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The Political Economy of Resource Conflicts and Forced Migration: Why Afghanistan, Colombia and Sudan Are the World's Longest Forced Migration Crises

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ABSTRACT

Afghanistan, Colombia, and Sudan are the world's three longest producers of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Why? To answer this question, we evaluate the conventional and dominant geopolitical model of forced migration, as well as alternative models that focus on resource-based conflicts and political economy. We demonstrate that in each of the three cases, natural resources are at the heart of the conflicts that precede the involuntary movement of people both across international borders (refugees) and within national borders (IDPs). But the presence of resources by itself does not cause conflicts or forced migration. In Afghanistan, Colombia and Sudan, it is the political economy of resources--the ways in which these resources are accessed, appropriated, produced, distributed, and transported--that generates the conflicts which create refugees and IDPs. We conclude that alternative models of forced migration are important to policy-making and planning at the regional, national, and global levels in order to reduce the underlying causes of forced migration.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Colombia, Sudan, Political Economy, Resource Conflicts, Forced Migration, Taliban, FARC

I. INTRODUCTION

Scholars of the nation-state have done a remarkable job of describing and explaining forced migration and their analyses shapes global, regional and national policies (Betts 2009; Crepeau et al. 2006; Gatrell 2013; Martin and Aeinikof 2013). The nation-state model combines multiple disciplines, ranging from political science, international relations, and sociology to the study of ethnicity and nationalism (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Loescher 2016). This scholarship defines the dominant paradigm in forced migration studies that uses geopolitics as the primary or even exclusive explanatory mechanism.

This explanatory model offers a macro-causal understanding of forced migration based on ethnic strife, civil wars and intra-state conflicts in general (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Loescher 2016). While these explanations appear in a wide-range of empirical settings, variables such as tribalism and nationalism risk overemphasizing the primordial origin of conflicts, and as a result make them seem inevitable, i.e., deterministic (Morland 2014).

More recently, alternative approaches have been deployed to explain forced migration in a different disciplinary context: disaster and environmental studies. Of these, the resource conflict approach and the environmental and climatic migration hypothesis have gained cross-disciplinary appeal (see e.g., Bates 2002; El-Hinnawi 1985; Homer-Dixon 1999; 1994; Hugo 1996; McAdam 2014; Myers 2001; 1997).

In general, the natural resource conflicts model explains forced migration due to natural scarcities, natural disasters and more recently extreme climatic events (see e.g., McAdam 2014). El-Hinnawi (1985) developed the early environmentally driven migration thesis that emphasized the impact of environmental degradation on forced migration and its victims were labeled "environmental refugees." El-Hinnawi (1985:4) first called attention to and defined environmental refugees as "those people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of a marked environmental disruption (natural and/or triggered by people) that jeopardized their existence and/or seriously affected the quality of their life." Subsequent research identified the most common types of environmental disruption that force people to change residence, including deforestation, rising sea levels, desertification, and droughts (Hugo 1996; Myers 1997; Suhrke 1994). Natural disasters continue to be one of the leading explanations for forced migration (Bates 2002; Myers 2001; Stojanov 2012).

Homer-Dixon (1999; 1994) explains conflicts due to falling natural resource inventory and rising human population. He argues that resource scarcities trigger a scramble for resource-capture and thus conflicts. He attributes resource scarcity to individual agency or personal choices in determining family size, the sum total of which, in his view, grows into demographic overload causing resource scarcity and triggering resource conflict. Homer-Dixon (1999) partially attends to the structural scarcities as well, but foresees a preventive in a strong state to keep resource scarcities from erupting into active or armed conflicts. The strong state proposition is, however, problematic from the human rights perspective, and could become a source of forced migration in its own right. More importantly, Homer-Dixon's (1999; 1994) neo-Malthusian argument over-emphasizes individual agency in contrast to a more structural analysis (Hobson, Bacon, and Cameron 2014; Freudenburg, Gramling, Laska, and Erickson 2009; El-Hinnawi 1985). Nonetheless, his major contribution lies in prioritizing the causality of resource scarcity in social conflicts. In his view, the presence of resources as a factor in a conflict is sufficient to define that conflict a resource-based conflict.

