

# Comparative Analysis of Economic Diplomacy of The PRC and The ROK to DR Congo

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this study is to analyze comparative economic diplomacy carried out by the PRC and the ROK to DR Congo as an effort to safeguard natural resources (cobalt and copper), competition, and the impact on the SDGs agenda using International Relation's Liberalism Theory and secondary data. PRC and the ROK need to secure cobalt and copper so that their electric vehicle industry can continue to compete in the world electric vehicle market. DR Congo is the world's largest producer of cobalt and the fourth largest copper producer in the world. DR Congo's GDP is ranked 45th out of 53 African countries. Thus, DR Congo must be able to build the country's infrastructure so that its GDP can increase. PRC and the ROK, thirsty for cobalt and copper for their electric vehicle industries, are moving closer to DR Congo to secure its cobalt and copper. The economic diplomacy carried out by the PRC is a resource for infrastructure while the ROK is based on the principle of mutual benefits. Thus, PRC and the ROK get resources (cobalt and copper) and DR Congo gets the country's development which is following several SDGs agendas. This paper answers that the economic diplomacy carried out by the PRC and the ROK to DR Congo is an attempt to secure cobalt and copper, creates a competitive environment between PRC and the ROK, and also has an impact on the SDGs in DR Congo.*

*Keywords: Comparative Analysis, Economic Diplomacy, the PRC, the ROK, DR Congo, Sustainable Development Goals.*

## **ABSTRAK**

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis diplomasi ekonomi komparatif yang dilakukan oleh Republik Rakyat Tiongkok (RRT) dan Korea Selatan terhadap Republik Demokratik Kongo sebagai upaya pengamanan sumber daya alam (kobalt dan tembaga), persaingan, dan dampaknya terhadap agenda SDGs dengan menggunakan Teori Liberalisme Hubungan Internasional dan data sekunder. RRT dan Korea Selatan perlu mengamankan kobalt dan tembaga agar industri kendaraan listriknya dapat terus bersaing di pasar kendaraan listrik dunia. Republik Demokratik Kongo merupakan produsen kobalt terbesar di dunia dan produsen tembaga terbesar keempat di dunia. PDB Republik Demokratik Kongo berada pada peringkat ke-45 dari 53 negara Afrika. Dengan demikian, Republik Demokratik Kongo harus mampu membangun infrastruktur negaranya agar PDB-nya dapat meningkat.

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RRT dan Korea Selatan yang haus akan kobalt dan tembaga untuk industri kendaraan listriknya, bergerak lebih dekat ke Republik Demokratik Kongo untuk mengamankan kobalt dan tembaganya. Diplomasi ekonomi yang dilakukan RRT adalah sumber daya untuk infrastruktur sedangkan Korea Selatan didasarkan pada prinsip saling menguntungkan. Dengan demikian, RRT dan Korea Selatan memperoleh sumber daya (kobalt dan tembaga) dan Republik Demokratik Kongo memperoleh pembangunan negara yang sejalan dengan beberapa agenda SDGs. Tulisan ini menjawab bahwa diplomasi ekonomi yang dilakukan RRT dan Korea Selatan terhadap Republik Demokratik Kongo merupakan upaya untuk mengamankan kobalt dan tembaga, menciptakan lingkungan yang kompetitif antara RRT dan Korea Selatan, dan juga berdampak pada SDGs di Republik Demokratik Kongo.

Kata Kunci: Analisis Perbandingan, Diplomasi Ekonomi, RRT, Korea Selatan, Republik Demokratik Kongo, Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan.

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## INTRODUCTION

Interaction between states is an interesting thing to be examined. The diplomacy process is a complicated task to do. Diplomacy is a process between actors who are in an international system and engage in private or public dialogue to pursue a predetermined goal peacefully (McGlinchey, 2017). Diplomacy can also be interpreted as an instrument for achieving interests formulated in foreign policy. Foreign policy is drawn up by state actors and through diplomats, states can achieve their interests through diplomacy (Marks & Freeman, 2020). Thus, foreign policy is an extension of the country's domestic interests (Muharudin, 2009). There are various forms of state domestic interests, such as political interests, security, economy, culture, and others (Liu, 2013). To achieve domestic interests stated in foreign policy, the state conducts diplomacy.

There are various forms of diplomacy, one of which is economic diplomacy which is defined as the use of government resources to encourage the country's economic growth by increasing trade, promoting investment, and collaboration through bilateral or multilateral trade agreements (Diplo, 2022). If a country conducts diplomacy, such as economic diplomacy, then there are interests that it wants to achieve. This interest, in the context of economic diplomacy, is aimed at encouraging the country's economic growth.

At the same time, economic diplomacy can help build other countries that are targets for diplomacy. In the context of this paper, it can be seen the economic diplomacy that is carried out by the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) to the Republic Democratic of Congo (DR Congo) occurs because of the encouragement of their domestic interests to strengthen their electric vehicle industry so that it can be described as a 'competition'. When these two countries carry out economic diplomacy, it is also beneficial to DR Congo. One of the benefits is increasingly achieving the agendas set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Broadly speaking, the economic diplomacy carried out by PRC is encouraged to continue its economic development and security interests which include territorial integrity and cultural interests (Gupta, 2012). In the context of economic development, PRC relies on its three largest sectors, namely manufacturing, services (labor), and agriculture (Asialink, 2018). In the manufacturing context, PRC is home to the world's fastest-growing electric vehicle (EV) market (South China Morning Post, 2022). The PRC government has also boosted innovation for electric vehicles, thereby encouraging the emergence of local products, such as Nio, Xpeng, and Li Auto (South China Morning Post, 2022). Meanwhile, the economic diplomacy carried out by the ROK

occurred because of its desire to create an open international economic environment and expand cooperation with countries with developing markets and actively raise awareness of climate change (The MOFA Republic of Korea, 2013). In the context of engagement with developing market countries, the economic diplomacy carried out by the ROK has been precisely targeted because DR Congo is a country with a promising developing market and is targeted to be achieved by 2030 (Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler, 2017). The economic diplomacy carried out by the ROK to DR Congo is also driven by the interests of its own, such as the electric vehicle manufacturing industry (Yoon, 2022). The market need for electric vehicles car makes ROK companies, such as Hyundai Motor Co. and Kia Corp (Hyundai Motor Group), ranked fifth in electric vehicle sales by 2021 (Kane, 2022b; H.-S. Park & Kim, 2022).

