

POLITICAL EFFECTS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: A CASE STUDY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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ABSTRACT

The study analyzes the political effects of underdevelopment in the Democratic Republic of Congo, highlighting the paradox of a country rich in natural resources but marked by persistent poverty, poor governance and political instability. Based on a political economy of development approach, it shows that underdevelopment constitutes a real system of political regulation at the service of extractive institutions and dominant elites, rather than a simple economic backwardness.

Mass poverty, structural unemployment and weak public services weaken the state, fuel armed conflicts and promote the capture of resources. Thus, a vicious circle is established between underdevelopment and political instability. The study concludes by advocating for institutional refoundation, inclusive governance, and structural transformation of the economy to ensure lasting political stability.

Keywords: Underdevelopment, Political instability, Governance, Extractive institutions, Natural resources, DRC.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Since independence, socio-economic underdevelopment has been a structural determinant of the political trajectory of postcolonial states. It cannot be understood as a simple quantitative growth delay, but as a systemic configuration in which economic vulnerabilities, institutional fragilities and power strategies are articulated (North, Wallis & Weingast, 2009).

In sub-Saharan Africa, this reality manifests itself in an interweaving of structural poverty, weak state, and recurrent political instability; and the Democratic Republic of Congo paradigmatically illustrates this dynamic. Despite its exceptional economic potential, the country remains trapped in a spiral of extreme poverty, recurrent armed conflicts and dysfunctional governance. This apparent contradiction highlights what Bayart (2006) describes as the politics of the belly, in which the state becomes an instrument of predation rather than a vector of development.

Indeed, the persistence of underdevelopment in the DRC cannot be dissociated from the weakness of public institutions, the absence of inclusive policies, and the political instrumentalization of economic resources (Englebert, 2003).

Despite its exceptional mining and energy potential, it remains classified as one of the most fragile states, oscillating between political crises, persistent armed conflicts and socio-economic precariousness. This paradox questions the relationship between resource abundance and state consolidation, and refers to debates on the political economy of rent (Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A, 2012).

The scientific interest of the subject lies in the analysis of circular causalities between economic failures and institutional instability. In contrast to strictly economic approaches to development, this study adopts a political and systemic perspective, where institutions, governance choices and public policies determine the reproduction or mitigation of socio-economic imbalances.

The main objective is to analyze the political effects of socio-economic underdevelopment in the DRC, identifying the mechanisms by which poverty, social exclusion and inequality weaken institutions, alter state legitimacy and fuel instability. The study also examines the role of public policies in reproducing or reducing these dynamics, from a sustainable structural reform perspective.

2.0 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Brief presentation of the study environment: the Democratic Republic of Congo

2.1.1 Basic geographic, demographic and economic data

Located in Central Africa, the DRC shares nine regional borders and occupies a major geostrategic position. With 2,345,409 km², it is the second largest country in Africa. Its hydrographic network dominated by the Congo River represents considerable energy potential that is still poorly developed.

The population exceeds 100 million inhabitants, characterized by strong demographic growth and a majority of young people. This demographic dynamic, combined with limited industrialization, is generating high structural unemployment and an expansion of the informal sector.

Classified as a low-income country, the Congolese economy is essentially based on mining (copper, cobalt, gold, coltan), accounting for more than 90% of exports. This primary specialization exposes the country to the volatility of international markets and limits productive diversification. The contrast between mineral abundance and massive poverty reveals the limits of a rentier economic model that is insufficiently redistributive.

Despite significant potential, growth remains hampered by weak infrastructure, systemic corruption, weak governance, and persistent insecurity in the eastern part of the territory. These factors make the DRC a relevant analytical case for studying the link between underdevelopment and political instability.

It should be pointed out here that conflicts appear when they become financially attractive and easy to organize. Factors such as poverty, weak state, and natural resources contribute to these

wars. Thus, reducing the economic opportunities for rebellion is essential to prevent conflict (Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A., 2004).