Scholars in the political economy tradition see the limitations of the resource-based conflict approach and the disaster-driven environmental migration thesis. Many "natural disasters," they argue, are in fact not caused by

“nature” but by human economic and political agency (see, McAdam 2014; Hobson et al. 2014; Freudenberg et al. 2009). Hobson et al. (2014) argue that “natural disasters” are actually “natural hazards” that underinvestment in human security converts into disasters. Freudenberg et al. (2009) explain this phenomenon by arguing that if cities are built in the bed of rivers (such as New Orleans) or on the known fault-lines (such as Los Angeles and San Francisco), the resultant disasters cannot be described “natural.” In fact, environmental degradation per se is not “the” cause of forced migration or environmental refugees. Political and economic interests often benefit from ecologically destructive but economically profitable (at least in the short run) behaviors that often end when masses of people are forced to migrate (Freudenberg, et al. 2009). Ecologically informed political economy can reverse environmental degradation or lead to policies that positively shape land use behavior and land appropriation in general to preempt land degradation and consequent forced migration (Hobson, et al. 2014; Freudenberg et al. 2009).

Similarly, a number of environmental sociologists in the tradition of ecological Marxism (see e.g., Buttel 2001; O’Conner 1997; Benton and Redclift 1994; Schnaiberg 1980) have made use of the political economy approach to explain macro-sociological and macro-ecological phenomena, including but not limited to the capitalist economy and its impact on nature and the natural world, as well as their human dependents. This model explains the interactive relationship between natural and social realities that produce environmental inequality and environmental classism (O’Conner 1997; Schnaiberg 1980) to which environmental racism has been recently added. The model argues that natural resource depletion is a function of dominant political and economic interests and the ways in which they access, appropriate, produce distribute and ship natural resources that trigger conflicts.

Borrowing from Marx, Schnaiberg (1980) described an endless cycle of production and consumption as the “treadmill of production” (TOP), while O’Conner (1997) calls resource degradation and depletion the “second contradiction of capitalism,” the first being overproduction. All these phenomena inspired what Homer-Dixon (1999; 1994) characterizes as a scramble for “resource capture.” Peluso and Watts (2001) focus on the seizure of resources that become violent, and argue that the political economy approach to resource-conflicts is relatively more comprehensive than other models in that (a) it recognizes the presence of natural resources as a (and not “the”) cause of conflicts; (b) envisions conflicts as “potential” and not “inevitable”; and (c) considers political and economic interests--which control how resources are produced, consumed and distributed resources--as both the moderating and accelerating influence on social conflicts.

Case Studies: Afghanistan, Colombia, and Sudan

Drawing upon the resource conflict model that posits the causality of resource-scarcity to forced migration and the political economy of natural resource conflicts, we examine the cases of the world’s three longest producers of forced migration (both refugees and internally displaced persons). We demonstrate the location of natural resources in each of the three cases, and go further to identify the dominant political and economic interests at the global, regional, national and subnational levels, such as world powers, nation-states, subnational groups, national and multinational corporations, paramilitary forces, private armies and insurgent groups, which are competitively engaged in accessing, appropriating, producing, distributing and shipping natural resources that engender conflicts, and in turn trigger forced migration.

Afghanistan, which sits at a crossroads connecting Asia and Eurasia on the one hand, and serving as a gateway to south, east and west Asia as well as the Middle East on the other, has its geography contested by imperial and world powers. From Alexander the Great to the British and Soviet Empires, Afghanistan was coveted for its transit and trade routes that were integral to world trade (Tanner 2009). In the recent past, the landlocked Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan as a stepping stone to accessing the year-round warm waters of the Arabian Sea and eventually the Indian Ocean (Niazi 2008; Harrison 1981). The world’s reaction to this invasion had created what then were favorably called ‘Mujahidin’ (or ‘Freedom-fighters’) that violently resisted Soviet invasion (Braithwaite 2013). The ensuing struggle between two superpowers over claiming Afghanistan produced the world’s largest number of refugees since World Wars (UNHCR 2015). Margesson (2007) reported 8.3 million Afghans fled Soviet invasion, and became refugees in Iran and Pakistan.