The push for economic diplomacy by the PRC and ROK to DR Congo indicates an increasing need for electric vehicle components. The components of electric vehicles must also be met. The main component for electric vehicles is the battery because it no longer uses fossil fuels. The main components for the NMC532 battery (mass-produced electric vehicle battery) contain 8 kg of lithium carbonate, 35 kg of nickel, 20 kg of manganese, and 14 kg of cobalt (Egan, 2022). Copper is also needed because all-electric vehicles require large amounts of copper used in batteries, winding wires, and copper rotors used in electric motors, cables, busbars, and charging stations (IDTechEx, 2017).

In the context of this paper, the need for natural resources (cobalt and copper) needs to be secured by PRC and the ROK so that its electric vehicle manufacturing industry can continuously meet market needs. Then, the country with the largest cobalt production in the world and the fourth largest copper-producing country in the world is DR Congo (Garside, 2022a; Pistilli, 2021). Although

PRC is the third largest copper-producing country in the world (Garside, 2022a), PRC must be able to protect its natural resources so as not to be eroded by production needs. The ROK must also carry out economic diplomacy to meet the needs of the electric vehicle manufacturing industry which is also driven by its desire to actively raise awareness of the importance of climate change. Therefore, the PRC and the ROK carried out economic diplomacy with DR Congo to secure the demand for cobalt and copper for its electric vehicle manufacturing industry. While these two countries are carrying out economic diplomacy, DR Congo is also making progress in achieving the agendas set out in the SDGs.

Thus, how can the economic diplomacy of the PRC and the ROK in the context of safeguarding natural resources of cobalt and copper for the electric vehicle industry have an impact on the SDGs agenda in DR Congo?

Furthermore, the purpose and objective of this research are to conduct a comparative analysis of the economic diplomacy carried out by the PRC and the ROK to DR Congo to secure its natural resources, namely cobalt and copper, which are important for the electric vehicle industry. This research also analyzes the consequences of PRC's and ROK's economic diplomacy on DR Congo, namely the formation of a competitive environment between PRC and the ROK and the impact on the SDGs agenda in DR Congo.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Liberalism is one of the grand theories of International Relations which emphasizes the importance of cooperation. The basic assumptions of Liberalism include the view that humans are good creatures / have good nature (a positive view of human nature), the belief that international relations can be cooperative rather than conflictual, and the belief in the progress of international politics (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013). For Liberalism, humans are good creatures because they

always act under rational principles that can find solutions to international problems (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013). Although humans are seen as good creatures, Liberalism also explains that humans have their interests too. However, these interests do not become a stumbling block to the formation of cooperation and a more cooperative world. Rather, it is these interests that ultimately encourage humans to be more collaborative and cooperative so that they can produce great benefits (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013).

Liberalism sees that the state is a reflection of human beings who behave well. By having good nature, the state will prioritize cooperation to form a world that upholds peace compared to a world full of conflict. Therefore, Liberalism explains that because countries in the world prioritize cooperation which ultimately provides peace for the world, then conflict and war can be avoided (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013). Cooperation that provides benefits is more likely to be chosen than a prolonged conflict that brings losses. Therefore, the use of military force, according to Liberalism, is less important and less useful (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013). By viewing the use of military force as 'less important, then the power to dominate and the fear of domination by other countries can be eliminated so that cooperation between countries can be prioritized to bring peace to the world.

Relations between countries that emphasize cooperation can build trust between countries. James Rosenau explains that *"the process by which international relations are carried out by governments has been accompanied by relationships of individuals, groups and private communities which can and have important consequences for the course of events"* (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013). Rosenau's explanation of 'international relations with private groups and communities' reaffirms Liberalism which states that international relations are not filled only by state actors, but non-state actors can play a role and also interact. Relations

between countries, whether carried out by state or non-state actors, which emphasize the importance of cooperation, can make countries in the world become interdependent and not dependent (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013). This is because the formation of international economic structures encourages interdependence between countries which ultimately reduces violent conflicts between countries (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013).

Cooperation between countries is aimed at mutual benefit. With the aim of mutual benefit, cooperation will benefit each party (a win-win solution) so that countries in the world will prioritize cooperation over enemies. The explanation given by Liberalism is an idealistic view of people and the state. The idealist view shows how much Liberalism depends on the nature of humans as creatures who can work together and always think rationally to avoid conflict. Liberalism states that when humans use their minds, then they can have mutually beneficial cooperation (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013).

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research used the qualitative method. The qualitative method is a method for research that aims to understand the phenomena experienced by the subjects of research (Moleong, 2007). The qualitative research method is appropriate to be used to examine matters relating to research on behavior, attitudes, motivation, perceptions, and actions (Moleong, 2007). Qualitative research is also a method used to examine the condition of natural objects (Sugiyono, 2012). In qualitative research, the researcher is the key instrument in analyzing the data inductively, and the results of qualitative research emphasize meaning rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2012). This research refers to the findings through literature studies, verified websites, secondary data, books, and journals. Therefore, making this research uses a qualitative approach. This approach is used to answer, find, describe, and explain the quality or social influences that cannot be convincing, measured, or described through a quantitative

approach (Saryono, 2010). In line with the research method which states that qualitative methods are appropriate for researching 'actions', then this research will look at the comparative analysis of economic diplomacy of the PRC and the ROK to DR Congo and its many implications.

## RESULT AND ANALYSES

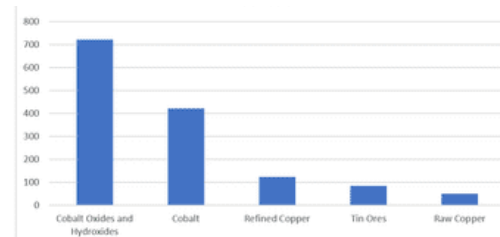
### Natural Resources of Cobalt and Copper in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) is a country located in Central Africa. DR Congo borders the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Zambia, Southern Angola, and the Republic of Congo (Cordell, Denis D. Lemarchand et al., 2022). It should be understood that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is different from the Republic of the Congo. This difference is due to the colonial past by Europeans, in which the Democratic Republic of the Congo was colonized by Belgium and the Republic of the Congo was colonized by France (Cordell, Denis D. Lemarchand et al., 2022). In terms of location and area, the larger of the two Congos is the Democratic Republic of the Congo which is located in the southeast, while the smaller country, the Republic of the Congo, is located in the northwest (Johnson, 2020).