2.1.2 Political history of the DRC: instability, armed conflict and weak governance

Since independence in 1960, the Congolese political trajectory has been marked by structural instability. The post-independence crisis and the assassination of Patrice Lumumba illustrate the fragility of the nascent state and early external interference.

Mobutu Sese Seko's seizure of power in 1965 inaugurated a centralized regime based on political clientelism and the capture of public resources marked by authoritarian, clientelist and predatory governance, based on the "politics of the belly" described by Bayart (2006), where public resources are used to maintain loyalty networks. This apparent stability was based on an economy of predation and an extreme personalization of power.

The fall of the regime in 1997 opened a sequence of major conflicts (1996-2003) involving several regional powers and a multiplicity of armed groups. These wars have profoundly disrupted the state apparatus and strengthened the war economy based on the illicit exploitation of resources.

The political transition that began in 2003 and the 2006 Constitution have established formal pluralism. However, the alternations between Joseph Kabila and Félix Tshisekedi took place in a climate of institutional mistrust and electoral contestation.

In addition, some areas in the east (North Kivu, Ituri, South Kivu) are still partially outside the effective control of the State. The political history of the DRC thus reveals a fragmented sovereignty, where formal authority coexists with parallel powers, reinforcing the structural link between underdevelopment and instability.

2.1.3 Underdevelopment indicators in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Congolese underdevelopment has a multidimensional dimension.

(a) Human Development Index (HDI)

The DRC ranks among the lowest in the world, reflecting a combined low level of income, education and health.

(b) Poverty

According to World Bank data (2024), more than 60% of the population lives below the national poverty line, with food insecurity affecting millions of people. Urban precariousness is increasing in parallel with rural poverty.

(c) Education

The Congolese education system suffers from serious shortcomings. The primary completion rate is estimated at around 60%, while less than 40% of children access secondary school (UNESCO, 2023). School infrastructure is often dilapidated, there is a glaring lack of qualified

teachers, and access to education is hampered in conflict zones. The adult literacy rate is stagnating at around 77 per cent, with marked gaps between the sexes and regions.

(d) Health

The health system is particularly fragile. There is less than 1 doctor per 10,000 inhabitants (WHO, 2022), and the majority of health facilities lack basic equipment. Life expectancy at birth is 61.8 years (compared to the global average of 74 years).

Infant mortality remains high (66 deaths per 1,000 live births), as does maternal mortality (473 deaths per 100,000 live births). Infectious diseases such as malaria, measles, cholera and tuberculosis are endemic, and access to care is limited by cost and distance.

e) Infrastructures

The country has a significant deficit in basic infrastructure: less than 20% of the population has access to electricity, and only 23% to drinking water according to UNICEF (2022). The road network is poorly developed, with less than 3,000 km of paved roads throughout the country. This deficit severely limits access to basic social services and hinders economic mobility.

f) Social and territorial inequalities

Regional disparities are particularly pronounced. The provinces of the East (North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri) and the Centre (Kasai) are both the poorest and the most affected by insecurity. Inequalities in access to economic opportunities, social protection and political representation feed a sense of exclusion, which is a source of social frustration and political tensions.

These indicators confirm the extent of multidimensional underdevelopment in the DRC, and fully justify the purpose of this study, which aims to analyze its political effects, in particular on the stability of the State, the legitimacy of institutions and democratic governance.

2.2 Methodology

In the framework of the present study, we have opted for the dialectical method in the theoretical operationalization according to VERHAEGEN Benoit quoted by Professor BONGELI EYKELO YA AATO Emile in the context of his teaching of the course of research methods in social sciences, in G2 SPA 2013-2014 at UNIKIN, in order to operationalize our problem wisely.

