another major issue is one of the people on the ground in the DRC. Artisanal mining communities are the ones that suffer the greatest due to exploitation by armed groups. As well as this, a lack of international involvement on the ground means that companies are unwilling to ensure constant diligence in their supply chains.
  - Corruption and embezzlement within the Congolese army and government have also led to an exploitation and smuggling of Congolese minerals across the borders with Rwanda and Uganda, thus leading to very little impact in changing the lives of the people in the mining communities.
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### **Recent International Precedent:**

- *UN and the OECD* – Together, the UN and OECD have produced a 5-step framework for all companies based on UN Principles for Business and Human Rights to adhere to, but this faces multiple issues. Additionally, the UN Security Council passed resolution 1952 in 2010 which further endorses OECD guidelines.
  - *United States of America* – In 2010, the United States passed legislation known as Section 1502 of the Dodd Frank Act, one of the first pieces of legislation which aimed at reducing the impact of mineral mining on Congolese communities.
  - *China* – In 2015, the China Chamber of Commerce of Metals Minerals & Chemicals Importers & Exporters (CCCMC) published Due Diligence Guidelines for Chinese companies active in the minerals trade.
  - *European Union* – In 2017, the EU adopted regulation requiring companies to declare and inspect the supply chains of metals regardless of where they are sourced from in the world.
  - *Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo* – Both nations have passed laws in compliance with OECD standards which require companies in the 3TG mineral sectors to carry out inspections of their supply chains.
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### **Bibliography / Useful Sources:**

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