

The Geography of Inter-State Resource Wars

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Abstract

We establish a theoretical as well as empirical framework to assess the role of geography for inter-State conflict. The theory shows that two related sources of asymmetry are important triggers of war motivations: if in a pair of neighboring countries only one of them has natural resources, and these resources are close to the bilateral border, the likelihood of war incentives can be higher than when resources are present on both sides of the border; moreover, when both countries have natural resources, again the probability of war increases in the asymmetry in terms of distance from the common border. The empirical analysis confirms that these two types of asymmetry, in terms of presence and/or distance, are significant in the explanation of inter-State wars after WW2.