As a result, dialectics has allowed us to consider the world as a social whole, in which we pinpoint the contradictions, tensions and oppositions that punctuate these interferences between all the actors of the national system in search of each other's attributes of power (influence, domination and control) and the particular acts and projects contributing to the political nationalization of the interests (status) of the state. In this virtual space, each actor must go with two means par excellence to protect his advantages or interests (prevention = peace, and war = conflict).

Being at different levels, the actors, and, as long as there must exist in the permanent balance of power, the aspiration of a citizen to a status among many others, depends somewhat on the stakes with the others, but also on the personal ingenuity of his political decision-makers, taking into account his assets at his emergence, without forgetting his political weaknesses compromising his scope.

Thus, the application of the different laws of the dialectical method is articulated in the following way, as stated by Benoit Verhaegen in his introduction to immediate history (Pinto, R., and Grawitz, M., 1987).

Materialist dialectics posits as a prerequisite the universality of contradiction MAO proclaims, "To deny contradiction in things and phenomena is to deny everything. This is a universal truth, valid for all times and all countries without exception. This is why the contradiction is general, absolute."

This principle has allowed us to understand how the population of a potentially very rich country can drag around in systematic poverty for so long. The Logic of Contradiction, Strengths - Weaknesses.

-The law of change in quantity and quality (motion). Everything is in motion. The dialectic rejects the idea of social stability and spontaneous social harmony. This movement takes place by qualitative leap, the accumulation of quantity causing a change in quality (without value judgment).

At this level, the principle clarifies the dynamic situation of the Congolese political systems, from Leopold II to the present day (crisis and political instability), the living situation of the Congolese from independence to the present day. What the fauna and flora, the soil and the subsoil, the water and the mines represented, a few decades ago, are now opening up to a terrible and evolving change. This principle has also enabled us to understand the conditions for access to development for the good life of the Congolese.

-The law of the universal totality of facts. For this principle, historical reality is one and total, it is neither mechanically determined nor completely left to chance or freedom.

This principle leads us to explain that, the situation in which the Congo was born, followed by the administrations that have managed the State from 1885 to the present day, despite their theoretical diversity, the practical reality tends to be the same in the feeling of national unity despite ethnic diversity, of territorial integrity despite wars and political vicissitudes, a united and indivisible country, always wanted as an international heritage.

-The law of structural determinism with a predominance of economics. Marx defines his conception of structural determinism as follows: "In the social production of their existence, men enter into determinate, necessary relations, independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite degree of development of their material productive forces... the mode of production of material life conditions the process of social, political and intellectual life in general."

This principle has led us to insist here on the responsibility of our structures, especially political ones. Policymakers must put us back on a smart path, offering the opportunities for the DRC to emerge. There is no form of government that is obligatory to power. Emergence is the result of work.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Manifestations of underdevelopment in the DRC

3.1.1 The case of high poverty

a) Theoretical explanation of poverty in the Congolese context

Poverty in the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be reduced to a mere lack of income. It constitutes a structural configuration resulting from deeply intertwined institutional, political and economic determinants.

In the capability approach developed by AMARTYA Sen, poverty refers to a deprivation of real freedoms, inability to access education, health, political participation and economic autonomy (Clark David A., 2005).

As the debate reveals, it is clear that, from an institutionalist perspective, notably that of Daron ACEMOGLU and James A. Robinson, extractive institutions produce and reproduce poverty by concentrating rents for the benefit of small elites. And the DRC illustrates this model, because the state often functions as a mechanism for clientelist redistribution rather than as a vector of productive inclusion.

Critical approaches to development, such as those of Pierre Jacquemot, also highlight the territorial fragmentation of state authority and the incoherence of public policies (Pierre Jacquemot, 2010).

In the DRC, armed conflict, systemic corruption and a lack of strategic planning are fuelling a vicious cycle of poverty, informality and exclusion. Poverty thus appears as a systemic product of failing governance rather than a simple economic indicator.

b) Empirical evidence on poverty in the DRC

Recent data confirm this structural reading: About 62% of the population lives below the national poverty line. More than 80% survive on less than \$1.90 per day. The HDI stands at 0.479 (2023), classifying the DRC as a country with very low human development.

