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State fragility as a cause of forced displacement: identifying theoretical channels for empirical research

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State Fragility as a Cause of Forced Displacement

Identifying Theoretical Channels for Empirical Research

Charles P. Martin-Shields

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Abstract

Our understanding of how state fragility leads to forced displacement remains empirically and theoretically fractured, even as wider research on development and migration has expanded. Forced displacement and mixed migration will increasingly be central to global debates in the coming decades, particularly in fragile and weak states; thus the goal of this Discussion Paper is to provide a theoretical structure for future research on forced displacement and state fragility. To do this, we have developed a theoretical conceptualisation of how state fragility can lead to forced displacement, drawing on a multi-dimensional method for understanding state fragility. When a state is fragile, lacking in administrative, social and security capacity, the population is more likely to be forced to seek safety and economic opportunity elsewhere. One of the main challenges is bringing different fields into a cohesive conversation; issues that will be addressed include what different disciplines aim to measure, potential epistemological problems with assuming a linear relationship between development policy and forced displacement, and normative differences between fields. The outcome is an integrated theoretical analysis of the economic, political, and social drivers of forced displacement in fragile states, focusing on the theoretical causal channels wherein state fragility leads to forced displacement. This can inform new empirical approaches for measuring and analysing the relationship between state fragility and forced displacement, while speaking to practical issues faced by regional and international organisations working in fragile states on forced displacement and migration issues.

Keywords: Forced Displacement, Fragile States, Peacebuilding, Institutions, Development Outcomes

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Abbreviations

CPIA	Country Policy and Institutional Assessment
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Center
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1 Forced displacement, development, and state fragility

Forced displacement is a challenging research and policy subject, as it cuts across so many disciplinary and policy fields. Creating a cohesive narrative based on often-competing empirical findings has been made even harder as the number of people forcibly displaced due to violence, economic pressure and disasters has rapidly escalated in the past 10 to 15 years, making this both a theoretically and practically important area for students and practitioners in the international affairs community. The goal of this Discussion Paper is to review the existing literature on forced displacement and provide a theoretical argument for the causal role of state fragility in displacement. This is an important exercise since there are ongoing debates about the drivers of forced displacement, especially as phenomena such as “survival migration” and “mixed migration” have emerged in theoretical and policy discussions. Untangling the causal pathways between state fragility and forced displacement not only yields benefits for academic research, in terms of how we understand the balance of motivations leading someone to take flight, but can also provide tangible value for international affairs practitioners working on migration and development policies intended to provide people with a better quality of life in their home countries.

Forced displacement can be a function of political, geographic, economic, or social drivers. Drawing on the existing literature and descriptive analysis, we identify and discuss three casual pathways by which state fragility causes forced displacement. Someone may be forcibly displaced due to violence or threats to personal safety, or to avoid political persecution (Davenport, Moore & Poe, 2003; Moore & Shellman, 2004). People may also be forced to migrate in response to environmental changes (Black, 1994; Hugo, 1996; Tacoli, 2009). Finally, deteriorations in the local economic climate may force people to take flight (Betts, 2013a, 2013b; Ibanez & Velez, 2008; Kondylis, 2010; Ruiz & Vargas-Silva, 2013). These factors overlap in many ways: environmental or political changes could lead to untenable economic outcomes (e.g. Sen, 1981 on social and economic entitlements), economic instability could lead to political instability and violence, or movement away from physical threats could have socio-economic consequences in receiving communities, leading to further displacement.

To bring these different disciplinary frames into a cohesive narrative that is both theoretically sound and flexible enough for policy application, the article begins with a literature review of forced displacement. We use this review to identify how scholars have discussed, by omission and commission, theoretical ways that fragility leads to displacement, then propose theoretical channels for understanding how state fragility influences and impacts patterns of forced displacement.

We then address the debates and literature on state fragility. This section is important to the overall analysis of state fragility and forced displacement because fragility remains a relatively new and still-debated term in the development and political science disciplines. It can be a description of the risk of violence (OECD, 2016), risks to development outcomes (World Bank, 2016), or the quality of different aspects of statehood (e.g. Grävingholt, Ziaja, & Kreibaum, 2015; Ferreira, 2017). The core goal of this section of the paper is to highlight how different aspects of the political, administrative, and social nature of fragility may act as drivers of forced displacement. The analysis section brings the two reviews into critical discussion, identifying theoretical channels between state fragility and forced displacement,

and focusing on how development aid can influence forced displacement by addressing fragility.

The analysis section aims to highlight where the theoretical knowledge of fragility, especially disaggregated approaches to understanding fragility, points to causal channels for forced displacement. In our analysis we use the approach of Grävingholt et al. (2015), who define fragility as a shortage in authority, capacity and legitimacy in a state. This allows us to ask: if people are going to be forced to move, how should variation in the government's provision of physical safety, its popular legitimacy, and administrative capacity of the government influence the movement of people? Since forced displacement is often a mix of traditional migration and forced movement, one major driver of displacement is economic opportunity elsewhere, in combination with weak capacity in a home country's government to manage an economy. Another driver of forced displacement is weak authority; when a government cannot guarantee the safety of its citizens, people will take flight to avoid risks to their physical safety. These are two core examples of dynamics at work in the ongoing African migration crisis, and as changes in the global economy, environment, and systems of governance take greater root, we will likely see more forced displacement, driven by a mix of economic and safety/survival issues. The analysis will be used to motivate discussion about which gaps in the forced displacement/fragility nexus are ripest for empirically testing and identifying drivers of forced displacement in fragile contexts.