DR Congo is the world's largest cobalt producer and the world's fourth largest copper producer (Garside, 2022b; Pistilli, 2021). DR Congo relies heavily on cobalt mining. In 2018, the cobalt industry contributed 32% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 95% of DR Congo's export earnings (Reid & Holland, 2020). In 2018, DR Congo had a GDP of USD 46.83 billion, thus cobalt mining contributed to DR Congo's 2018 GDP of as much as USD 14.84 billion (World Bank, 2020). Meanwhile, for copper, in 2021, DR Congo produce 1.8 million metric tons of copper (Garside, 2022b). Overall, DR Congo's top exports were refined copper at US\$ 11.1 billion, cobalt oxides and hydroxides at US\$ 2.95 billion, cobalt at US\$ 2.36 billion, copper at US\$ 710 million of raw copper, and US\$

655 million of copper ore (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2022). DR Congo exports the most minerals to China (USD 8.99 billion), followed by Tanzania (USD 1.67 billion), United Arab Emirates (\$1.15 billion), South Africa (USD 1, 09 billion), and Singapore (US\$1.06 billion) (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2022).

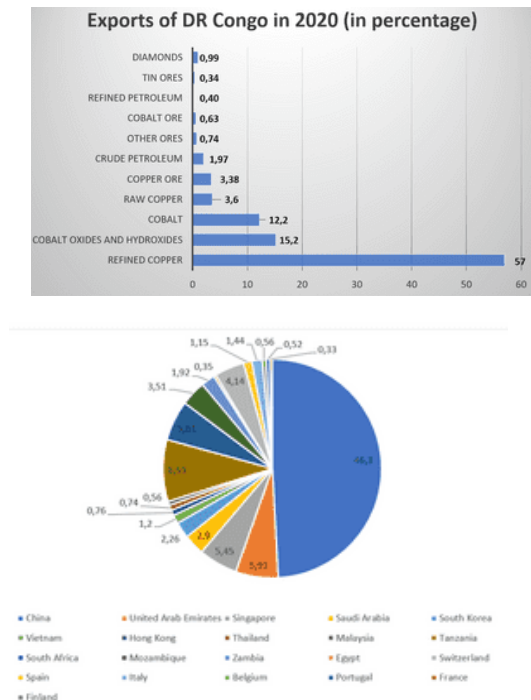
**Image. 1 Production specializations by DR Congo**



Source: (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2022)

From the figure above, DR Congo specializes in the production of cobalt oxide and hydroxide, followed by cobalt, refined copper, tin ore, and raw copper. Based on the figure, it can be stated that DR Congo has a large mineral mine. DR Congo is widely regarded as the richest country in the world in terms of natural resources. DR Congo's raw mineral deposits, which are untapped, are estimated to be worth more than US\$ 24 trillion (Global Edge, 2022). DR Congo can use its natural wealth to its advantage. DR Congo must be able to export its mining materials to countries that need these goods. Cobalt and copper, as described above, are materials needed for electric vehicle batteries. With the increasing trend of purchasing electric vehicles, DR Congo can sell these mining materials to PRC and the ROK. PRC is home to the world's largest electric vehicle market (South China Morning Post, 2022). ROK has also become a country where sales of electric vehicles have an increasing trend from 2013 to 2021 (Yoon, 2022).

**Image. 2 Production of mining production and its destinations to be sold**



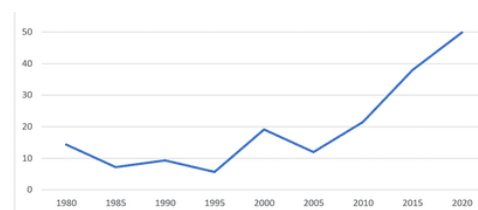
Source: (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2022)

Based on the image above, it can be seen that the PRC (darker blue) dominates the exports of DR Congo with a total of 46.3%, while the ROK (lighter blue) is only at 2.26%. This is reasonable because the electric vehicle manufacturing industry that requires cobalt and copper is still controlled by PRC. Even PRC control 15 out of 19 cobalt mining in DR Congo (Lipton & Searcey, 2022) which eventually places ROK in a position further below PRC. However, this also does not make it ROK difficult to develop its electric vehicle manufacturing industry but can also encourage the ROK to be able to secure cobalt and copper. Because for the ROK, mining goods produced by DR Congo, cobalt and copper, are valuable and much-needed items for the electric vehicle manufacturing industry due to the "resource war" (Newswires, 2021a). Apart from receiving exports from DR Congo, the ROK mining companies are also building a joint processing plant with an electric vehicle battery factory in DR Congo itself (Newswires, 2021a). But, for the PRC, these

raw mining materials are then processed into components for electric vehicles in China because of its three largest sectors, one of which is services (labor) (Asialink, 2018).

Qualitatively speaking, the greater the export of DR Congo's specialty mining materials to PRC and the ROK, the greater the contribution to DR Congo's GDP. Then, the greater the market demand for electric vehicles, the greater the PRC and ROK's need for cobalt and copper. Thus, the need for electric vehicles that always increases every year can give DR Congo along with the PRC and ROK their respective advantages. Sales of cobalt and copper also contributed to DR Congo's GDP growth. Sales of electric vehicles in China also increased by 169% (an increase in sales of electric vehicles by 2.99 million units) in 2020 (Ren 2022). Then, the increasing sales of electric vehicles have also made the ROK vehicle company ranked fifth in the world in 2021 (H.-S. Park & Kim, 2022) By selling cobalt and copper to a country with an increasingly strong electric vehicle manufacturing industry, DR Congo can become a home for the raw materials for electric vehicle components (Mitchell, 2022).

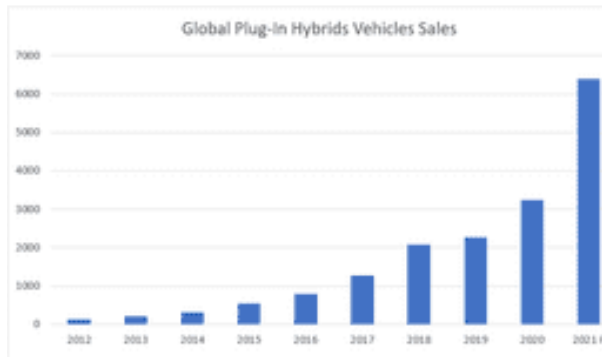
**Image. 3 GDP figure of DR Congo in US\$**



Source: (Mitchell, 2022)



**Image. 4 Increasing trend of electric vehicle sales**



Source: (Virta Global, 2022)

The two images above explain the increasing GDP of DR Congo and the trend of increasing sales of electric vehicles. It can be noted, from 2010 onwards (in the GDP figure of DR Congo), that the increase in GDP of DR Congo also coincided with the trend of increasing sales of electric vehicles (in the image increasing trend of electric vehicle sales). Seeing this, per the explanation of Liberalism, DR Congo together with the PRC and the ROK, prefer to be able to work together for their respective benefits. With China and South Korea as countries with an increasing electric vehicle manufacturing industry and DR Congo as the home of the world's largest cobalt producer and the fourth largest copper producer, the cooperation between PRC and ROK with DR Congo provides benefits for these three countries (win-win solutions).