Similarly, Colombia has its farmland contested among the state-backed honchos, right-wing paramilitaries, and national and multinational corporate interests on the one hand, and leftist guerilla groups such as FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), ELN (National Liberation Army) and rebel peasants on the other (Dudley 2003). The unjust tenure system that had reduced peasants and tenants to serfs created rebellion against the landlords and the state that supported them (Dudley 2003). Radical formations such as the FARC, which were largely manned and womanned by rural farmers, were born to champion peasants’ rights and seek justice for them. These groups used land seizures to gain ownership of abundant, overlapping resources throughout the country. State-sanctioned violence and retaliatory counter violence created massive displacement of the already marginalized segments of society, who were driven from their land and abodes to far-off places within the country. The conflict that ensued claimed some 200,000 lives and displaced more than 2 million people (Gomez, Sanchez-Ayla, and Vargas 2015). Thirteen years after Colombia’s National Center of Historical Memory, in its comprehensive report entitled “Enough Already: Memories of War and Dignity,” put the internally displaced people almost three times higher at 5.7 million (Guardian 2013), while BBC (2016) put the number of conflict fatalities at 260,000. Univision (2016) has recently calculated the fatalities even higher at 278,723, and displaced persons at 7.4 million. As the violent struggle kept morphing into violent formations, it attracted criminal syndicates, drug cartels, a succession of authoritarian governments, and abusive state institutions of violence that

each contributed to the growing displacement (Dudley 2003). The United States has been an active player in Colombia's decades-long war to keep illicit drugs and drug cartels from crossing its borders.

Like Colombia, Sudan too has its territory, oil wealth and farmland contested between different sections of society, and in diverse regions of the country. The conflict between the North and the South, in particular, triggered displacement across the country – southern Sudanese fleeing the North and northern Sudanese escaping the South. The number of internally displaced persons had reached 600,000 in the early 1990s (Human Rights Watch 1994). The Sudanese central government seated in Khartoum inflamed this conflict by seeking control of natural resources in the two peripheral regions of the country: South Sudan and Darfur. South Sudan, which is endowed with the wealth of oil, resisted the North and its military push to claim its resources. The north that served south Sudan's transit for oil shipment within and outside the country, retaliated by threatening to choke it. As a result, military troops based in the South mutinied and splintered to form Southern Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in 1983 (Human Rights Watch 1994). Similarly, Janjaweed, a group of warriors, fought western Sudanese in Darfur, who denied their Arab-Sudanese tribes grazing grounds and farmland for their cattle and cropping. These resource conflicts tore at the very fabric of the county, sending the helpless Sudanese fleeing the violence to safety. Yet, 1.3 million southern Sudanese alone were killed in the 1990s (Human Rights Watch 1994), while 1.097m were displaced, according to more recent estimates. The United Nations and the United States eventually midwived the bifurcation of Sudan in 2011, which led to the creation of the independent state of South Sudan. In this conflict, SPLA and its factions, central government in Khartoum, the government-backed National Islamic Front (NIF) and Janjaweed were accused of massive human rights abuses (Human Rights Watch 1994).

In the following sections, we provide evidence of the nexus between the political economy of resource conflicts and forced migration, and draw four major conclusions. Section II on "Research Approaches and Data Points" identifies comparative and historical case study methods and sources of primary and secondary data on forced migration in each of our three cases. Section III on "Case Studies of Political Economy, Resource Conflicts, and Forced Migration: Afghanistan, Colombia and Sudan" documents evidence on the nexus between the political economy of resource conflicts and forced migration. In Section IV on "Discussion and Conclusions," we highlight our findings and draw four major conclusions, especially those carrying empirical and theoretical implications, and their possible relevance to policymakers and planners.