The provinces of Kasai, Tanganyika, Haut-Uélé and Ituri have rates above 75%, revealing a deep territorial divide. The Multidimensional Poverty Index indicates that more than 72% of Congolese are deprived of at least three essential services. Youth unemployment exceeds 45% in large urban centres.

These indicators reveal a systemic failure of the redistributive state and explain citizen mistrust and structural political vulnerability.

3.1.2 Poor access to education and health

The education and health sectors are central indicators of Congolese underdevelopment. Despite some quantitative progress, access to education remains unequal and qualitatively deficient. Insufficient infrastructure, a shortage of qualified teachers and regional disparities limit the accumulation of human capital.

Secondary and higher education remains socially selective, while scientific research remains marginal, reducing the national capacity for innovation. The health system is marked by insufficient coverage, chronic under-equipment and low medical density. Life expectancy remains low and maternal and infant mortality indicators are high. Access to care is hampered by direct costs and geographical distance, especially in rural areas.

These structural deficits weaken individual capabilities, compromise social mobility, and limit the formation of a technocratic elite capable of driving economic transformation. Underinvestment in human capital is thus a factor in the reproduction of underdevelopment and institutional instability.

3.1.3 The situation of massive unemployment, especially among young people in the DRC

With more than 60% of the population under the age of 25, the DRC faces intense demographic pressure on a loosely structured labour market. Urban youth unemployment is as high as 40-45%, while rural underemployment and informality dominate.

The mismatch between training and economic needs, the weakness of the formal private sector and the lack of industrialization limit the absorption of labour.

This economic marginalization leads to social frustration, forced migration and vulnerability to recruitment by armed groups, particularly in the east of the country. Youth unemployment is thus a major political factor: it fuels protest, weakens social cohesion and increases the risk of collective violence.

For Ba-Mweze, Jean-Noël, unemployment remains one of the main problems with a high rate, presumed at 84%, placing the country in a bad position in the world ranking (Ba-Mweze, Jean-Noël, 2024).

3.1.4 Low industrialization and dependence on the export of raw materials in the DRC

The DRC illustrates the paradox of abundance. Its economy remains dominated by the gross export of mineral resources (copper, cobalt, coltan, gold), accounting for more than 90% of exports. The secondary sector remains marginal and poorly integrated with the rest of the economy. The lack of infrastructure, legal uncertainty and the weakness of a coherent industrial policy hinder productive diversification.

This extractivist dependence exposes the country to the volatility of international markets and to the "resource curse" theorized by Sachs and Warner. The rentier model limits the creation of skilled jobs, hinders innovation and reinforces regional inequalities. The inability to process

resources locally deprives the country of strategic value chains, consolidating economic vulnerability with profound political effects. (Sachs and Warner, 1995).

3.2 Observed political effects of underdevelopment

3.2.1 Chronic political instability in the DRC

Structural underdevelopment produces persistent political instability, characterized by armed conflicts, contested transitions and territorial fragmentation.

3.2.1.1 Structural instability rooted in poverty and marginalization

Frustrations over poverty, regional inequality and the lack of public services fuel community tensions and violence. Paul Collier's work shows that poverty increases the risk of civil war, a risk amplified in the DRC by mineral abundance.

3.2.1.2 Wars, Rebellions and Fragmentation of Power

The wars of 1996-1997 and 1998-2003 profoundly dismantled the state. Since then, the east has been marked by the activism of armed groups such as the M23 and the ADF, which thrive on institutional weakness and the war economy.

3.2.1.3 Violent changes in regimes and institutional fragility

From the assassination of Patrice Lumumba to the fall of Mobutu Sese Seko, then to the transitions involving Joseph Kabila and Félix Tshisekedi, Congolese political history reveals the difficulty of institutionalizing lasting peaceful alternations. Underdevelopment thus acts as a delegitimizing factor, weakening the social contract and multiplying violent non-state actors.