### **Electric Vehicle Industry of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Korea**

In the context of the Chinese electric vehicle industry, in 2021, the electric vehicle industry in China experienced an increase, including an increase of 169% (2.99 million additional units) in electric vehicle sales compared to 2020, electric vehicle sales accounted for 13.3% for vehicle sales across China, and additional production of 601,000 plug-in hybrid cars (an increase of 131% compared to

2020) (Ren, 2022a; Statista, 2022). Increased production in 2021 makes China the world's largest electric vehicle market (Statista, 2022). By 2021, China's electric vehicle market is worth US\$ 124.2 billion and is expected to reach US\$ 799 billion by 2027 (Mordor Intelligence, 2022). China's leading domestic electric vehicle manufacturer is BYD. BYD cars, namely the model Qin, Han, and Song series, are in the top 10 electric vehicle sales in China, with the BYD Qin electric car achieving sales of 187,227 units beating all Tesla models sold in China (Cheng, 2022).

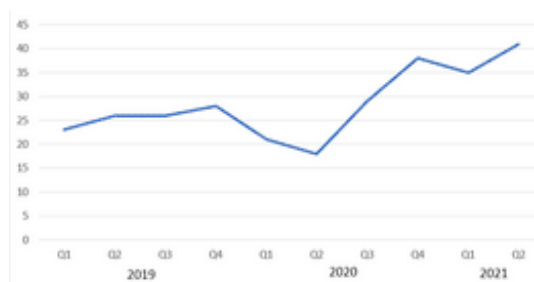
The increase felt by the PRC electric vehicle industry was also driven by the support of the Chinese government. In 2021, the Guangdong provincial government provided buyers of new electric vehicles to replace fossil fuel vehicles with a grant of 10,000 Yuan (US\$1,513) (Ren, 2022b). The amount of assistance provided by the government of each province in China varies. However, this assistance is provided by each provincial government so that the sales of electric vehicles in China will increase again, which will also encourage China's economic development after the Covid-19 pandemic (Ren, 2022b). The assistance to buyers of electric vehicles didn't only occur in 2021 but has been carried out by the PRC government since 2009.

Since aid was provided by the PRC government in 2009, approximately 100 billion Yuan (USD 14.8 billion) have been provided to buyers and commercial fleet operators (public transport) until the end of 2021 (Reuters, 2022). The PRC government will not impose a tax on electric vehicle buyers in 2022 and will extend the tax exemption until 2023 (Interesse, 2022; Reuters, 2022). The assistance provided by the PRC government has boosted sales of electric vehicles, even surpassing sales of electric vehicles in the United States, which only sold 800,000 (Marquis, 2022). The actions taken indicate that the PRC government supports the electric vehicle industry because it contributes to the benefits of the country. The PRC

government's support for its electric vehicle industry has contributed to the dominance of the world electric vehicle market.

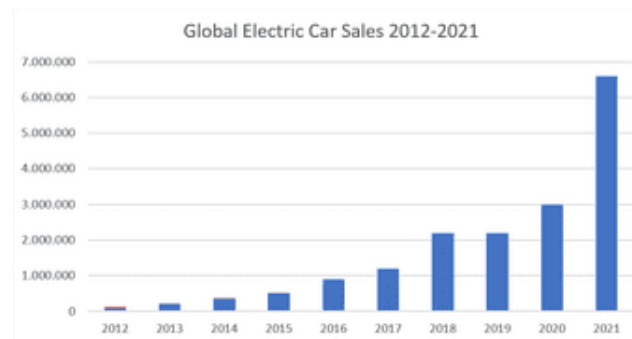
In 2021, there was a 160% jump in China's electric vehicle exports (additional exports of 499,573 electric vehicles compared to 2020) (Kawakami et al., 2022). China's electric vehicle exports surged, followed by Germany at 230,000 electric vehicles and Japan at 27,400 electric vehicles while the United States electric vehicle exports declined by 30% (110,000 electric vehicles) (Kawakami et al., 2022). Exports of electric vehicles produced by China are leading to the European market, where exports of Chinese electric vehicles to Europe will increase fivefold to 230,000 units in 2021, even though the market share of China's electric vehicles in Europe is second after Germany (Harding, 2022; Kawakami et al., 2022). Seeing an increase in the number of productions, government assistance so that people can buy electric vehicles, and an increase in the number of exports directed to the European market, the Chinese electric vehicle industry will always increase year by year (Pontes, 2022).

**Image. 5 China's automotive export per ten thousand units**



Source: (Sebastian, 2021)

**Image. 6 Global electric car sales from 2012 – 2021**



Source: (Richter, 2022)

Looking at the two images above, there is an increase in the number of vehicles exported from China and an increase in the number of purchases of electric vehicles in China. Electric vehicle sales show that China continues to lead in domestic electric vehicle sales, beating the United States, Europe, and other countries. The export of China's electric vehicles was hampered in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but the Chinese government has boosted the production of electric vehicles to assist electric vehicle buyers and tax exemptions for electric vehicles. Then, looking at these two images indicate that China's electric vehicle industry will continue to dominate the world electric vehicle market compared to production in Western countries. If the Chinese government wants its electric vehicle industry continues to dominate the world electric vehicle market, then they need to understand that the components of electric vehicles are different from fossil fuel vehicles.

The main component of an electric vehicle is a battery which is used instead of a motorized engine. The battery components are cobalt and copper, and DR Congo is the world's largest cobalt producer and the world's fourth copper producer. Therefore, safeguarding natural resources, cobalt, and copper, needs to be carried out by the Chinese government to continue to dominate the world



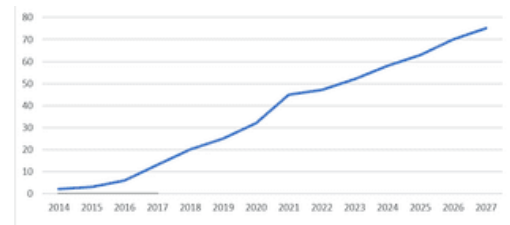
electric vehicle market (to meet the needs of electric vehicles and their main component, batteries) in competing with Western countries. DR Congo has natural resources, and China needs to secure cobalt and copper.