II. RESEARCH APPROACHES AND DATA POINTS

This analysis makes use of the resource-conflict approach and the political economy tradition, in conjunction with comparative and historical case study methods, to explain the deep and discreet dynamics of forced migration in the world's three largest producers of forced migration: Afghanistan, Colombia, and Sudan. We selected these countries on the following criteria to omit any selection bias: (a) all three countries have been the world's longest producers of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs); (b) they represent sampling diversity as they belong to three different continents – Asia, Latin America and Africa; and (c) they each have been commanding the "attention economy," i.e., they have been dominating global attention in terms of the world's major powers' investment of diplomatic, military and political resources on behalf of contending parties to the conflict, as well as worldwide media and scholarly attention. Judging by the above criteria, all three countries stand out as the primary subjects for the scholarly investigation that we assumed.

For these case studies, we use primary data from the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) to identify which countries produce the most refugees, IDPs, and other types of forced migrants. In 1951, the UN defined a refugee as a person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (UNHCR 2000:23). That same year the UN created the UNHCR with a mandate to ensure a set of human rights for refugees (especially no forced repatriation). The UNHCR expanded its mandate in 1998 to include internally displaced persons (IDPs): people forced from their homes--but who do not cross an international border--due to local violence that is ignored, condoned, or even fomented by their state (Cohen and Deng 1998). Statistics from the UNHCR are widely considered the most accurate data available on global forced migration.

As of 2015, more than 46 million people fell under the mandate of the UNHCR (UNHCR 2015). During the early 21st century, Afghanistan, Colombia and Sudan are the world's longest producers of forced migrants (see table 1). Afghanistan, in fact, was the largest producer of forced migrants in the post-World War Two period (with a peak of more than 6,000,000 refugees in 1990) and was only surpassed by Syria in 2014 (UNHCR 2015). Later, some estimated the peak number of Afghan refugees to be 8.3 million (Margesson 2007). While Syria currently presents the world's largest migration crisis, forced migration from Syria is comparatively recent. The UNHCR's population of concern originating from Syria numbered only 25,000 in 2004 and only 10,000 in 2000. But Colombia and Sudan each produced more than 500,000 forced migrants in 2000 (UNHCR 2004). More recent evidence shows that the Colombian conflict displaced 5.7 million people (Guardian 2013) and killed 260,000 (BBC 2016a); while the Human Rights Watch (1994) puts the number of forced migrants in Sudan much higher at 600,000 in the early 1990s, and the fatalities even higher at 1.3 million.

Table 1. Number of Forced Migrants in Top Five Populations of Concern to the UNHCR in 2004 and 2014 by Country of Origin*

2004		2014	
Afghanistan	3,660,300	Syria	9,608,604
Colombia	2,095,300	Colombia	6,113,579
Sudan	1,405,200	Sudan ¹	4,763,086
Liberia	931,500	Afghanistan	3,684,060
Azerbaijan	833,100	DRC ²	3,445,494
Total	8,925,400		27,614,823
% World	45.7		59.6
World	19,525,600		46,307,783

Source: UNHCR, 2004, 2015.

* Population of concern comprises refugees, returned refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, returned internally displaced person, stateless persons, and others of concern.

¹ South Sudan separated from Sudan and became an independent country in 2011. In 2014 the UNHCR population of concern originating from South Sudan numbered 1,828,290. That figure is included in Sudan's total to obtain a more accurate estimate of forced migration in this area.

²Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We use three sampled countries -- Afghanistan, Colombia and Sudan -- to make a "variation-finding comparison" (Tilly 1984). This type of comparative method seeks to demonstrate that different causal conditions produce different types of outcomes (see table 2). In this study, the causal conditions are different forms of natural resource economies – geography in Afghanistan, farmland in Colombia, and predominantly oil wealth in Sudan. The outcomes are forced migration that results in both transnational refugee populations and internal displacement. Afghanistan has been productive of the largest-ever refugee population (until the eruption of the Syrian crisis) because the main conflict is global and regional powers competing for control of geo-strategic transit and trade routes that run through Afghanistan to connect Europe and Asia and many regions within Asia. Colombia, on the other hand, has internal displacement because numerous groups--including the state, national and multinational corporations, paramilitaries, private armies and insurgent groups --use land seizures to gain ownership of abundant, overlapping resources throughout the country, forcing people to flee to safer places within country. Sudan, too, has internal displacement because the Sudanese state causes conflict by seeking to control natural resources in two of its peripheral regions in the south and the west.

Table 2. Types of Natural Resource Wealth, Political Economy Conflicts, and Forced Migration.

Regional Displacement	Societal Displacement	Transnational Displacement	
Country	Sudan	Colombia	Afghanistan
Natural Resource Wealth	Some but varies by region	Abundant and diverse in all locations	Little but location of strategic value
Political Economy Conflict	State control of regional resources	Property ownership through land seizures	Access to international transit routes

We also use qualitative and quantitative secondary data to highlight the connection between the political economy of resource conflicts and forced migration. Secondary data cannot measure the level of discrete variables

but they can identify "multiple and conjunctural causality" (Ragin 1987), that is, overlapping historical trends that create events. The founders of sociology, including Marx and Weber, often used secondary data in their comparative, historical case studies. Building on Moore (1966), Skocpol (1979) is widely credited with reintroducing and refining this methodology. She demonstrated that state breakdown due to international pressure and diminished landlord control of peasants was a precondition for the revolutions in France (1789), Russia (1917), and China (1911). The comparative historical method enables a sociologist to identify structural patterns by aggregating the findings of books and journal articles by area specialists. Secondary sources are, of course, not a data set that can test the explanatory power of discrete variables which operationalize competing theories.

Theorization of Key Causal Variables

We theorize four key variables as causally related: Political economy, natural resources, conflicts and forced migration. We define political economy as the politics of economic relations within and between nations, which is operationalized in key political and economic interests such as the state, state institutions and market forces, particularly national and multinational corporations. Natural resources refer to raw materials such as land, water, forests, minerals, that nature yields and that humans use for economic benefit. In our case studies, natural resources are represented in geography, geology and minerals. Conflicts are defined as disagreements that are settled by means of institutional violence, such as violence deployed by military, police and paramilitary forces, private armies or insurgent groups.

III. CASE STUDIES OF POLITICAL ECONOMY, RESOURCE CONFLICTS, AND DISPLACEMENT

AFGHANISTAN

Unlike Sudan and Colombia, Afghanistan has never been valued for its raw materials (Barfield 2010). Since pre-history, Afghanistan's natural wealth has been its strategic location connecting Central Asia with South Asia and the Middle East. Transit would be easy if Afghanistan was flat but three-quarters of the country is dominated by the Hindu Kush. These majestic ranges rise 24,500 feet but rapidly descend to 3,500 feet at the Khyber Pass (Hein and Niazi 2012). Afghanistan's location means that it cannot be ignored but its geography means it cannot be easily conquered.

Much of the conflict during the Cold War was motivated by geo-politics not economics, such as whether the US or the Soviet Union would control Cuba or Vietnam. But the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 was motivated by the largely landlocked USSR's (Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics) need for year-round warm water ports (Niazi 2008; Harrison 1981). In this quest, Afghanistan was merely a stepping stone to expand Russian reach into neighboring Balochistan, Pakistan's coastal province that sits ashore the Arabian Sea in the Indian Ocean (Harrison 1981). Landlocked Soviet Republics in Central Asia, in particular, needed access to maritime transit. Once in the Arabian Sea, the Soviets were to establish an unrivaled maritime presence casting long shadows over the Persian Gulf, key shipping lanes including the Strait of Hurmoz and the Strait of Malacca (Niazi 2008). At that time, British and U.S. naval presence on the Indian Ocean was at best modest. Britain had a naval base in Diego Garcia to which the U.S. had access as well (Niazi 2008).

