

HYDROCARBONS AND CONFLICT: EVALUATING NATURAL GAS AND MILITARIZED INTERSTATE DISPUTES

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Abstract: To what extent does dependence on fossil fuels affect the likelihood of militarized interstate disputes? Existing literature evaluating the relationship between hydrocarbons and conflict primarily focus on the impact of oil. Because natural gas represents an increasingly important hydrocarbon, this study seeks to determine the relationship between natural gas and militarized interstate disputes (MIDs). Independent variables are operationalized as annual consumption and production of natural gas in billion cubic meters as well as reserves of natural gas in trillion cubic meters. Two dyadic and two monadic datasets were generated using R and SPSS with data obtained from the Correlates of War (COW) MIDB 5.0 and COW Dyadic MID 3.1 as well as the 2020 BP Statistical Review of World Energy. Binary logistic regressions generated statistically significant results for all three variables in most models. Undirected results for both dyadic and monadic datasets suggest a strong positive relationship between MIDs and both the consumption and reserve variables. Additional directed dyadic tests indicate states with large natural gas reserves tend to be targeted more frequently by aggressor states. The results remain robust to a variety of controls and changes in model specification. Analysis of the data offers several novel contributions to existing literature, opportunities for further research, and implications for policymakers.

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