In the context of the electric vehicle industry in the ROK, the South Korean government is trying to make its country secure a market share of 10% in the global electric vehicle market by 2030 (Research and Markets, 2020). Efforts to achieve this target are also being pushed by the ROK government itself, such as the South Korean government's plan to invest heavily in the electric vehicle manufacturing industry under the government of President Yoon Suk-Yeol (John, 2022). With the election of President Yoon Suk-Yeol, the ROK will implement a ban on the registration of fossil fuel cars starting in 2035 (John, 2022). Previously, Former President Moon Jae-in also stated that South Korea has an interest in becoming the world's leading EV battery manufacturer by 2030. The prohibition and desire to become a home for electric vehicle battery manufacturers is the South Korean government's first step to making the country an environmentally friendly country. In addition to making the ROK an environmentally friendly country, this ban also benefits major vehicle companies in South Korea, such as Hyundai Motor Co. The Hyundai company revealed that it will invest 63 trillion won in South Korea from 2022 to 2025 to build an electric vehicle factory (Aljazeera, 2022). This investment has also pushed many South Korean *chaebol* companies into the race to dominate the electric vehicle battery market (Wang, 2022).

As much as 30% of the electric vehicle battery industry in South Korea is controlled by *chaebol* companies (Wang, 2022). Big South Korean companies, such as LG and Samsung, still dominate the stage of the electric vehicle battery industry, while other companies, such as SK On, are still crawling up and competing with big companies in the electric vehicle battery industry (Wang, 2022). The battery for electric vehicles is the driving

heart of electric vehicles. The greater the market demand for electric vehicles, the greater the need for batteries for electric vehicles. The market demand for electric vehicles can be seen in the sales of Korean electric vehicles in the United States. South Korea also fulfills the needs of the electric vehicle market in the United States which can be seen in the first quarter of 2022. In the first quarter of 2022, Hyundai Motor Co. and Kia Corp. managed to outperform other electric vehicle companies putting them right behind Tesla Inc. (Ewing, 2022; Ferris, 2022).

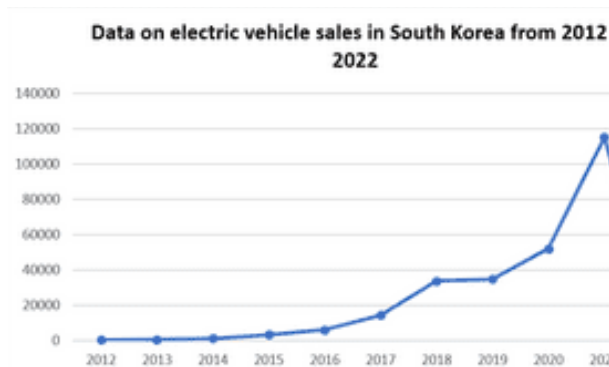
**Image. 7 South Korea's battery electric vehicle sales and predictions for 2019 – 2027 (in thousand)**



Source: (Changtor, 2018)

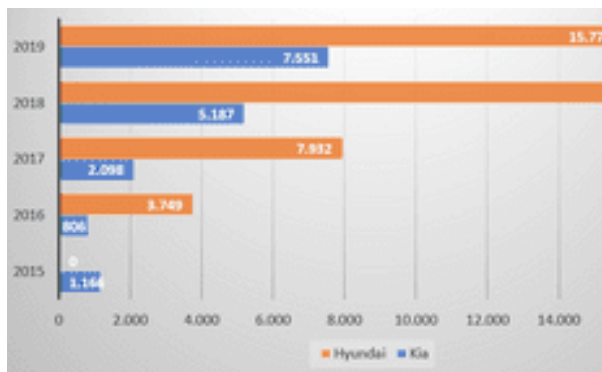
Based on the figure above, it can be seen that sales of electric vehicles in South Korea have been steadily increasing from 2014 to 2018. The biggest increase occurred in 2017 which brought electric vehicle sales to an increase of 13,000 units (Changtor, 2018). Electric vehicle companies, such as Hyundai, Renault Samsung, and Kia, were among the companies that benefited from the surge in sales in 2017 (Changtor, 2018). Looking back from the picture above, it is predicted that sales of electric vehicles in South Korea will increase in sales exceeding 60,000 units per year. Even though the picture above is a prediction for 2018, it also manages to determine the following years.

**Image. 8 Data on electric vehicle sales in South Korea from 2012 – 2022**



Source: (Yoon, 2022)

**Image. 9 Sales of Hyundai electric vehicles in 2016 – 2022**



Source: (Yoon, 2020)

Based on the two images above, it can be seen that sales of electric vehicles in South Korea and sales of electric vehicles from the Hyundai brand can be stated to be continuously increasing. The continuous improvement has put Hyundai in fifth place in global electric vehicle sales in 2021 and there is an increase in electric vehicle sales in 2021 compared to 2020 (Kane, 2022a), thus making the 2018 predictions come true. By March 2022, Hyundai had sold more than 42,000 electric vehicles representing 4.6% of its total sales (Kane 2022a). Hyundai electric vehicle models, such as the Hyundai Ioniq 5, Hyundai Kona Electric, Hyundai Tucson, Hyundai Santa Fe, and Hyundai IONIQ, still dominate the best-selling models. The increase in Hyundai's electric vehicle sales which

continues to increase indicates that the market demand for electric vehicles is also increasing.

However, the ROK government has also facilitated the increasing market demand for electric vehicles. South Korea has a distinct advantage in terms of growth in the electric vehicle manufacturing industry compared to other countries. The existence of strong government support, especially since President Yoon Suk-Yeol's agenda about the ban on motorized vehicles by 2035 and the importance for South Korea to become the world's leading EV battery manufacturer by 2030, and a vehicle maker with a growing electric vehicle infrastructure capabilities, can ensure that South Korea will become the leading global electric vehicle market in the long term (Changtor, 2018).

### Comparative Analysis of Economic Diplomacy Competition between the PRC and the ROK to the DR Congo

By definition, then the economic diplomacy carried out by the PRC and the ROK to DR Congo aims to increase trade, promote investment, and collaborate in bilateral trade agreements (Diplo, 2022). Certain reasons encourage a country to carry out economic diplomacy with other countries, just like what the PRC and ROK did to DR Congo. When viewed from the country's location, of course, each of these countries is far from each other where the PRC and ROK are in East Asia while DR Congo is in Central Africa. However, considering that diplomacy is an instrument to achieve domestic interests as outlined in foreign policy, then the main motive why PRC and the ROK conduct economic diplomacy with DR Congo is based on their domestic interests.

China's domestic interests can be found in the Whitepaper of China's Peaceful Development 2011. In the document, there are six interests of China, one of which is 'basic safeguards for ensuring sustainable economic and social development (Zhaokui, 2014). If economic development is one of China's six interests, then China will always try to achieve its interests. Meanwhile, South Korea's

domestic interests are to achieve a consolidation of democracy, continue to further its economic growth, propel cultural pluralism, security and prosperity of the Korean nation, promotion of democracy, freedom, and human dignity, contribution to world peace, and peaceful unification (I. Park, 2011). In these national interests, there is an interest to 'continue to further economic growth. If the market demand for electric vehicles also has an impact on South Korea's economic growth, then the ROK government will facilitate its country's electric vehicle industry which can also provide benefits for itself.

