

Peace, not war, responsible for deforestation in armed conflict zones

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Rates of deforestation in war zones increase dramatically once peace is declared, according to a study from the University of Waterloo.

The study, by Simron Singh, a researcher in Waterloo's Faculty of Environment and Nelson Grima from the University of Vermont, looked at data on [conflict zones](#) around the world, with a specific focus on Nepal, Sri Lanka, Ivory Coast and Peru.

The study found that in the years after fighting ended in those countries, they discovered deforestation increased to a rate of roughly 68 per cent. In comparison, the world mean rate of deforestation is 7.2 per cent.

"We don't want people to think we support armed violence in any way," says Singh. "But our findings show that when the fighting stops, a number of factors lead to an increased rate of deforestation."

Forests and jungles provide what researchers call, ecosystem services. This includes benefits such as carbon sequestration, provision of food and fibres, pollination and more. Deforestation hinders the provision of these services.

The researchers concluded times of war, forests are used as cover for guerrilla fighting and secluded bases. As such they become dangerous, and few people disturb them if they're not involved in fighting. Also, they're not logged or hunted in. However, when the fighting stops, often reconstruction efforts demand resources, and forests offer ample material and opportunity to help rebuild an economy and society. Moreover, there is often political instability and weak policy implementation, allowing uncontrolled exploitation.

"The goal with ecosystem services in any environment, peaceful or otherwise, is responsible management," says Singh. "Armed conflict is an unfortunate part of our world. Understanding the

role forests play during and after armed violence will help to better govern and manage our resources during all circumstances. No matter how awful."

The full study, How the end of armed conflicts influence [forest](#) cover and subsequently [ecosystem services](#) provision? An analysis of four case studies in [biodiversity hotspots](#) is available in the journal *Land Use Policy*.

More information: Nelson Grima et al, How the end of armed conflicts influence forest cover and subsequently ecosystem services provision? An analysis of four case studies in biodiversity hotspots, *Land Use Policy* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/j.landusepol.2018.10.056](#)

Provided by University of Waterloo

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