The Soviet invasion led 8.3 million Afghans to follow the centuries-old patterns of cross-border migration (Margesson 2007). Monolingual Tajiks and their cohorts of Turkic origin, who spoke Persian, crossed into Iran. Similarly, the overwhelming majority of Hazaras who took refuge in Iran shared language as well as faith (Shiism) with their hosts. In fact, Iran did not label these Afghans as "refugees" (Hein and Niazi 2012). Instead, it conferred on them the title of *mohajerin* (involuntary religious migrants) that is traced to the Prophet of Islam who himself became *mohajer* after he and his followers were forced from Mecca (Hein and Niazi 2016). Pashtuns from eastern and southern Afghanistan migrated to Pakistan. They shared ethnicity, faith (predominantly Sunni), and language (Pashtu) with their Pakistani hosts. Nearly all of these refugees resettled in two of the four Pakistani provinces bordering Afghanistan: Baluchistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (Hein and Niazi 2012). The global powers, especially the United States, led the free world in support of the Afghan resistance that was being spearheaded by those who were then favorably labeled in the West as 'Mujahidin' (or 'Freedom Fighters'). They were labeled as such for their alliance with the West that supplied them with money and weapons to fight the communist Soviets and oust them from their country. Later, in 1995, another insurgent group in the 'Taliban' (students of religious seminaries) rose to dislodge now feuding Mujahidin. In 1996, the Taliban wrested the control of Kabul, capital of Afghanistan, forcing the Mujahidin to flee.

The Taliban and Transit Routes

Afghan transit and trade routes and the quest for access to warm waters motivated the Soviet invasion in 1979 (Niazi 2008; Harrison 1981). Soviets have since continued to shape subsequent conflicts in Afghanistan. After the collapse of the Soviet-backed government of Dr. Najibullah Khan in 1992, armed militias found that a "major source of income were roadblocks that extorted money from the international transit trade between Pakistan and Iran" (Barfield 2010:253). The Taliban's first foray from its Pakistani bases in 1995 was to open Afghan roads choked by the tolls of local warlords, a goal supported by the Benazir Bhutto administration (1993-96), which wanted to resume imports of trade goods from Central Asia (Nojumi 2009). Once the Taliban came to power in

1996 the US opened secret discussions with them hoping to gain gas pipeline agreements for the US energy giant Unocal (Rashid 2000).

The NATO Invasion and Transit Routes

NATO dislodged the Taliban in 2001 but that invasion did not end the nexus between forced migration and the political economy of transit routes. Numerous countries and corporations remain interested in Afghanistan as a shipping junction that could transit oil and natural gas from Central Asia (Rashid 2000). In the hope of moving from "an isolated buffer state to a transit state" (Barfield 2010:445), Afghanistan has allowed China to construct a railroad to Xinjiang Province and India to build a road connecting Iran's port of Chahbahar with Afghanistan's Nimroz Province. These development projects divide Afghans themselves and are viewed with alarm by neighboring countries who also want access to Afghanistan, thus fueling continued conflict and forced migration.

Since the 2001 NATO-invasion, Afghanistan has gained significance as a shipping hub for oil and natural gas. In post-Soviet Afghanistan, the TAPI Gas Pipeline is a major United States-backed natural gas shipment project, which would bring gas from naturally endowed Turkmenistan to Afghanistan before it is shipped to fast industrializing Pakistan and India. Hence, the acronym TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India) Pipeline. The Taliban are, however, violently opposed to the TAPI project. It is largely because of their opposition that the project has been stalled for years, despite the support of global and regional powers. In the mid-nineties, the Taliban refused to provide protection to a United States company, UNICOAL, for a similar shipment project (Rashid 2000).