The paper closes with discussion of implications for practitioners and policy makers working in the fragile state/displacement nexus, as well as suggestions for future research. Overall, our aim is to inform ongoing scientific work on fragility and forced displacement in a way that is policy relevant and useful to academic researchers and policy makers alike.

2 Forced displacement: an evolving topic in migration and social science

To develop a theoretical understanding of the relationship between forced displacement and state fragility, we start with a review of how forced displacement is conceptualised across fields, particularly within the migration and refugee studies literatures. Forced displacement is a fraught term, particularly in refugee studies, where there is overlap in the definition and scope of the research. After the overall examination of forced displacement in the social science literature we shift our focus to how forced displacement has been treated in the development and security fields. This step in the article allows us to comparatively frame forced displacement and fragility in the analysis section, since both have received similar normative treatment from the development and security communities over the last 15 to 20 years.

2.1 Defining forced displacement

The study of migration cuts across multiple disciplines, including political science, sociology, economics and geography, among others. In recent years the phenomenon of human migration increasingly gained importance, due to the rising number of people on the move (Abel, 2015; Abel & Sander, 2014). As a consequence, the field comprises a variety of diverse sub-fields, often with overlapping theoretical concepts. These concepts deal with

multiple drivers of migration, which in many cases influence and reinforce one another. As a result, the comparability of research findings, especially with regard to the phenomenon of forced displacement, can at times feel limited (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003).

We start with a most general definition of international migration. “International migration” in this article is based on the United Nations (UN Commission on Human Rights, 1998, p. 9) definition that refers to “any person that changes his or her country of usual residence” as an international migrant, and therefore does not focus on the reasons for migration.¹ The “forced migration/displacement” term, however, deals with the “involuntary” or coerced movement of persons away from their home regions in order to find refuge in a safe place (Castles, 2003, p. 173; Betts, 2009, pp. 4f.). Normally those persons are referred to as “forced migrants”, as “displaced persons”, or sometimes in a misleading way as “refugees”.² While in theory the preliminary distinction between “voluntary” and “involuntary” movements appear to be reasonable and valuable, in reality the classification of individuals can be challenging due to varying and/or inseparable personal motivations (Betts, 2009, pp. 4f.). Various terms that include “mixed migration” and “migration continuum” aim to capture this complexity and variety.

If the displacement takes place within the country of origin, the migrants are further categorised as “internally displaced persons” (IDPs), although the conceptualisation of the term IDP is still debated (Mooney, 2005). According to the “Guiding Principles for Internal Displaced People” by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (1998, p. 1), internal displacement can be triggered by “armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters”. Still, some researchers only consider individuals fleeing because of violent conflicts as IDPs (e.g. Castles, 2003, pp. 175f.) or further categorise them as conflict-induced internally displaced persons (Betts, 2009, pp. 7f.), while others include natural disasters and environmental causes (Mooney, 2005, p. 9). As a result, the IDP term and statistics have to be treated with caution, and we see later in the analysis section why the data remain challenging to work with. In political reality, internal displacement is a complicated issue for the international community because of the possible violation of states’ sovereignty regarding the external granting of protection and assistance for individuals of concern (Castles, 2003, p. 176; Betts, 2009, pp. 7f.).

There are several possible drivers that can trigger forced displacement, which can have further implications for the forced migrants’ legal status (Castles, 2003, pp. 173ff.; Betts, 2009, pp. 4ff.). One of the main sub-fields of forced displacement deals with individuals fleeing from war, and persecution that is based on religious, ethnic, racial, political, or social reasons. According to the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention and its later expansion, the 1967 “Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees”, migrants forced to move across international borders because of such reasons are ensured international protection and the right to asylum. While individuals granted asylum are defined as “refugees” in these agreements, people still on the move with pending status are generally considered as asylum-seekers (Castles, 2003, pp. 173f.).

1 The Global Compact on Migration includes a focus on improving the data on migration, including better information on why people are moving across borders.

2 “Refugee” is a specific legal classification; this is why outlets such as the BBC refer to all people who cross borders as migrants until asylum requests have been formally completed.

Individuals staying in another country without a legal residence status, not covered by the 1951 Refugee Convention and against the local immigration law are generally categorised as “irregular immigrants”, “unauthorised immigrants”, “undocumented immigrants” or, more controversially, as “illegal immigrants” (IOM, 2004, p. 34.). In contrast to people fleeing war and persecution, forced migrants being forced to move because of economic or social risks are at a disadvantage (Castles, 2003, p. 174). Without the right to claim asylum, there are often a lack of other legal avenues for migrants forced by economic or social circumstances to cross international borders safely and legally. As a result, irregular types of migration are strongly correlated with phenomena such as trafficking and human smuggling, which take advantage of the migrants’ vulnerability (Castles, 2003, p. 177). Modern forms of slavery, forcing individuals into precarious situations, can be seen as another extreme form of forced displacement (Gallagher, 2002, p. 26; Castles, 2003, p. 177). Still, there “is no clear or universally accepted definition of irregular migration. (...) There is, however, a tendency to restrict the use of the term ‘illegal migration’ to cases of smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons” (IOM, 2004, p. 34). As a result of these ongoing definitional and normative debates, data collection and empirical research on irregular migration is challenging (de Beer, Raymer, van der Erf, & van Wissen, 2010, p. 462).