From the perspective of Liberalism theory, if the interests of China and the ROK are to strengthen their economy during competition with countries in the world (in the context of the electric vehicle industry), then China and the ROK will cooperate (according to Liberalism) to countries that have raw materials for the manufacture of electric vehicles which one of which is DR Congo. DR Congo is not a country that can be classified as having the largest GDP in Africa. DR Congo's GDP in 2019 was ranked 45th out of a total of 53 countries on the African Continent (Statistics Times, 2020). Thus, investment, trade agreements, and increased trade by focusing on its natural resources, namely cobalt and copper, can promote growth for the DR Congo economy. At the same time, China and the ROK need to secure natural resources of cobalt and copper so that they can support their electric vehicle industry. Efforts to get closer through economic diplomacy to DR Congo have been carried out by these two countries.

The economic diplomacy carried out by China to DR Congo is different from the economic diplomacy carried out by Western countries to DR Congo. The diplomacy carried out by the PRC to DR Congo is more focused on the economy than politics. Due to the emphasis on the economy, the PRC cooperates with DR Congo in economic investment in infrastructure and extraction of

pure minerals based on economic principles without any political requirements (Kabemba, 2016). For China, the approach taken by the West by prioritizing democratic principles and values is a barrier to the growth of the DR Congo political system which can lead to political instability and economic stagnation (Kabemba, 2016).

Thus, the economic diplomacy carried out by the PRC was carried out without interfering in the internal affairs of DR Congo. Meanwhile, the economic diplomacy carried out by the ROK to DR Congo can be seen during the administration of President Lee Myung-bak. In 2011, President Lee Myung-bak visited three African countries simultaneously, namely South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Ethiopia (Nicolas, 2020). President Lee's visit to the three countries is an effort to safeguard natural resources. This was expressed through the interests of South Korea during President Lee's administration. During his time in the office, there was an objective of 'energy security that was emphasized through what was called 'resource diplomacy' (Nicolas, 2020).

The existence of resource diplomacy is the impetus of President Lee's strategy for the 'Global Korea strategy. The Global Korea Strategy that President Lee has shown to African countries is through official development assistance (ODA). Through ODA, President Lee hopes that South Korea can boost its international influence (Nicolas, 2020). Thus, there are differences in the form of economic diplomacy carried out by the PRC and the ROK to DR Congo. The PRC focuses on infrastructure development and mineral extraction, while the ROK focuses on providing ODA. However, it can also be concluded that the economic diplomacy carried out by the PRC and the ROK to DR Congo is to secure its natural resources, such as cobalt and copper, considering that China also participates in mineral extraction and the ROK also has an interest in energy security.

China has made various investments in infrastructure development and mineral mining. In the context of mineral mining development, in 2021 the President of DR Congo, Felix Tshisekedi, announced his intention to renegotiate the \$6 billion deal signed between the government of DR Congo and Chinese mining companies (Case, 2022). The intention to continue the agreement between DR Congo and the PRC shows that the PRC has been present in DR Congo for a long time and this can be seen since the 1990s. China's state-owned and private companies have been purchasing and processing minerals obtained from mining in the province of Katanga, DR Congo, since the mid-1990s (Raid, 2014). In January 2008, an USD 8 billion resource and infrastructure development agreement was signed between Chinese construction companies and DR Congo mining company Gecamines (Raid, 2014).

The ROK has also carried out economic diplomacy with DR Congo, such as an investment agreement which is expected to expand bilateral cooperation between ROK and DR Congo in the field of infrastructure development in 2010, cooperation between a consortium of South Korean mining companies and RD Congo for mineral mining, and cooperation in development and technology for the development of DR Congo which is one of the war-torn African countries (Bilaterals, 2016; Newswires, 2021b; OCHA Services, 2011). In addition to assisting in DR Congo, South Korea also assisted the African Development Bank amounting to USD 600 million for investment in energy investment (African Development Bank, 2021). South Korea also opened a joint committee with DR Congo to develop bilateral collaboration (Yonhap, 2016).

The results of the development of bilateral cooperation collaborations were also felt by the two countries, such as in the fields of agriculture, health, energy, education, and public services (Yonhap, 2016). The development of collaboration between South

Korea and DR Congo shows that there is potential for the development of DR Congo itself. The DR Congo government itself also stated that the South Korean government could help DR Congo to develop the agricultural industry and natural resources (Yonhap, 2016). The DR Congo government also hopes that South Korean investors can visit DR Congo to be able to see DR Congo's natural mineral wealth so that they can study and use them (Yonhap, 2016).

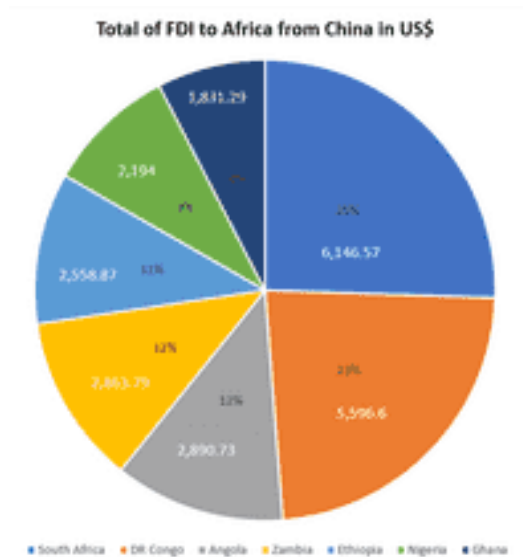
Chinese mining companies have increased their influence in DR Congo, and Congolese authorities have increased incentives to support the commercial interests of these companies (Raid, 2014). Continuing through 2021, Chinese mining companies own 15 of the 17 cobalt mines in DR Congo. Five of China's largest mining companies aiming to mine cobalt and copper in DR Congo could achieve a profit of US\$124 billion (Uren, 2021). In 2021, China and DR Congo will again strengthen their bilateral cooperation in the mining sector. Bilateral trade between the PRC and DR Congo reached US\$6.49 billion in the first half of 2021, an increase of 108.9 percent annually, while direct investment across the PRC industry in DR Congo was US\$176 million.