The nexus between the political economy of resource conflicts and forced migration in Afghanistan becomes even clearer when one looks at a rival pipeline project that aims at importing natural gas from Iran, which until very recently has been under severe economic sanctions. Named as IPCI, the gas will be piped from Iran to Pakistan and then to China and India. China and India, which each have made massive investments in Iranian gas fields for exploration and extraction of gas, prefer IPCI to TAPI. But the West views IPCI as a rival that could undermine TAPI. In this mammoth struggle, both projects languish but show the continued significance of Afghanistan for its trade and transit routes, and the conflicts that they embed.

COLOMBIA

Unlike Afghanistan, Colombia has its farmland contested among several powerful groups. According to Arboleda and Correa (2003:837), Colombia "is a country in which population displacement has been the rule rather than the exception throughout its history, particularly during the latter half of the 20th century." Spain conquered the indigenous people of Colombia in the 1530s to take their gold. Gold remained the country's primary export until the 1880s, when it was replaced by coffee (Safford and Palacios 2002). The globalization of the commodity market beginning in the 1990s increased the value of Colombia's other natural resources (Vergara and Ruiz 2003). Due to plentiful water and variation in altitude, the country's agricultural production is "extraordinarily rich" and in addition to coffee includes wheat, rice, sugarcane, cotton, and palm oil (Brizzi, Gomez, and McMahon 2003:487). It also has a "generous endowment of energy resources" including oil, coal, natural gas, and hydropower (Zolezzi 2003:391). By the early 2000s, the state, corporations, and para-military groups had used violence to gain ownership of these abundant natural resources and produced millions of IDPs in all parts of the country.

Macro-Causes of Societal Displacement

The main political economy conflict in modern Colombia is the violent transformation of rural economies from subsistence agriculture to commercial agriculture (Gómez, et al. 2015). Much of the violence is perpetrated by privately financed paramilitary groups. Land seizures to expand coffee-growing areas were prevalent during La Violencia (1946-1966). The conflict claimed some 200,000 lives and displaced more than 2 million people (15 percent of the country's population). It also shifted residential patterns from overwhelmingly rural in the 1930s to more than fifty percent urban by the mid-1960s as millions of subsistence farmers fled to shantytowns ringing the major cities (Gomez et al. 2015).

Globalization since the 1990s created even stronger incentives for the seizure of land (Escobar 2003). Conflicts which had been ideological, such as the paramilitaries versus Marxist insurgents, became economic because controlling territory had more commercial than political value (Gottwald 2004). Arboleda and Correa (2003:828) provide the specifics: "the areas affected by violence are rich in natural resources (gold, platinum, oil, minerals, and biodiversity), desirable for the construction of large investment projects (interoceanic canals, hydroelectric plants, strategic roads), or fertile and thus desirable for the expansion of agricultural, agribusiness, or livestock projects." As this overview of Colombia suggests, property ownership of natural resource wealth is the central conflict in the Colombian political economy of natural resource appropriation and explains its pattern of societal forced migration (Gruner 2007).

Micro-Causes of Societal Displacement

Numerous studies have documented that land seizure is the main cause of displacement at the micro-level. Municipalities with extensive coca crop cultivation and high tax revenue from natural resource exploitation (such as mining) have the most IDP expulsions (Duenas, Palacios, and Zuluaga 2014; Pécaut 2000). A study of Colombian IDPs from Córdoba and Antioquia found that low-income households who had larger landholdings were more

likely to receive direct threats than those with smaller holdings (Engel and Ibáñez 2007). Estimates suggest that one-half of Colombia's IDPs lost land due to their flight (IDMC 2010).