Another prominent sub-category of forced displacement is displacement due to environmental changes and human-induced disasters. The “environmental migration” or “environmental refugee” concept is challenged in the migration field because it lacks a clear and consistent definition and gives rise to an academic dispute about the overall concept.³ The scientific discourse started in the 1980s, when Essam El-Hinnawi (1985) introduced the term “environmental refugees” with an underlying broad conceptualisation in a report for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (Gemenne, 2011, p. 2). This first concept included international and internal displacement as well as temporary and permanent movement that could be triggered by “all types of environmental changes, and not only those induced by climate change” (ibid). The concept evolved and was later modified by Norman Myers (2002), who defined “environmental refugees” as “people who could no longer gain a secure livelihood in their homelands because of drought, soil erosion, desertification, deforestation and other environmental problems, together with the associated problems of population pressures and profound poverty” (Myers, 2002, p. 609). In comparison to El-Hinnawi’s concept, Myers’ approach puts an emphasis on migration due to climate change and its associated effects. Nevertheless, there are researchers evaluating the effects of environmental factors on forced migration differently, categorising them as “a distraction from central issues of development, inequality and conflict resolution” (Castles, 2003, p. 177; referring to a study by Black, 1998).

Although forced displacement triggered by natural disasters is generally considered to be a part of a broader “environmental migration” concept (e.g. Castles, 2003, pp. 176f.; Betts, 2009, p. 10; Gemenne, 2011; Ionesco, Gemenne, & Zickgraf, 2015), a distinction between forced displacement due to climate change and natural disasters can be useful for further analysis and policy advice, especially considering the lack of reliable data on displacement triggered by long-term climate change (Ionesco et al., 2015, p. 6). The “displacement due to natural disasters” concept includes short-term movements triggered by all kinds of natural

3 This is made more complex because the term “refugee” comes with particular legal status, and is thus a politically sensitive designation.

disasters, such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis or hurricanes. In many cases, natural disasters are made worse by human decisions about the placement of infrastructure or industrial sites (Castles, 2003, p. 177).⁴

The “development-induced migration” concept is another sub-field of forced displacement. This concept covers displacement triggered by large-scale development projects such as dams or mining operations (Castles, 2003, p. 176). Cernea (1996; 2006; 2008) analysed several projects with regard to the political questions of compensation and appropriate resettlement. He notes that normatively positive aspects of land use, whether for economic development or for preservation of biodiversity, can have significant negative effects on indigenous and poor communities when access to territory is restricted (Cernea, 2006). At a larger empirical scale Cernea (2008) notes that donor-funded infrastructure projects like dams and mining operations can displace already poor populations, and that the negative effects are compounded when there is no corresponding policy for aiding resettlement.

Having addressed the debate around the definition of forced displacement, we turn to the issue of how the policy community has framed it. In the 1990s and early 2000s there was a strong security lens in developing policies to manage forced displacement. While the security lens remains, there has been an increased push in the 2010s to use development tools to decrease the drivers of forced displacement.

2.2 Forced displacement: tension between security and development responses

As the literature review indicates, forced displacement as a concept is still debated in the social science and economics literature. Geographically, forced displacement is a phenomenon that is often observed and discussed within the context of developing countries, and indeed many of the cross-border forced displacement movements are South–South (Castles, 2003). This has led to a tension, and at times an effort to balance, how policy makers have viewed forced displacement and irregular migration, with the 1990s and early 2000s ushering in an era of securitisation and border control, and then a shift in the mid-2000s from pure securitisation to an increased recognition that development and aid play an important role in preventing situations that force people to leave their homes.

2.2.1 Forced displacement as a security issue

Security, whether viewed from the perspective of the origin or the receiving country, continues to influence how we talk about forced displacement. From a human perspective, a lack of security is one of the main reasons forcing people to flee from their homes. Davenport et al. (2003, p. 27) point out that “individuals will tend to flee when the integrity of their person is threatened”. Huysmans and Squire (2009, p. 3) emphasise that “the very meaning of the concepts of migration and security are highly contested, and are used to identify various practices that articulate different [policy] rationales”.

4 An example of a man-made natural disaster would be the BHP Billiton dams breaking in Minas Gerais state in Brazil, leading to large-scale toxic mudslides that killed dozens of people and destroyed marine ecosystems (Douglas, 2015).

Forced displacement emerged as a security issue during the 1990s, as the Cold War drew to a close and conflicts in the Balkans and Africa led to an increase in asylum seekers (Weiner, 1992; Wæver, Buzan, Kelstrup, & Lemaitre, 1993; Doty, 1998). Although South–South migration formed the biggest part of migration (Castles, 2003, p. 174), the movement of people was increasingly seen as a security threat to the Western/Northern states (Doty, 1998, p. 1), as well as sending countries (Weiner, 1992, pp. 103–120). This could be viewed in contrast to outflows of refugees to Western Europe from Hungary in 1956 (Markowitz, 1973, p. 46), and from Vietnam in the 1970s (Kelly, 1986), where Western countries worked to provide safe havens and to manage the flow of refugees. Though a variety of scholars point out that security threats from migration are social and political constructs (Weiner, 1992, p. 103; Wæver, 1995), there is a broad consensus of the significance of the security paradigm in forced displacement and migration management: “Migration policy has become one of the most significant influences on migration, and security is the dominant force behind migration policy. Any understanding of human movement must therefore incorporate notions of security at both an empirical and theoretical level.” (Collyer, 2006, p. 268)

