



Environment, natural resources, and armed conflict (CS)

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Thursday, 12.30 to 2.30 pm

1 Course description

This course analyzes the relationships between natural resource dependency, environmental degradation, and armed violence. It is divided into four parts. The first part focuses on non-renewable natural resources and discusses the political and economic reasons why major oil and gemstone exporters are more likely to experience civil war. The second part investigates to what extent resource scarcity and environmental degradation (driven, among others, by population growth and climate change) increase the risk of intrastate armed conflict, and discusses several theories that seek to explain why extreme weather events such as droughts or cold waves are often associated with political violence. The third part explores the possibility of interstate disputes around water and oil. Finally, the fourth part of the course is devoted to the environmental consequences of armed conflicts, and explores the various pathways linking warfare to environmental degradation.

There are no prerequisites to attend this lecture, but you need to be somewhat comfortable in English (e.g., be able to take notes).

2 Provisional course outline

- 0 Introduction and definitions
 - 0.1 Renewable and non-renewable resources
 - 0.2 Types of conflict
- 1 High added-value non-renewable resources and civil war
 - 1.1 The “rapacity effect”
 - Case study : diamonds and the Sierra Leone civil war (1991-2002)
 - 1.2 The funding mechanism and the heterogeneous effects of oil, gemstones, and drugs on conflict outbreak and duration
 - Case study : the production of narcotics in Afghanistan
 - 1.3 The “rentier state” mechanism
 - Case study : the Algerian civil war (1991-2002)
- 2 Scarcity of renewable natural resources and political violence
 - 2.1 Demand-induced scarcity : population growth and land overuse
 - Case study : the Rwandan genocide
 - 2.2 Supply-induced scarcity : climate change
 - Case study : the collapse of the Maya civilization
- 3 Interstate disputes around oil and water
 - 3.1 “Oil wars”
 - Case study : Iraq
 - 3.2 “Water wars”
 - Case study : shared rivers in Central Asia
- 4 Environmental consequences of warfare
 - 4.1 Before the conflict : preparation
 - 4.2 During the conflict : collateral damages and “scorched-earth tactics”
 - Case studies : deforestation of Kurdistan ; destruction of the Iraqi Marshes
 - 4.3 After the conflict : institutional and economic consequences of warfare

3 Assessment

Oral exams (10 to 15 minutes) will take place in January. The exact date and time slots will be communicated at a later point.

Please note that, depending on enrollment, I reserve the possibility to replace oral exams with a written exam.

Important information : international students staying only for one semester are allowed to take the exam in December (after the last class) instead of January.

This possibility is also open to French students, but (depending on available time slots) priority will be given to either exchange students or French students who are not in Grenoble in the next semester.

Attendance is not mandatory, although it is strongly recommended : you may choose not to attend the lecture and to consult suggested readings provided at the end of each class instead. Please note that you are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence (regardless of the reason).