

Review of: "Armed Conflicts in Africa and Environmental Intelligence for Sustainability"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The proposals made by the two authors are valuable and promising. However, they should be further specified and integrated within larger frameworks of avoiding as well as dealing with the consequences of violent conflict.

With respect to the specification of the proposal of building institutions for EIS, I have three major concerns. One relates to what such institutions should cover. The text seems to vacillate between a focus on environmental issues narrowly understood and the whole spectrum covered by the SDGs. The second refers to the sources which should be used. The reference to the origins of the concept indicates that these should be a combination of public and non-public (intelligence agency-gathered) information. In the text, however, there is little about what this would mean for Africa in general, and Cote d'Ivoire specifically. What intelligence institutions could or should supply relevant information? This leads to the third issue. The authors suggest placing EIS in a security institution environment. This seems problematic to me. Security institutions may be part of the problem, as suggested by the authors themselves when they list Coup d'Etats among those phenomena potentially detrimental to sustainability.

In general, I find the proposal more promising for early warning than for conflict management. Typically, it focuses on outcomes – environmental degradation, poverty, etc. – rather than inputs – actors, institutions, and instruments shaping outcomes. When it comes to conflict management and rehabilitation, however, the latter are crucial. The authors say little about how these would be integrated into their suggested EIS proposal. In essence, I see what they are proposing as a risk analysis (which might actually be a better name in view of the comment above on intelligence).

My last point relates to this. The paper would be more convincing if it discussed similarities and differences to other tools of risk analysis, some of which are also seeking to combine security issues, such as violent conflict, with indicators of sustainability, both at international organisations such as UNEP and regional organisations such as IGAD.