After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, there was a significant shift in the discourse around the displacement–security nexus (Faist, 2005; Isotalo, 2009). The focus shifted to seeing displacement mainly as a security threat, and there was an increase in border and migration management (Hammerstad, 2011; Sørensen, 2012, p. 61). In the Western countries, in particular, a connection between displacement and terrorism was made, and in order to prevent terrorism, actions were launched against migration (Faist, 2005, p. 4; Collyer, 2006, p. 256). The policy of closing borders to prevent terrorism lacks empirical grounding, even if events like the truck attacks in France and Germany made the argument politically useful for certain parties; indeed, evidence indicates that closing borders to displaced people might *increase* the risk of terrorist attacks. Terrorist groups often offer humanitarian help to refugees in order to get new recruits, increasing the number of potential terrorists, and irregular refugee flows can have destabilising effects on neighbouring weak states (Lischer, 2008, p. 96; Choi & Salehyan, 2013). Thus, closing borders may just present a boon to terrorist organisations looking to increase recruiting opportunities.

Forced displacement started being seen as both a security and development issue, as Northern countries recognised that securitisation alone would not prevent forced displacement (Adamson, 2006). In light of this, Castles & Delgado Wise (2008, p. 3) and Sørensen (2012, p. 62) criticise the agenda-setting in the field of migration as still mainly managed by the Northern countries. Recent international policy efforts, such as the Global Compact on Migration and Global Forum on Migration and Development, show that states in the Global North increasingly recognise the need to work with developing countries on international migration policy and to incorporate development and technical cooperation into migration policy. Indeed, as the displacement and migration crisis in Europe has grown in recent years, there has been a distinct policy shift toward using development and aid as a mechanism for managing irregular migration and forced displacement, though the impacts of this strategy are still debated (Castillejo, 2016).

2.2.2 Forced displacement and development

The relationship between development and forced displacement as a path of inquiry has developed and transformed over time (Sørensen 2012, 2004; Sørensen, Van Hear, & Engberg-Pedersen, 2003; Isotalo, 2009). The classic assumption “that a search for better or more secure livelihoods is the main cause of migration” (Sørensen, 2012, p. 63), is still dominant in the migration–development debate. The question of when individuals decide to leave is an ongoing discussion, including debates on push and pull factors as well as the “migration hump”, which is the tendency for people to migrate as their wealth increases (Clemens, 2014; de Haas, 2006; Sørensen et al., 2003, p. 12;). In many cases, it is difficult to draw the line between “voluntary” and “forced migration” and/or to differentiate between varying causes of flight, as phenomena like civil war are often accompanied by economic hardship (Betts, 2013a, Sørensen et al., 2003). Generally speaking, though, forced displacement triggered by economic hardship is not considered as acute as flight due to war and persecution, and the design of the existing international migration system reflects this (e.g. Ramos, 2012; Falkler, 2007). In development studies, the migration topic was for a long time associated with negative connotations, categorising migration as a result of underdevelopment or “as the outcome of conflict and subsequent state fragility and insecurity” or “perceived migration [...] as a completely distinct area of concern from development” (Sørensen, 2012, p. 64).

When migrants are leaving a fragile state, the motivations become mixed; as Betts (2013b) explains, while economic growth generally leads to more emigration, state fragility can lead to “survival migration”. The inherent problem in the economic development–migration nexus is that economic growth and state fragility can exist simultaneously, leading to citizens migrating to seek new opportunities and also to avoid dangers associated with state fragility. As sending countries move up the development ladder, industrialising or shifting to manufacturing, or recover from conflict, the communities that are likely to balance migration versus staying have been the topic of recent empirical research. In an industrialising context, Blattman and Dercon (2016) surveyed five manufacturing firms in Ethiopia, learning that labourers were unlikely to stay in formal labour when the pay in the informal sector was near equal and was safer. Blattman and Annan (2016) showed the importance of predictable capital allocations and pay in helping former fighters in Liberia stay in formal labour settings instead of returning to black-market industries. Both these states have experienced varying levels of conflict and violence, and while they are at different economic development levels, both experience the kinds of state fragility that Betts (2013b) describes as motivating “survival migration”, where a sudden lack of a job or change in political winds can make staying at home impossible.

Focusing on labour protections in early-stage industrial countries, and supporting payment systems and nascent banking infrastructure, represent active ways that development and technical cooperation can mitigate forced displacement, by focusing on ways that state fragility manifests and impacts the lives of citizens, even when a state is not actively in conflict. If one can trust that the state can enforce labour protections and provide workers’ compensation if there is an accident, or can regulate and support a banking system such that safe and regular payments are made to workers, then the push factors that might force a person to seek economic and social stability elsewhere could be lessened.

2.3 Forced displacement as a function of state fragility

The scope of this article goes beyond a discussion of forced displacement within the migration field though; it aims to understand state fragility as a driver of forced displacement. With this in mind, the next section will unpack and analyse the literature on state fragility, specifically identifying different aspects of fragility that influence the lives of citizens negatively. This provides us with a platform to analyse how state fragility can theoretically cause forced displacement, and discuss further empirical approaches for identifying causal pathways between these two phenomena.