South Korean mining companies are also increasing their influence in DR Congo, one of which is the establishment of a South Korean mining company based in Kinshasa called WTIA DRC in 2021 (Newswires, 2021b). The establishment of a mining company in RD Congo aims to manage DR Congo's rich underground resources market, which is still full of untapped gold, cobalt, and high-grade copper reserves (Newswires, 2021b). One of the contracts signed between DR Congo and the South Korean mining company, WTIA DRC, is the purchase of 50,000 tons of raw ore resources that contains large amounts of cobalt and copper deposits (Newswires, 2021a). Apart from establishing a mine and mining company for cobalt and copper, WTIA DRC has also established a processing factory for electric vehicle

batteries in DR Congo in collaboration with DR Congo government-owned companies and private companies (Newswires, 2021b).

The establishment of mining companies, cobalt, and copper mining sites, to processing factories for electric vehicle batteries, is a form of South Korea's progress to achieve its national interests by 2030 as targeted by former President Moon, namely to become a world leader in the K-battery industry (Newswires, 2021b). Various cooperation developments have been carried out by the PRC and ROK in DR Congo. China's economic diplomacy and the ROK are not only in the mining sector, but China also provides Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and the ROK provides Official Development Assistance (ODA) to DR Congo.

**Image. 10 Total FDI to Africa from China in US\$**



Source: (Galal, 2021)

**Image. 11 South Korea's ODA figure to countries in the world**



Source: (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2021)

Looking at the figure of the total FDI to Africa from China, up to 2019, South Africa is the highest target for China's FDI grants, around US\$6.14 billion. FDI grants were followed by DR Congo and Angola followed by PRC grants FDI at around \$5.6 billion and US\$ 2.89 billion, respectively. In the same year, China's FDI grants to countries in Africa amounted to about US\$44.4 billion (Galal, 2021). The investments made by China to DR Congo are driven by its interest in being able to mine its abundant natural resources of cobalt and copper (Southern Africa Resource Watch, 2021). Then, looking at South Korea's ODA figure to countries in the world, it can be seen that the provision of ODA to Least Developed Countries (LDCs), one of which is DR Congo, is constantly at the 25% - 35% point. Thus, the ODA provided by South Korea to LDCs continues to be in a stable position. The provision of ODA by South Korea to LDCs also indicates that South Korea's economy continues to grow, from initially receiving aid from other countries to providing aid to countries in need. Thus, for the PRC and the ROK, to secure the natural resources in LDCs, the two countries will carry out economic diplomacy, namely, diplomacy that gives each country, if viewed from the Liberalism Theory, their respective advantages.

Looking through the Liberalism perspective, this economic diplomacy gives Chinese and ROK companies access to the natural resources of DR Congo, namely the

largest cobalt mine in the world and the second largest copper reserve in Africa, and DR Congo has the opportunity for infrastructure development (Kavanagh, 2021). Seeing this, the three countries, China, ROK, and DR Congo get their respective benefits (win-win solution). China and the ROK have access to and can secure the natural resources of cobalt and copper mines needed for their electric vehicle industry and DR Congo gets investment for their country's development. However, the economic diplomacy carried out by the PRC and the ROK to DR Congo can form a competition between the PRC and the ROK. The intended competition is an effort to secure natural resources related to the PRC and ROK electric vehicle manufacturing industries.

The presence of competition amid the economic diplomacy carried out by the PRC and the ROK to DR Congo occurs because it is driven by domestic interests, such as for the PRC it is a basic safeguard to ensure sustainable economic and social development and for the ROK it is the energy security. Then, in the context of the electric vehicle manufacturing industry, these two countries are competing to develop their electric vehicle industry because the market demand for electric vehicles is increasing every year. Thus, the PRC and the ROK need to secure cobalt and copper. Without cobalt and copper, the "heart" of electric vehicles, namely batteries, will not be able to be produced following the ever-increasing market demand. In short, China and the ROK carried out economic diplomacy to win the battle for influence in DR Congo.

### **Implications for the SDGs from the Economic Diplomacy Competition of the PRC and the ROK to the DR Congo**

The economic diplomacy of the PRC and the ROK to DR Congo also has an impact on the development of DR Congo under the SDGs agenda. Looking at investment patterns, China's economic diplomacy with DR Congo is in the form of an agreement on resources for infrastructure (Kafarhire, 2019). Meanwhile,

the economic diplomacy carried out by the ROK to DR Congo is based on the principle of mutual benefits (OCHA Services, 2011). The economic diplomacy carried out by the PRC to DR Congo is based on infrastructure with long-term commercial objectives. The PRC government's proposal was attracted by the DR Congo government because of the urgent need for infrastructure to revive the country's economy which had just recovered from prolonged conflict and political turmoil (Kafarhire, 2019).

Various agreements, in the context of country development, have been negotiated by the PRC and DR Congo ever since the early 1970s. The 'resources for infrastructure' agreement has given DR Congo benefits, from the construction of roads, and dams, to the exploitation of natural resources, especially minerals (cobalt and copper) to timber (Bolin & Mayers, 2019). China's economic diplomacy in the form of loans was also carried out to DR Congo. Loans have been given by the PRC government to DR Congo, one of which is through the 2007 Sicomines Agreement.

Meanwhile, for the ROK, the development of bilateral cooperation between South Korea and DR Congo is also directed at securing the energy needed by South Korea, but also has a good impact on DR Congo, namely cooperation in the development and technology of DR Congo, development of DR Congo which is one of the war-torn African countries, cooperation in transferring agricultural technology, human resources training, and drawing up national development strategies, construction of water purification facilities, and ports and developing mineral resources (OCHA Services, 2011). The development of cooperation between the ROK and DR Congo occurred because of the desire to work together for the development of DR Congo 'based on the principle of mutual benefits' by combining the strong points of the two countries, namely the latest Korean technology and DR Congo's natural resources



which are still underdeveloped. has various potentials to be used (OCHA Services, 2011). The economic diplomacy carried out by the PRC and the ROK is still directed at the needs of the two countries, namely cobalt and copper mining goods. Agreements were also made by the PRC and the ROK which also had a good impact on DR Congo.

The 2007 Sicomines Agreement was the most impactful agreement for the development of DR Congo (Larrarte & Claudio-Quiroga, 2019). The Sicomines Agreement is a US\$9 billion 'resources for infrastructure' agreement signed between Chinese mining companies and the DR Congo government (Chakrabarty, 2016). Under the agreement, Chinese mining companies will provide infrastructure projects worth US\$6 billion with funds from the Export-Import Bank of China (EXIM Bank) (Chakrabarty, 2016). The infrastructure project will undertake the construction of 3,402 kilometers of paved roads, including highways and bridges connecting the main cities of DR Congo (Lubumbashi, Bukavu, Goma, Kisangani), and the construction and repair of 450 kilometers of roads within the capital city of DR Congo, Kinshasa, then continued with 3,213 kilometers of construction or rejuvenation of railroads, construction, and equipment of 145 health centers, 31 hospitals, 5,000 low-cost housing units and two universities (Chakrabarty, 2016).