3.2.2 Systemic corruption and political clientelism

Corruption in the DRC is both a symptom and a driver of underdevelopment. Ranked among the most corrupt countries according to Transparency International, the DRC is experiencing widespread capture of public resources.

Clientelism, characteristic of the neo-patrimonial states described by Jean-François Médard, transforms the administration into an instrument of political co-optation. The effects are multiple: institutional weakening, ineffective public policies and reduced democratic accountability.

In a context of massive poverty, dependence on clientelist networks consolidates a locked system where structural reform becomes politically costly.

3.2.3 Inequalities in the distribution of national resources

The territorial disparities between mining provinces (Lualaba, Haut-Katanga) and marginalized regions (Kasai, Sud-Ubangi, Sankuru, Tshuapa, etc.) illustrate an inequitable redistribution.

Public expenditure per capita is largely concentrated in Kinshasa. The concentration of wealth within a politico-economic elite reinforces the logic of predation analyzed by Jean-François Bayart. These inequalities fuel mistrust, identity withdrawals and violent demands.

3.2.4 Weak State Legitimacy in Certain Regions

3.2.4.1 Absence or inadequacy of public services

In several eastern and central provinces, the state is perceived as absent or coercive, unable to provide essential services.

3.2.4.2 Competition from non-state actors

These are armed groups, customary authorities, NGOs and churches that replace or compete with the state, and fragment its sovereignty.

3.2.4.3 Governance perceived as illegitimate

Alleged electoral fraud, corruption and weak accountability are fuelling the crisis of confidence.

3.2.4.4 Fragmentation of the national space

Occasional aspirations for autonomy reveal the erosion of national sentiment.

3.2.4.5 Exclusion of marginalised social groups

Women, youth, Indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities remain underrepresented and marginalized, undermining democratic participation and national cohesion.

3.2.4.6 Manipulation of public resources for political purposes

The grabbing of natural resources and the embezzlement of public funds are consolidating patronage networks. Election campaigns are sometimes financed by misappropriated state resources, reinforcing regimes based on loyalty rather than democratic performance.

As we can see, the results show that underdevelopment in the DRC is not only an unfavorable socio-economic condition, but a structuring factor of the political system. Poverty, unemployment, extractivist dependence, corruption, inequality and exclusion produce chronic instability, territorial fragmentation and a crisis of state legitimacy.

Underdevelopment thus appears as a mechanism for the reproduction of power, consolidating a neo-patrimonial political order and hindering democratic consolidation and sustainable structural transformation.

5.0 DISCUSSION

5.1 Analysis of the results

5.1.1 Correlations between extreme poverty and the emergence of armed groups

One of the central contributions of this research lies in the demonstration of a structural correlation between extreme poverty and the proliferation of armed groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

This is not a simple statistical coincidence, but a causal chain inscribed in a socio-political configuration marked by institutional fragility and the rentier economy.

5.1.1.1 Poverty mechanisms and recruitment logics

In the eastern provinces (North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, Tshuapa), extreme poverty acts as a factor of structural vulnerability. Theoretically, this dynamic can be read in the light of Paul Collier's work on the economics of civil wars, according to which low growth and lack of economic opportunities increase the likelihood of armed mobilization.

Socio-economic exclusion produces a feeling of political marginalization; the individual no longer perceives himself as a subject of rights but as an agent abandoned by the State. Armed groups then become functional substitutes: they offer immediate income, protection, recognition of identity and community integration.

Violence ceases to be solely ideological; it becomes a rational survival strategy in a destructured environment.

5.1.1.2 Natural Resources and the War Economy

The poverty-violence correlation is reinforced by the concentration of natural resources in conflict zones. Strategic minerals (gold, coltan, cassiterite) are easily captured rents.