This exercise is important for two reasons. The first is that while there has been a long literature on the drivers and decisions around economic and labour migration, as well as refugee law and policy, the field of international studies is still in a relatively early stage of understanding the causes and drivers of forced displacement. There are the obvious drivers: war and violence drive people out, or disasters make a place unliveable. But much of the forced migration and displacement that has been taking place over the last 15 to 20 years is driven by a hybrid set of mechanisms, which are difficult to assess empirically and fall into gaps or grey areas of migration and refugee policy (Betts, 2013b). Before in-depth empirical work (particularly quantitative research) can be done on the causal channels of modern forced displacement, we have to assess why we expect causal relationships to exist. This links to the second reason why understanding state fragility as a driver of forced displacement is important.

One of the key ongoing debates is the influence that development aid has in changing patterns of migration, both regular and forced. By understanding the arc of how scholars have treated fragility, potential drivers of forced displacement could emerge. This can help frame why people migrate or take flight under circumstances that are less acute than outright war or violence, and provides channels through which development aid could influence the movement of people. This is useful not only for the study of migration, but also development economics. The work done on causal effects between aid flows and changes in migration and displacement patterns has returned mixed, sometimes contradictory, results (e.g. those from Lanati & Thiele, 2017).

When development aid enters a country, it does so at a government-to-government or international organisation-to-government level. The problem with assuming that changes or differences in development aid will influence migration decisions is that migrants probably do not make decisions to migrate based on projections of how much aid their country will receive. This statement is not meant to be glib; people may migrate in response to the outputs of aid, such as efforts to jump-start cashew processing in Mali (McCormick 2017), but they are unlikely to be looking at trends in OECD Development Assistance Committee data on total aid allocation to guide their decisions. Into this gap we place state fragility; technical cooperation and aid influence the operation of the state, the operation of the state influences things like work, education, and safety, and the outcome of those state operations can influence people's decisions to move. When a state is fragile, the provision of economic, social and physical safety is limited. Thus, we argue that further empirical work should focus on multiple dimensions of fragility as a core causal driver of forced displacement.

3 State fragility: identifying categories of fragility

Building on our review of forced displacement in the social science and economics literature, we use this section to define categories of fragility in the theoretical and policy areas, and set up our integrative exercise, where we merge the existing knowledge of forced displacement with the current concepts of state fragility to identify potential causal channels between fragility and forced displacement. Fragility, a term used to encompass everything from a country's resilience to shocks, ability to make use of aid, provide capable public services, and prevent violence, is relatively new conceptually, and remains difficult to define. For our purposes we refer to fragility as a lack of different aspects of statehood, using a framework developed by Grävingholt et al. (2015). Section 3.1 introduces the various definitions and analyses of fragility that have been developed across different academic and policy areas. It provides an overview of how fragility has been conceptualised in the academic space, and how these concepts have been operationalised by policy actors.

Much of the literature on state fragility stems from the idea of “failed states” that emerged in the mid-2000s, and has focused on preventing terrorism and managing transnational threats (Patrick, 2006). Since this time, the terms “failed” and “fragile” have evolved in tandem, leading to debate about the efficacy of those terms in both theoretical and policy debates. Since the late 2000s, there has been a robust literature that has pushed back against the notion of “failed” states, and called for a more carefully defined idea of what failure and fragility mean when talking about states (Faust, Grävingholt, & Ziaja, 2015; Grävingholt et al., 2015). “Fragility” overtook “failed” as the general term for a weak state, and critical analyses of the normatively grounded literature on failure opened the space for a more multi-dimensional notion of how a state could be fragile.

For the scope of this paper, and the analytic goals, we will focus on the administrative and governance attributes of the state as the indicators of the type of fragility a state experiences. Focusing on categories of statehood, in this case authority, capacity and legitimacy, allows us to perform descriptive analysis of fragility and forced displacement. This supports our theoretical approach for understanding forced displacement as an outcome of fragility.

3.1 What is meant by “state fragility”?

The definition of “fragility” when talking about the operation of the state continues to evolve. Over time we see literature that discusses “failed” states, “fragile” states, and “situations of fragility”, with these evolutions being driven by normative and analytical changes in how researchers and policy makers view the function of the state (McLoughlin, 2009). The OECD's early definition of state fragility is the base around which many donors and development agencies have coalesced: “States are fragile when state structures lack political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their population” (OECD DAC, 2007). This definition has been built upon and challenged not only in the OECD's annual report on fragile states, but also across multiple academic disciplines and development organisations. In the most recent *States of Fragility 2016* report, the OECD updated their definition to reflect the dynamic, multi-dimensional nature of fragility: “Fragility is defined as the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, system and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks” (OECD 2016, p. 16).

The concept of fragility shares roots with the concept of state failure and failed states. The concept of the failed and failing state has distinct security undertones, as governments moved to understand transnational threats, and the politics that fostered these threats, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks (Kahler, 2002; Patrick, 2006). While there is some empirical evidence that transnational threats such as terrorism may be incubated in failed states (e.g. Piazza, 2008), much of the literature on what leads to state failure took a wider, though still conflict- and violence-centric, view. Goldstone (2008) discusses the channels between different types of political violence and institutional collapse, noting that over time these lead to a loss of legitimacy and effectiveness of governance, and potentially state failure. Iqbal and Starr (2008) find that while state failure is not contagious, it can influence conflict risk in neighbouring countries, which can lead to cyclical social and economic repercussions (Iqbal, 2006). What we tend to see in this stream of literature is state *failure* being the outcome of shocks and stressors, such as conflict and violence, in countries we would already consider fragile.