To guarantee the repayment of this loan, the Sino-Congo joint venture (Sicomines), will be repaid with a separate payment package set up by Gecamines (RD Congo's state-owned company) with 32% shares and PRC mining companies with 68% shares including China Railway Engineering Company, Sinohydro, Zhejiang Huayou Cobalt, and China Machinery Engineering Corporation (Chakrabarty, 2016). Profits from Sicomines will be used to repay loans for mine development and infrastructure projects (Chakrabarty, 2016). Another agreement was also made by the ROK government with DR Congo.

The agreements made by the ROK and DR Congo are also aimed at the development of DR Congo, such as the USD 1 billion deal (Manson, 2010). Although the agreement between the ROK and DR Congo is much smaller than the agreement between China's Sicomines and DR Congo, DR Congo still shows its willingness to sign the agreement with South Korea. The deal package proposed by South Korea provides benefits for DR Congo in the areas of repairing the Musoshi mine, construction of a deep-water port, and wastewater plant (Manson, 2010). With the improvement of the Musoshi mine and the construction of a deep-water port, the mined goods that have been excavated can easily access the Atlantic Ocean so that they can be delivered to South Korea. This assistance also helped boost South Korea's bid to secure long-term access to metals and at the same time helped build DR Congo in the infrastructure sector (Manson, 2010).

Apart from development related to mining, development for community services in DR Congo was also proposed by South Korea, namely the construction of wastewater treatment. The construction of wastewater treatment can serve up to 2 million people in Kinshasa (Manson, 2010). Another assistance, such as humanitarian assistance worth USD 500,000 was also provided by the ROK government to DR Congo. This assistance is estimated to be able to help 70,000 people of RD Congo who are starving within one month (The MOFA Republic of Korea, 2012).

Viewing from the Liberalism point of view, the economic diplomacy and other diplomacy carried out by the PRC and the ROK to DR Congo also provide their benefits. DR Congo can continue to extract its natural resources, cobalt, and copper, for its benefit. China and the ROK, which require cobalt and copper for their electric vehicle industry, can continue to invest in DR Congo's cobalt and copper mines. Of course, the economic diplomacy carried out by the PRC and the ROK to DR Congo can form a competitive

environment in which each country competes with the other. However, looking back on the Liberalism values, every country competes so that its national interests can be achieved. What China and ROK are doing can also have an impact on the development of the DR Congo country per the SDGs agenda, especially the SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 4 (Quality Education), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), and 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

In agenda 1, various investments with the opening of mining by the PRC and ROK can provide jobs for the people of DR Congo. In agenda 4, the construction of two universities through the Sicomines agreement also provides the opportunity for residents of DR Congo to be able to receive a higher-level education. In agenda 6, the development of wastewater treatment by ROK which can serve more than 2 million residents of Kinshasa can provide clean water and health for the environment. In agenda 9, through the Sicomines agreement, China builds and rejuvenates 3,213 kilometers of railroad tracks, then ROK builds an electric vehicle battery factory in RD Congo, a deep-water seaport, and repairs the Musoshi mine. In agenda 11, China builds 5,000 low-cost housing units for residents of DR Congo. Seeing the progress of achieving the agendas in the SDGs through the PRC's economic diplomacy and the ROK to DR Congo, the three countries will prioritize cooperation so that they can be more collaborative and cooperative to generate greater profits. However, behind the impact on progress in achieving the SDGs agenda, there are still violations of law and inappropriate mining governance.

Various violations of law and mining governance often occur in the cobalt and copper mines in RD Congo. These violations include excessive work hours, degrading treatment, violence, discrimination, racism, unsafe working conditions, disregard for basic health provisions, child labor, massive

exploitation, environmental damage, below-average wages, the opening of illegal mines, and others (Caldwell, 2022; France24.com, 2021; Lawson, 2021; Ndebele, 2022; Raid, 2021; Thomas, 2021). These various violations of law and mining governance often occur in mining sites operated by Chinese mining companies, DR Congo, and illegal mining, and there is even a tendency that China carries out neo-colonialism over DR Congo to obtain cobalt and copper mining goods (Raid, 2021). In contrast to South Korean mining companies, such as WTIA DRC, which build mining companies, mining sites, and processing factories for electric vehicle batteries. In addition to being centered on mining, the WTIA DRC company is also running rapid progress in other areas, such as agricultural, environmental, energy, and internet distribution projects for DR Congo (Newswires, 2021a). Of course, the existence of these violations does not reflect the desire for SDGs development in DR Congo to continue, but it is very dangerous for the future of DR Congo. Thus, on the one hand, economic diplomacy can provide progress for the achievement of the SDGs agenda, but on the other hand, there are exploitation practices that tend to violate the law and inappropriate mining governance due to the pursuit of profit which also can degrade SDGs development in DR Congo.

## CONCLUSION

The economic diplomacy of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Korea in the context of safeguarding natural resources of cobalt and copper for the electric vehicle industry can have an impact on the SDGs agenda in the Democratic Republic of the Congo due to various investments, agreements, expansion of bilateral cooperation, infrastructure developments, opening mines, job creation, and construction of health and education facilities. In short, the economic diplomacy carried out by the PRC and the ROK to DR Congo is to secure its natural resources, namely cobalt, and copper, which are very important for their country's electric vehicle manufacturing industry.

Safeguards of cobalt and copper must be carried out by China and the ROK if these two countries want their electric vehicle industry to continue to compete in the world electric vehicle market given that electric vehicles' vital objects are the batteries. China and the ROK are also competing to be able to secure the natural resources of cobalt and copper in DR Congo through various economic diplomacy they carry out. This competition is also driven by the market demand for electric vehicles.

Production, demand, export, and the electric vehicle industry have benefited China and the ROK. Thus, China and the ROK must be able to secure the natural resources of cobalt and copper, and if the materials used to assemble electric vehicle batteries are not secured, the PRC and ROK electric vehicle industries could be threatened. Economic diplomacy carried out by China to DR Congo is a 'resource for infrastructure', while ROK's economic diplomacy to DR Congo is 'based on the principle of mutual benefits'.

Thus, looking at the idealistic side of liberalism, the relationship between China, ROK, and DR Congo is a 'symbiotic mutualism' relationship. China and the ROK got what they wanted, namely cobalt and copper, while DR Congo got what it wanted, namely country development. The country's development is also following the SDGs agenda, especially the SDGs agenda 1 (No Poverty), 4 (Quality Education), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), and 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). The existence of economic diplomacy carried out by the PRC and the ROK to DR Congo finally formed a collaborative and cooperative relationship so that the cooperation resulted in benefits for each country.

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