

ABSTRACT

DEMOCRACY WITHOUT *DEMOS*: THE MINING INTERESTS OF A “GLOOMY CANADA” IN AFRICA.

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Before the 2006 elections in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) financed a \$6 millions aid program supporting peace and democracy projects in a country ravaged by more than ten years of a murderous conflict. Years before, the previous president Laurent-Désiré Kabila had signed one-sided contracts with numerous Canadian mining companies even before coming to power. Some of these companies are still active in the region. Their presence appears problematic for the State budget, the common good, the environment and often for the physical wellbeing of the populations traditionally living and working in areas around the Canadian concessions.

The new Congolese mining code, contingent to loans from the international sponsors, was adopted at the Congolese Parliament in 2002 by the non-elected transitional government. In order to establish the ideal legal framework of a mining eldorado, the World Bank first consulted about 80 mining companies. In 2008, over 75 percent of the world's exploration and mining companies were headquartered in Canada. The department of Natural Resources Canada and CIDA have been active in establishing this new legal framework which has been implemented in different developing countries.

The new mining codes provide minimal social and environmental protections — when such protections actually exist — as well as considerable fiscal exemptions for the foreign mining industry. In the DRC, this “geological scandal”, only 5% of the exploitation mining capital is contributing to the State budget through taxation. Besides, World Bank loans conditionalities led to the creation of public institutions like the Congolese *Comité de pilotage de la réforme des entreprises du portefeuille de l'État* (COPIREP), which has a mandate to privatize the functions of the State. This “governance” modality generally coincides with a reform of the electoral code and the creation of *ad hoc* ministries having wide discretionary powers, while pulling away decisions regarding economic policies from Parliaments and public structures. Meanwhile, large assistance programs dependent on Canadian foreign aid are meant to “empower the capacities” of a technocratic elite working to implement those practices of governance that are essential to the consolidation of the extractive industry. The DRC has consequently become a manager of the privatization of its prerogatives of Sovereignty.

Can we then qualify this State trusteeship to financial Canadian interests as “democracy”?

* *Gloomy Canada. Plundering, Corruption and Criminality in Africa.*