In parallel with the analysis linking security threats to state failure, a number of authors called into question the concept of the failed state, on both normative and analytic grounds. Bøås and Jennings (2007) discuss the normative issues that arise in categorising states as “failing” versus not failing. The differentiation does not hinge on empirical categories across developing states with similar governance and security issues, but instead is based on perceptions of Western states about whether a country poses a security risk. Indeed, in some cases the attributes that make some countries “failing” are favoured for political economic reasons by developed countries (ibid). These normative issues stem in part from a lack of empirical clarity about how state failure leads to security threats, such as transnational terrorism. This could lead to problems such as development and security policies geared around treating the symptoms of state failure while failing to address the roots (Patrick, 2007).

Jones (2008) argues that much of this comes down to the inherent ahistoricism and lack of theoretical grounding in the way that the security and development fields have treated the concept of state failure. This line of criticism is carried forward by Call (2008), who argues for abandoning the terminology of “state failure” due to its analytic vagueness and shifting towards a notion of stateness that is more accurate. Call (2008; 2010) notes that while the concept of the “failed state” had utility in terms of refocusing the wider debate on development and security, it is analytically unhelpful as the concept captures a wide range of countries that have little in common. He makes a shift toward viewing fragility as a function of how the state operates, across the areas of security, legitimacy and capacity (Call, 2010). These as aspects of statehood lay the groundwork for how both the development literature and policy space have treated fragility in the last decade, as well as providing a set of attributes that will be further assessed later in this article.

3.2 Measuring and categorising fragility for analytic use

One of the key problems with measuring and categorising fragility is that it is easy to fall into a number of logical or analytic traps, either by omission or commission. At a top level, fragile states are those with weak government structures, high poverty rates, and the actualisation or risk of violence (e.g. BMZ, 2017). This captures a wide range of causes and effects, making it difficult to categorise types of fragility by types of forced displacement. Two starting points are the World Bank’s CPIA (Country Policy and Institutional

Assessment) scores, and the OECD's fragility framework. The World Bank's CPIA categorisation is based on a multidimensional measure of state capacity, primarily grounded in economic management and public administration processes (World Bank, 2010), while the OECD's current framework uses clusters of societal, economic, environmental, security, and political indicators to categorise countries as fragile (OECD, 2016). These two sets of indicators use a cut off for whether a country is fragile; this is useful for determining where aid and development assistance is directed but does not help guide us toward an understanding of what aspects of fragile statehood drive forced displacement. Composite indexes such as the Fragile States Index (Fund for Peace, 2017) suffer from a similar problem: we can only see the amount of forced displacement from the fragile state, but we cannot see what aspects of the state drove the displacement. This is compounded by many indexes capturing refugees and IDPs as an indicator within the composite score.

An alternative way to understand fragility is as a function of statehood or "stateness". The categories of a state in this frame include authority, capacity, and legitimacy. These three factors have been explored by multiple authors (e.g. Stewart & Brown, 2009; Guillaumont & Guillaumont Jeanneney, 2009), and are the basis for Call's (2010) framework of intersecting gaps of statehood. These three factors are also the basis for Grävingholt et al.'s (2015) argument for a multi-dimensional empirical typology, which groups countries into six categories of non-linear constellations, based on their relative performance across the three statehood categories. While it is beyond the scope of this article to perform the tests necessary to statistically identify pathways between fragility and forced displacement, the next section will feature exploratory analysis of fragility and forced displacement data that can lay the foundation for future empirical analysis. We use Ziaya, Grävingholt and Kreibaum's (2017) constellations of state fragility, authority, capacity and legitimacy, as our empirical concept of fragile statehood.

4 The forced displacement–state fragility nexus: channels of influence for aid

The goal of this section is to bring the forced displacement and fragility literature together, using descriptive statistics to stylistically identify potential channels between fragility and forced displacement. When looking at these channels it is important to think about *why* people would be displaced, with varying degrees of voluntariness. The decision is likely to be heavily based on "push" factors: these could be violence, an acute lack of economic opportunity, or environmental changes, all attributes of a fragile statehood. Further, evidence indicates that the life of someone forced to migrate, for example in the "survival migration" mode described by Betts (2013b) is often challenging, even if they manage to claim asylum someplace safe (e.g. Coates, Anand, & Norris, 2013; Nielsen & Krasnik, 2010; Safi, 2010).