This configuration is in line with the thesis of the "resource curse" developed by Jeffrey Sachs and Andrew Warner: mining abundance, in a weak institutional context, favours predation rather than development.

In the DRC, the war economy is turning resources into instruments of military financing. Poverty is no longer just a consequence of conflict; it becomes one of the conditions for reproduction.

Local populations, deprived of economic alternatives, find themselves unwillingly integrated into circuits of illegal taxation, forced artisanal exploitation or security dependence on parallel authorities.

5.1.1.3 State failure and radicalisation

The inability of the State to ensure its sovereign functions of security, justice and public services creates a normative vacuum. This lack of legitimacy encourages radicalization, especially among young people excluded from formal social integration circuits.

The process observed is not purely economic, it is also symbolic. Membership in an armed group sometimes constitutes an identity and political claim in the face of a state perceived as distant, corrupt or instrumentalized by elites.

Thus, underdevelopment acts as a catalyst for the fragmentation of public authority.

On this subject, Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler explain that civil wars are mainly motivated by economic opportunity rather than injustice. Rebellions emerge when violence is profitable and inexpensive to organize. The presence of natural resources, poverty and weak government increase this risk. Prevention therefore involves reducing economic incentives to wage war. (Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A., 2004).

5.1.1.4 Profound Implications

The discussion confirms that Congolese political instability cannot be analyzed independently of socio-economic determinants. Any security policy that lacks inclusive economic reforms remains insufficient.

Stabilization simultaneously presupposes economic diversification and job creation; transparent management of natural resources; strengthening local governance; Security Sector Reform. The conflict thus appears to be the visible symptom of a deeper structural imbalance between resources, institutions and political legitimacy.

5.2 The Role of Elites in Maintaining the Status Quo

The analysis reveals that underdevelopment in the DRC is not only the result of a capacity deficit; it is also linked to strategies for retaining power implemented by different elites.

This dynamic is part of a neo-patrimonial model where the state is appropriated as a private resource.

A. Political capture of resources

Political elites use access to mining, land, and fiscal rents as instruments for consolidating power. The allocation of public resources becomes a mechanism for clientelist loyalty.

This logic reduces productive investment and limits social redistribution. The state ceases to be an impartial arbiter and becomes a vector of selective privileges. This institutional lock-in prevents the emergence of governance oriented towards the general interest.

B. Military elites and the instrumentalization of insecurity

The militarization of the political field also contributes to the maintenance of the status quo. Some security elites are taking advantage of chronic instability, which justifies exceptional budgets, fluctuating alliances and indirect territorial control.

Insecurity becomes a political resource: it legitimizes the authority of certain actors while maintaining grey areas conducive to economic predation.

C. Economic elites and the rentier economy

Economic elites, often connected to political spheres, benefit from extractive capitalism centered on raw exports. The lack of industrial diversification protects their dominant positions and discourages any redistributive reform. The economic system remains locked, because any structural transformation would threaten the rents acquired.

D. Instrumentalization of identities

In some local contexts, community elites reinforce ethnic or regionalist logics in order to consolidate their influence. This politicization of identities fragments the national space and diverts attention from the structural issues of governance.

Let us remember that the Congolese status quo is based on a convergence of interests between political, military and economic elites. Underdevelopment then becomes not only a constraint, but an instrument for the reproduction of power.

4.3 Comparison with other developing countries

The DRC shares several characteristics with fragile states such as South Sudan, Haiti and the Central African Republic.

A. South Sudan

In these two countries, the concentration of natural resources (oil in South Sudan, minerals in the DRC) fuels armed rivalries and elite capture. The rentier economy and institutional fragmentation prevent democratic consolidation.

B. Haiti

Haiti illustrates chronic institutional fragility and dependence on international aid. As in the DRC, clientelist networks block structural reforms and maintain social exclusion.

C. Central African Republic

The CAR shares with the DRC the territorial fragmentation and proliferation of armed groups financed by the exploitation of resources (gold, diamonds, timber). State authority remains partial and contested.

