

The Rand-Great Dyke-Copper Belt-Katanga mineral resources axis: blessing or curse for Southern Africa

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Abstract

Southern Africa (SA) is among the world's richest mineral-rich regions, yet many of its citizens wallow in untold socio-economic distress. This puzzling reality bids the question: Is resource endowment a curse or a blessing for developing countries? This review unearths the significance and implications of mineral resources found along the Rand-Great Dyke-Copper Belt-Katanga axis in SA. To gather relevant literature key words were used to retrieve secondary sources from various databases. A total of 250 documents were retrieved, subjected to screening and 138 were finally considered suitable. Comprehensive meta-analysis was adopted to analyse the findings. Results indicated that the axis accommodates various minerals namely gold, diamond, copper, chrome and platinum. The axis is a double-edged sword since it brought positives and negatives to the region's developmental architecture. Availability of minerals triggers slow economic growth, political instability and environmental degradation. Cropping of numerous problems such as poverty, corruption, crime and inequality is attributed to the way minerals are mined and managed. Existing literature acknowledges that benefits derived from the axis are usually outweighed by detriments. This militates against the region's quest for development. Hence, a framework towards sustainable harnessing of the axis' minerals was developed. This framework advocates for the integration of the region's legal framework, infrastructure development, research and skills development and public-private partnerships, all premised on strong nationalist developmental agendas which integrate well into the global developmental framework. Regional co-operation is essential since it supports local capacity building in terms of minerals value addition while adhering to socio-environmental sustainability.

Keywords: Mineral curse, Mineral blessing, Sustainable development, Mineral resource axis, Southern Africa