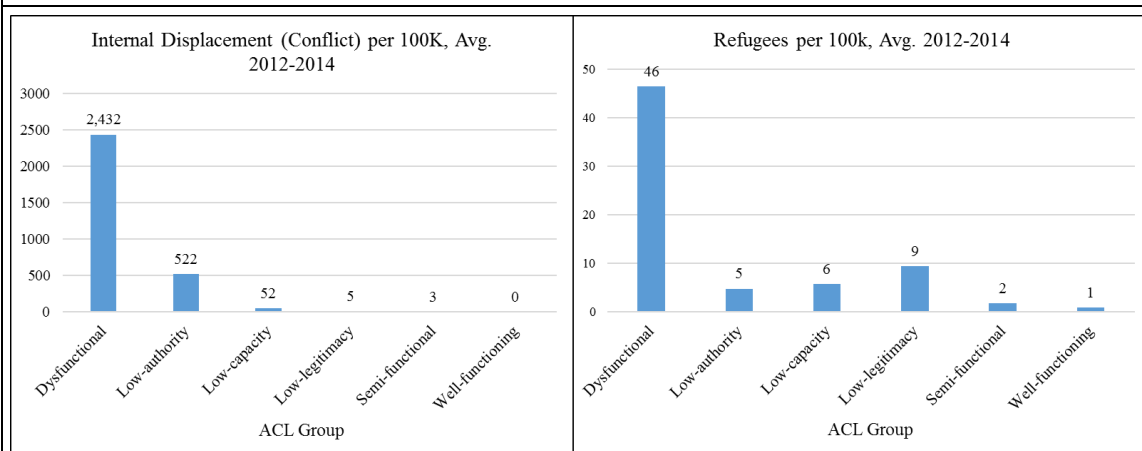
In this section we conduct a basic exploration of descriptive data on fragility and forced migration, and use these descriptive relationships to motivate analysis of how forced displacement can be driven by variations in state fragility. To do this, we use Grävingholt et al.'s (2017) types of fragility, and compare the refugee numbers and internal displacement numbers across categories. First, we will explain the six constellations and their attributes, then explain our selection of refugee and internal displacement numbers. We will use these descriptive comparisons to discuss why forced displacement and migration under duress are

outcomes of fragility. We will close this section with a discussion of the potential channels through which development aid could influence migration decisions.

What the authority, capacity and legitimacy categories give us is a stylised way to see how forced displacement occurs in countries that may not be experiencing conflict, but are fragile in terms of capacity or legitimacy. Part of this is to take our analysis beyond just those countries affected by significant conflict; it is abundantly clear why millions of people have fled Syria over the last five years. What is more interesting, and what the ACL categories allow us to observe, is how many people are leaving or are displaced in countries that are not completely consumed by conflict, but may have acute problems with the legitimacy of government leadership, or serious problems with the capacity to provide public services. These results can be used for inferential analysis, to help understand what future patterns of displacement will look like in places affected by different types of fragility.

If we look in Figure 1 at how countries in the ACL groups are batched, we see that one group is titled “dysfunctional”. This would be countries that are either completely at war, or have such widespread violence and poverty that they cannot function as a state. As noted above, it is unsurprising that these countries have the highest rates of conflict-driven internal displacement and refugee requests. Conversely, “well-functioning” and “semi-functional” states have the lowest numbers of conflict-driven forced displacement and refugee requests; this makes sense given that on the whole these are states with no serious deficits in authority, capacity or legitimacy.

Figure 1: Internal displacement and volume of refugees



Source: based on ACL group. ACL group numbers from Ziaja et al. 2017 (forthcoming dataset available upon request)

There is empirical potential, though, in looking at the relationship between weak authority, capacity and legitimacy and forced displacement. For this exercise, we are limited to using refugee data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2017), and displacement data from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC, 2017), since there is limited international cross-national data on displacement. We look at these two data sources since they are consistent time-series measures of forced displacement; refugees by nature of their legal classification have been forcibly displaced, and, while there are problems inherent to measuring internal displacement, the IDMC provides a starting point for analysis. Two interesting descriptive dynamics emerge. One is that low authority

and low capacity lead to more conflict-driven internal displacement than low legitimacy. Low authority is a driver of conflict-related displacement, since authority is conceptualised as the “absence of competing claims to monopoly of violence” (Grävingholt et al., 2015, p. 1290); in a state that otherwise functions, threats to authority could manifest as regionalised or localised violence that would drive people from one region within a state to another. Low capacity may then lead to further displacement as a state cannot cope administratively with a displaced population.

The UNHCR refugee numbers tell a potentially interesting story as well. While it is no surprise that people flee dysfunctional countries, it is possible to unpack the relationship between capacity and authority as drivers of asylum seeking, especially given the arguments put forward by Betts (2013b) about the ways that economic and social breakdowns can lead to forced displacement. It should be noted that the Legitimacy measure in Ziaja et al. (2017) includes granted asylums, so in further inferential analysis we would have to account for this endogeneity risk.

These descriptive relationships call for further empirical analysis, especially as migration and forced displacement become increasingly inter-related. Mixed migration and survival migration are phenomena that will continue to be issues that demand the attention of researchers and policy makers. The following section lays out potential theoretical ways that the causal relationship between different aspects of fragility could lead to forced displacement.

4.1 Filling the empirical gaps in the fragility–forced displacement nexus

The literature reviews and analysis of fragility and forced displacement indicate that there are a number of areas for further research. Something that is especially useful about understanding fragility as a function of authority, capacity, and legitimacy is that these three factors have different potential influences on forced displacement. This opens up research opportunities that can focus on contemporary issues, such as forced displacement due to climate or economic issues, that takes place in countries where people may be moving for traditional economic reasons as well as due to reasons normally associated with forced displacement.

In light of Betts’s argument about “survival migration”, a good starting point for empirical research could be state capacity shortages leading to forced displacement. Lanati and Thiele (2017) show a statistical relationship between quality of governance and how likely people are to emigrate; the quality of the regulatory environment has a significant negative relationship with the annual volume of emigration (ibid). It is reasonable to argue that this detail, while one part of a larger set of models, shows how capacity can influence displacement. As noted earlier, Blattman and Annan (2016) find that employment and long-term expectation of capital and payment can play an important role in helping former fighters in Liberia focus on shifting to legal means of earning a living and reintegrating into society. This is the kind of case that speaks directly to whether people will migrate internally or externally (in this case, economic reasons), but for expectations of capital and payment to be met, the state’s capacity must be robust and resilient enough to guarantee that wages will be paid on time and safely. Capacity and legitimacy can influence the economic and social fabric of a country in such a way that people may be forced to move to establish a

livelihood or merely survive. In the coming decades, understanding these non-conflict factors in fragility could be crucial in understanding patterns of new types of forced displacement and irregular migration.

