

# Elections' Involvement in Driving Tropical Deforestation

Xiaohua Wei\*

Department of Earth, Environmental and Geographic Sciences, University of British Columbia (Okanagan Campus), Kelowna, British Columbia V1V 1V7, Canada

## Abstract

Deforestation refers to the practice of clearing trees and other vegetation from an area of land, usually for commercial or agricultural purposes. This process is not only destructive to the environment but also has a significant impact on human societies and economies worldwide. Deforestation is a global issue that affects many countries, particularly those in tropical regions such as Brazil, Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. According to the World Wildlife Fund, around 17% of the Amazon rainforest has been lost in the past 50 years, while Indonesia has lost around 25 million hectares of forest since the 1990s. Deforestation not only leads to the loss of valuable natural resources, but it also contributes significantly to climate change.

**Keywords:** Tropical deforestation • Agricultural systems • Crucial ecosystem services

## Introduction

The final remaining habitat for many endangered species, tropical forests are among the planet's most biodiversity regions. Additionally, tropical forests provide crucial ecosystem services that benefit the entire world, like the provision of clean water and carbon sequestration. Up to 1.6 billion rural residents depend on forest resources for their livelihoods and may live close to forests. However, it is alarming that tropical deforestation has increased to alarmingly high levels in recent decades, with up to 79,000 km<sup>2</sup> (an area roughly the size of Austria) being cleared each year. So, it is essential for understanding what causes tropical deforestation [1].

## Literature Review

Forests play a crucial role in regulating the Earth's climate by absorbing and storing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from the atmosphere. When forests are cleared, this carbon is released back into the atmosphere, contributing to the overall rise in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels. Deforestation is estimated to account for around 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, making it one of the leading causes of climate change. The impact of deforestation extends beyond climate change, however. Forests provide habitat for countless species of plants and animals, many of which are endangered or at risk of extinction due to habitat loss. Deforestation also contributes to soil erosion, leading to decreased soil fertility and increased water pollution. In addition, deforestation can have a significant impact on human communities that rely on forests for their livelihoods. The primary drivers of deforestation are commercial agriculture and logging. Large-scale agribusinesses and small-scale farmers alike clear forests to make way for crops, pastureland and livestock. Logging companies also contribute to deforestation by cutting down trees for timber and other forest products. In many cases, these practices are illegal, but they continue due to a lack of enforcement or oversight [2].

*\*Address for Correspondence:* Xiaohua Wei, Department of Earth, Environmental and Geographic Sciences, University of British Columbia (Okanagan Campus), Kelowna, British Columbia V1V 1V7, Canada; E-mail: adam.wei123@ubc.ca

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In addition to commercial agriculture and logging, deforestation can also result from infrastructure development such as road building, mining and hydroelectric projects. These projects often require the clearance of large areas of forest, which can have devastating impacts on local ecosystems and communities. The effects of deforestation can be seen around the world, but they are particularly evident in tropical regions where forests are most abundant. In the Amazon rainforest, deforestation has led to the loss of habitat for countless species, including jaguars, monkeys and birds. It has also contributed to increased soil erosion and water pollution, making it more difficult for farmers and indigenous communities to sustain themselves. In Indonesia, deforestation has led to the destruction of vast tracts of rainforest, including some of the last remaining habitats of orangutans and other endangered species. The country is also one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases, largely due to deforestation and the burning of peatlands for agriculture [3].

## Discussion

The impacts of deforestation can also be felt in developed countries. For example, the United States is the world's largest importer of wood products, including timber and paper. Much of this wood comes from countries where deforestation is rampant, contributing to the loss of valuable natural resources and the destruction of fragile ecosystems. There are many ways to address the issue of deforestation, from government policies and regulations to consumer choices and grassroots activism. Governments can enact laws and regulations to protect forests and limit deforestation, while consumers can choose to buy products that are certified as sustainable or come from sources that have been verified as deforestation-free.

There are also many initiatives and organizations working to combat deforestation around the world. For example, the United Nations has established the REDD+ program, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. Other organizations, such as Rainforest Action Network and Greenpeace, work to raise awareness of the impacts of deforestation and push for more sustainable practices. Commercial logging, subsistence logging, conversion of forests to agricultural lands (for example, for oil palm plantations or cropping); and fires are the most common direct causes of tropical deforestation. Seasonality can also have an impact on deforestation; it may be lower in rainy seasons when logging is more difficult due to saturated soils and higher in dry seasons when flammability is higher. There is strong evidence that some enabling circumstances lead to an increase in deforestation. Using corruption as an example, where politicians trade away gains to privatise them [4].

A nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) may also be important, with higher deforestation rates in those with lower GDPs. Economies of high GDP countries are less likely to rely on logging, whereas those of low GDP countries

are prone to link deforestation to economic progress. Moreover, countries with larger human population densities tend to have more deforestation. It's interesting to note that free media is also linked to reduced deforestation, maybe counteracting the impacts of corruption by making politicians afraid of being exposed for privatising public goods [5,6].

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## Conclusion

Politicians try to gain an advantage over rivals during elections, which are power conflicts. By supporting popular policies and establishing economic possibilities, these benefits can be attained. Politicians may pledge or gift forested land for development in order to gain the favour of influential potential supporters, as well as with agricultural or logging companies. In order to gain the support of the people, the incumbent administration in Uganda in 2011 made promises about forests. An analogous instance is the 2018 Brazilian presidential elections, which saw a rise in deforestation as a result of candidates' promises to repeal environmental regulations. Governments may turn a blind eye to environmental protection during electoral campaigns. The majority of nations have strict rules prohibiting gaining political favour by using money. Yet, gaining support by donating land and forest resources is a desirable substitute for paying taxes because environmental protection regulations are typically not as strictly enforced or monitored as financial laws. There are numerous ways that elections might cause deforestation, but the impact of elections on deforestation is still poorly understood, particularly at large geographic scales.

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## Conflict of Interest

None.

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