

## **E-2 Contemporary Issues in International Studies**

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The Oil Slick: Resource Dependence and Instability in the Middle East

**ABSTRACT:**

This paper examines the phenomenon known as the "resource curse" or the "paradox of plenty," the negative impact that resource abundance and wealth can have upon a nation-state. In the past two decades, theorists have tried to determine the root causes for the negative outcomes of resource wealth. Two schools of thought have emerged. The first proposes an economic explanation of the harmful effects resource wealth has on a state. This perspective contends that the reliance on revenues from natural resources tends to create economies that are slow growing, poorly managed, and rentier based. The second school of thought is political. Political theorists believe that resource wealth leads to reduced accountability and increased militarism and corruption, in addition to numerous other political ailments. This paper argues that neither the political theory, nor the economic theory adequately explains this phenomenon. This paper examines the impact of natural resource abundance on countries and makes a number of recommendations to address this problem. Saudi Arabia is used as a case study to show the destabilizing effects of the "resource curse."

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Minority Rights after EU Expansion: The Case of Lithuania

**ABSTRACT:**

Before EU expansion in 2004, minority issues in Eastern and Central Europe (ECE) were of interest to many policy-makers and academics. Protection of minority rights was one of the main criteria to decide whether an EU candidate state from the region was ready to join the union. At the same time, the impact of EU conditionality on domestic changes in minority rights policies needs further investigation. Were the ECE governments able to implement their declaratory legal principles and policies? What happened in minority rights policy-making after EU accession?

This paper is part of a larger project which attempts to clarify the roles that domestic and international factors have played in shaping minority rights in Eastern and Central Europe. Although the paper focuses on the case of Lithuania, one of its goals is to understand how the situation in Lithuania relates to discussions of minority rights accommodation in other liberal democracies, including the other two Baltic states (Latvia and Lithuania). It surveys the main developments in minority rights politics in Lithuania since 1989, discusses how the recent initiatives associated with Europeanization fit into the historical patterns of minority politics, explores salient issues in minority rights politics and analyzes the implementation of actual policies proclaiming minority rights. Like most countries in Eastern Central Europe, Lithuania has adopted a minority rights regime which combines elements of a cultural autonomy model and limited cultural rights for "traditional minorities" (which include ethnic Poles, Russians, Jews, and Karaims). Lithuania adopted rather liberal laws in 1989; this helped the country to avoid international scrutiny, but eventually the public lost interest in this issue. Recent sociological studies suggest that ethnic intolerance, xenophobia, integration of Roma into the Lithuanian society and participation of minorities in Lithuanian politics have become salient issues, but there is no political will to address them.

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Diaspora Politics and International Studies

**ABSTRACT:**

Straddling the sub-fields of comparative politics and international relations, the study of diaspora politics, specifically its transnational dimension, has received little systematic attention in political science. At the same time, scholars, policy-makers and popular media, operating in a post-9/11 world, frequently identify diaspora organizations with radical ideologies and violence in global politics. With few exceptions, however, transnational political mobilization by diaspora groups remains largely unexamined in international relations. Sociology, anthropology and history, by

contrast, seem better equipped analytically to study diaspora communities and trace patterns of migration and political activism over time. This paper explores how different disciplinary perspectives and approaches to the study of transnational diaspora politics and political violence can help us to better understand the construction and transformation of political identities, the changing nature of sovereignty and the meaning of citizenship in a global economy. The study of diaspora politics, it seems, is ideally suited for rigorous, multidisciplinary analysis that may help us to move beyond simplistic assertions about political violence in our world today.

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Polar Awareness: What Every Student Should Know About the Polar Regions, and Why

**ABSTRACT:**

Today, we are becoming aware of the ecological importance of the Earth's polar regions: our lifestyles are probably contributing to global warming, causing melting of the polar ice caps, which, in turn, will have a huge effect on us. This is just one of many reasons why students should learn about the polar regions. Some kinds of polar wildlife have been hunted almost to extinction; we can learn more about stewardship of natural resources by looking at these negative examples. Peoples native to those regions have developed some unique adaptations to their harsh environment that can provide lessons for us all. Exploration of the polar areas by European countries was one of the engines for geographical discovery; it also raises interesting issues about imperialism and claiming other lands by right of discovery. The chronicles of Arctic and Antarctic exploration also can teach us a lot about our human nature and how we cope with extreme conditions. Some noteworthy art and literature has been inspired by these parts of the globe. In fact, the polar regions make an excellent focus for the study of place in all its aspects: geology, living things, ecosystems, human exploration and exploitation, and the symbolic implications of landscape. I have traveled to Antarctica, and I am planning to travel to Arctic Norway and Svalbard next year. I have a long-standing interest in reading about the polar regions. In this presentation, I will argue that students at all levels could benefit from greater emphasis on the polar regions in the curriculum.

Discussant: **Vincent Kohler**, Georgia Southern University