State fragility, measured as deficits in authority, capacity, legitimacy, provides multiple theoretical channels for understanding forced displacement and is a framing approach that can speak to policy making as well. The empirical challenge going forward is twofold. The first is determining the best strategy for understanding how different aspects of fragility uniquely influence changes in displacement and flight. While it is obvious why people flee war and violence, it is much harder to unpack the effects of weak institutions in otherwise stable countries on migration and flight, and the interaction effects between low-intensity violence and deficits in state capacity. Potential empirical strategies beyond the econometric methods employed by Lanati and Thiele (2017) and other economists include Qualitative Comparative Analysis, wherein countries are batched by the types of displacement they experience and shared attributes are then identified. Geographic methods using datasets like PRIO-GRID⁵ can also shed light on the geographic determinates of forced displacement at micro-levels, especially when looking at climate factors (e.g. Brück et al., 2017).

The second issue, which is one that will be a core component of the Global Compact on Migration, is improving data collection (IOM, 2017). Right now, the best data we have to work with when looking at forced displacement are refugee data, followed by IDP data. The problem is that these data are driven largely by events of violence; data on who is moving because there are no jobs, or due to climate change, is harder to find and compare across space and time. The Global Compact on Migration will push UN member states to track more effectively the movements of people across their borders and provide data on why people are migrating. This type of data would be useful to both researchers and policy makers, allowing for improved empirical models of how changes in state fragility correlate with different types of migration.

5 Future directions for research and policy

Forced displacement and migration will continue to present empirical challenges to researchers, and will continue to present policy challenges for the foreseeable future. One of the key questions this article has addressed is the influence of different aspects of state fragility on forced displacement and migration. Understanding these influences from a theoretical and descriptive perspective is helpful in setting courses for further empirical research, but also provides theoretically grounded channels for how development policy can influence forced displacement. This article laid out the current empirical and theoretical issues in forced displacement and fragility research, and provides theoretically grounded options for future empirical research, as well as an argument for why policy makers should view forced displacement as an outcome of state fragility.

Given the volume of literature and policy work being done on the role of development and technical cooperation, our article points to some new opportunities for understanding the channels through which aid can influence forced displacement and migration. The role of

5 More information on PRIO-GRID data is available at: <http://grid.prio.org/#/>

development aid in mitigating state fragility and forced migration is an especially contested topic, as countries like Germany and Austria have developed a focus on both preventing illegal migration and reducing the drivers of forced displacement (Die Welt, 2017). As international efforts such as the Global Compact on Migration are negotiated and come into effect, it will be crucial to have a theoretically and empirically grounded understanding of where development fits into the overall displacement and migration space. The quantitative literature on the impact of development on displacement and migration, while engaging, often takes a mechanical approach that assumes a linear relationship between development aid and changes in the migration/displacement. While this research has helped keep the empirical discussion active, it also has distinct limits in terms of describing the channels through which aid influences migration decisions at the individual level. As we discussed in the article, this is where using different aspects of fragility as drivers of forced displacement shows both research and policy promise.

To fully realise the possibilities for supporting safe migration through effective development policy, processes like the Global Compact on Migration will have to follow through on their data collection and standardisation goals. Right now, migration and displacement data tend to be sparse, or highly context dependent, such as UNHCR's refugee and displacement data. Improvements in global data standards to ensure that databases contain meta data on reasons for migration, as well as demographic data, could be of significant use to policy makers as well as researchers.

The policy implications for addressing forced displacement through managing state fragility, and the potential for new data that can be used to develop fragile state-specific migration policy, are significant. For researchers, the nexus between fragility and forced displacement, especially when viewed through a development lens, is exciting. Taken in combination, the interaction between variation in state capacity and forced displacement offers a rich empirical space to do social, political, and economic research. A critical area in development research that impacts migration through channels of fragility is the ability for a government to maintain economic capacity. What this means can vary by case – in a state like Ethiopia it could mean the political will to develop and enforce labour laws (e.g. Blattman & Dercon, 2016), while in Liberia it could be basic management of payment systems and access to capital (e.g. Blattman & Annan, 2016). These examples represent the difficult grey area of forced migration, where people could be displaced for legitimate economic reasons, but the legal apparatus determining the status of migrants is not sufficient to recognise flight as a function of economic exclusion. Micro-level case studies, field experiments, and survey research could go a long way in building an empirical base of knowledge about the relationship between government capacity, labour and livelihoods, and forced displacement.

Fundamentally, people move to meet needs that can be met better elsewhere, or, more critically, to avoid political and social breakdowns and dangers where they are from. The stories and data from those who are displaced can provide important windows into how we understand the role of the state in people's lives, and how variations in the different functions of the state influence people's decisions to stay and build a life, or take flight for other locales. The relationship between state fragility and forced displacement provides a theoretically compelling channel for understanding 21st-century development, governance and humanitarian challenges, and the empirical research that emerges from this space can

inform solutions to policy questions that an increasingly interwoven global community will face for decades to come.

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