

War and Peace in the Amazon

Eduardo Saad Diniz

“War and Peace in the Amazon” examines the relationship between environmental degradation, criminal violence, and climate governance in the Brazilian Amazon. The book seeks to make three original contributions. First, it applies systematic conflict analysis to Amazon deforestation, bridging environmental governance and security studies. Second, it develops a comprehensive peacebuilding framework for megadiverse extractive frontiers. Third, it proposes practical reforms to climate finance, drawing on existing territorial fund models and REDD+ reform proposals.

The project argues that climate change, frontier conflict, and environmental governance are deeply interconnected. It demonstrates why conflict prevention and peacebuilding should be understood as climate interventions, why land rights function as a form of carbon protection, and why Amazonian communities are central actors in maintaining ecological stability.

The book identifies three criminal economies that drive deforestation and violence across the Amazon frontier: timber trafficking, illegal gold mining (*garimpo*), and land grabbing (*grilagem*). Illegal timber is laundered through falsified documentation, corrupt oversight systems, and clandestine processing networks before entering international markets. Illegal mining operations have expanded into Indigenous territories, generating environmental contamination, public health crises, and social instability while financing organized criminal activity. Land grabbing—the fraudulent appropriation of public and Indigenous lands through forged titles, corrupt registries, and coercive force—underpins both processes. Cleared land is frequently converted to cattle ranching, reinforcing political and economic structures that facilitate further deforestation.

A central finding of the existing literature is that legally recognized Indigenous territories consistently experience lower rates of deforestation than comparable areas under other land-tenure arrangements. Despite their effectiveness as environmental stewards, Indigenous and local communities often face disproportionate levels of violence, limited access to climate finance, and persistent barriers to land titling and territorial protection.

Drawing on case studies from the State of Amazonas, Brazil, the book develops a four-track framework for environmental and climate justice:

Track 1: Security and Rule of Law: Strengthening community-based environmental protection and disrupting criminal financial networks.

Track 2: Land and Territorial Governance: Accelerating Indigenous territorial demarcation, expanding smallholder land titling, and improving transparency through publicly auditable land registries.

Track 3: Social Policy Integration: Expanding access to healthcare, food security initiatives, and education programs that incorporate local ecological knowledge.

Track 4: Climate Finance Reform: Increasing direct funding to local and Indigenous organizations and supporting results-based compensation for territorial stewardship.

The project contends that prevailing conservation approaches—including carbon markets, ecosystem-service payments, and centralized environmental management—have often struggled to address governance challenges on the frontier or adequately support local communities. It proposes an alternative framework in which environmental justice and climate stability are understood as mutually reinforcing objectives. By strengthening community governance, territorial security, and equitable access to resources, the book argues that conservation outcomes can be improved while supporting the long-term resilience of Amazonian societies.

Ultimately, “War and Peace in the Amazon” provides a framework for understanding how environmental protection, peacebuilding, and climate policy can be integrated to address one of the most consequential ecological and governance challenges of the twenty-first century.