

Conflict and the Environment

Since 1990 at least eighteen violent conflicts have been fuelled by the exploitation of natural resources. In fact, recent research suggests that over the last sixty years at least forty percent of all intrastate conflicts have a link to natural resources. Civil wars such as those in Liberia, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo have centered on “high-value” resources like timber, diamonds, gold, minerals and oil. Other conflicts, including those in Darfur and the Middle East, have involved control of scarce resources such as fertile land and water.

As the global population continues to rise, and the demand for resources continues to grow, there is significant potential for conflicts over natural resources to intensify in the coming decades. In addition, the potential consequences of climate change for water availability, food security, prevalence of disease, coastal boundaries, and population distribution may aggravate existing tensions and generate new conflicts.

Environmental factors are rarely, if ever, the sole cause of violent conflict. Ethnicity, adverse economic conditions, low levels of international trade and conflict in neighboring countries are all significant drivers of violence. However, the exploitation of natural resources and related environmental stresses can be implicated in all phases of the conflict cycle, from contributing to the outbreak and perpetuation of violence to undermining prospects for peace. In addition, the environment can itself fall victim to conflict, as direct and indirect environmental damage, coupled with the collapse of institutions, can lead to environmental risks that threaten people’s health, livelihoods and security.

Identifying Supporting Evidence

Argument	Identify two pieces of supporting evidence from the text
In the last 20 years many conflicts have had a link to natural resources.	Since 1990 at least eighteen violent conflicts have been fuelled by the exploitation of natural resources
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There is a significant potential for conflicts over natural resources to intensify in the coming decades.	As the global population continues to rise, and the demand for resources continues to grow
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