D. Commonalities and specificities

The similarities lie in: elite predation; the rentier economy; institutional weakness; the persistence of conflicts.

The differences are due to the history, geography and degree of internationalisation of the crises.

The DRC is part of a broader model of fragile states where deficient governance and the capture of resources structure instability.

5.4 Specificities of the DRC

Despite these convergences, the DRC has unique characteristics.

A. An exceptional mineral wealth

The DRC holds a major share of the world's reserves of cobalt and other strategic minerals. This centrality in the global energy transition accentuates geopolitical greed and rivalries. The "political economy of plunder" described by some researchers takes on a systemic dimension.

B. Considerable territorial extent

With 2.3 million km², the country faces major logistical and administrative challenges. The distance of the provinces from the decision-making centre favours the fragmentation of power and the emergence of areas outside state control.

C. Persistent foreign interference

The DRC's strategic position attracts regional and international interventions, from neighbouring state actors to multinational companies. This external pressure complicates the consolidation of full political and economic sovereignty.

Let us therefore say to sum up that the combination of mining abundance, territorial immensity and geopolitical interference makes the DRC a paradigmatic case of the paradox of abundance.

It should be noted, then, that the epistemological examination of the political effects of underdevelopment in the DRC highlights a circular system where poverty, institutional fragility and elite capture reinforce each other.

Underdevelopment appears not only as a deficit of resources or capacities, but as a structural configuration produced and maintained by specific power relations.

Compared to South Sudan, Haiti or the Central African Republic, the DRC shares the fundamental features of fragile states, while distinguishing itself by the strategic scale of its resources and its geopolitical weight.

Breaking this cycle requires a profound transformation, including the consolidation of the rule of law, transparency in resource management, socio-economic inclusion, productive diversification and the redefinition of the social contract.

But on this subject, Theodore Trefon shows that international aid in the DRC produces few results. He goes on to say that reforms fail because of informal practices, corruption and local logics of survival. The state often operates informally, which diverts the objectives of public policies. In the end, aid creates a "staging" in which reforms exist on paper but do little to change reality (Trefon, T., 2011).

Without deep reform, underdevelopment will continue to fuel political instability and the reproduction of a predatory elite order. Sustainable stabilization thus presupposes a coherent articulation between social justice, democratic governance and economic sovereignty.

6.0 CONCLUSION

An analysis of the political effects of socio-economic underdevelopment in the Democratic Republic of Congo reveals that this phenomenon goes far beyond the simple lack of growth or income. It is a systemic configuration where the economic, political and institutional dimensions intertwine to produce and perpetuate a cycle of structural fragility.

The DRC is a paradigmatic example of the paradox of abundance. A country endowed with immense natural and human wealth, but locked in a dynamic of poverty, inequality and instability. The concentration of resources in the hands of predatory elites, systemic corruption, the absence of inclusive public policies and the weakness of institutions favour the reproduction of a neo-patrimonial order in which underdevelopment becomes an instrument for maintaining power rather than a constraint to be overcome.

The results show a strong correlation between extreme poverty, mass unemployment, social marginalization and political instability. The proliferation of armed groups, territorial fragmentation and the loss of legitimacy of the state are thus rooted in a rentier economic environment and deficient governance. Underdevelopment fuels violence, while violence, in turn, sustains underdevelopment, forming a vicious circle that prevents lasting transformation.

Breaking this cycle requires in-depth reform. This requires the consolidation of the rule of law, transparency in the management of natural resources, economic diversification, the development of human capital and the reduction of social and territorial inequalities. Peace and political stability in the DRC can only emerge from truly inclusive and equitable development, based on social justice, democratic governance and economic sovereignty.

Thus, underdevelopment in the DRC is not only a state, but a political and economic system to be deconstructed. Transforming its underlying logics is the essential prerequisite for the emergence of a stable, legitimate state focused on the well-being of its population

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