This chapter discusses the relationship between the environment and security. The concept of 'environmental security' is omnipresent, but is nonetheless ambiguous and contested. What exactly needs to be secured, and what are the security threats? Is environmental security about state security, faced with the loss of natural resources? Or is it about protecting individuals and communities from environmental degradation and reduced access to key environmental resources? A first step in clarifying these questions is to disentangle two related but distinct causal arguments. In the relationship between environment and security, environmental degradation can be analysed either as a cause or as a consequence of security issues. A second step needed to clarify these debates is to adopt clear definitions. In the context of international relations, security has traditionally been understood in relation to the survival of the state, and the main threats to state security are armed conflicts. For the purpose of this chapter, conflicts are defined as any type
9. Natural resources, security, and conflicts

of disagreement. The chapter also examines the impact of conflicts on the environment.

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