

ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF CONGOLESE DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

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In 2006 the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) held multiparty elections for the first time in over forty years. The elections were hailed as a victory for democracy. However, this paper will argue that the capacity of Congolese democratic institutions has been fundamentally undermined by a political tradition of patronage and corruption based on access to easily-corruptible sources of revenue.

By examining the history of the DRC from independence in 1960 until the collapse of the formal economy in the early 1990s this paper will firstly establish a normative framework for understanding the Congolese political economy. This paper will argue that a dependence on resource rents in this period undercut the formation of a strong and accountable relationship between the ruling elite and the populace.

Since the end of the Second Civil War in 2002, the DRC has been characterised by positive growth, low levels of mineral extraction and high levels of foreign aid. This paper will argue that the source of easily-corruptible revenue merely shifted from resource rents to foreign aid. In doing so foreign aid has undermined the very democratic institutions that Western governments have attempted to bolster in the DRC.

Finally this paper will examine the Sicomines deal- a highly structured mining-infrastructure agreement worth US\$9.25 billion- made in April 2008 between the Congolese government and a group of Chinese enterprises. This paper will explore the likely ramifications of this deal on the accountability and capacity of Congolese democratic institutions.

Given the immense size, location, and political and economic influence of the DRC, an analysis of Congolese democratic institutions is essential to any consideration of democratisation in Africa.