The province of Antioquia in central Colombia provides an example of how natural resource wealth is closely correlated with high levels of violence and displacement. Since the colonial era, Antioquia has been one of the wealthiest parts of Colombia due to its gold mines (Safford and Palacios 2002). Agricultural products such as tobacco, chichon bark (a malarial treatment), and especially coffee gradually replaced gold as Colombia's major exports during the late 1800s. Coffee became the export majority in the 1920s, by which time Antioquia was the largest producer: it had increased production from 43,000 bags of 60 kg each in 1900 to 630,000 in 1932 (Palacios 1980). The Urabá area of Antioquia became Colombia's primary producer of bananas beginning in the 1960s, with companies from Medellín building the infrastructure and local landowners selling the produce to United Fruit. This production of wealth from natural resource generated a cycle of forced migration during the 1980s: "Urabá fell into a spiral of violence in which farm managers were kidnapped or murdered by the guerillas, union leaders were attacked by the paramilitary, and workers were killed by every side" (Bucheli 2005:176). Now Antioquia has 33 percent of the country's forced migrants although the province accounts for only 13 percent of the country's total population.

The same pattern of natural resource wealth, violence, and forced migration is evident in the north-west region of Urabá (IDMC 2007). This region is valued for agriculture, logging, mining, and its strategic location connecting the Pacific Ocean with Caribbean. Some 3,800 hectares of land in the Urabá region are palm plantations that came from land appropriated from Afro-Colombian IDPs. The companies involved assert ownership to an area of 22,000 hectares even though in 2000 Afro-Colombians were awarded more than 100,000 hectares of collectively owned land. Their resistance to commercial palm plantations, however, interferes "directly with the government's intentions to increase the national production and exportation of biodiesel to the world market" (IDMC 2007:19). The major players in this conflict have been the Colombian state, right-wing militaries, leftist militant groups, especially FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and ELN (National Liberation Army), whose violence and peasant-based rebellion led to, in the latest documentation by the Colombian National Center of Historical Memory, the killing of 260,000 citizens (Guardian, 2013), and the displacement of 5.7m (BBC 2016a) in the decades-long conflict. Finally, the Colombian government and the country's largest militant group FARC has signed a peace deal on August 25, 2016 (BBC 2016a). The first of the four-point peace agreement promises *land reforms* (Balling 2016).

SUDAN

Like Colombia, farm and pasture land has been a bone of contention between several groups in Sudan, but major conflict had to do with the oil wealth and its control that was contested between the north and the south. The central government in the capital of Khartoum used violence to gain control of wealth production from nature in more distant regions of the country, particularly in the south and the west. According to de Waal (2007:3) the root of the Sudanese conflict is "the excessive power held by a disproportionately wealthy elite in Khartoum which relentlessly exploits and subjugates the country's provinces." The state uses the military to maintain patronage and power sharing among competing elites in the capital. In the provinces, it uses tribally-mobilized paramilitaries to privatize the war. By the early 2000s, there were millions of IDPs in the provinces of South Sudan and Darfur, and hundreds of thousands of Sudanese refugees in the countries, such as Chad, bordering these provinces.

The north and south went to war over the control of oil that flowed in the south. Although oil deposits were located in the south, its transit inside and outside the Sudan ran through the north. Khartoum used this geographical advantage to threaten to choke the supply lines of oil. The conflict thus became so severe that, in the early eighties, southern Sudanese in the military mutinied to form an army of their own in 1983: South Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). Sudanese communities that were living across the country in peace and harmony in colonial and post-colonial eras were suddenly at each other's throats as mortal enemies. Southern Sudanese living in the north fled home to south Sudan, and northern Sudanese living in the south escaped to the north. The north's military push into the south still forced more than a million Sudanese (to be exact 1.097m) to displace, while 1.3m of the southerners were killed (Human Rights Watch 1994).

Natural Resources and South Sudan

The natural resources in the southern region of Sudan, which is now an independent country, have attracted outsiders for centuries (Collins 2008). For hundreds of years it was a source of gold. In the nineteenth century, Europeans coveted the region for its proximity to the source of the Nile as well as for its ivory (for billiard balls) and ostrich feathers (for lady's hats). Natural resources have been at the heart of post-colonial Sudanese conflicts as well. These conflicts, on the surface, appeared ethno-religious in nature, because resource-rich territories were divided between ethno-religious communities, who became the primary stakeholders in the outcome of how the resources are distributed and appropriated. These conflicts continued into post-independence Sudan, precipitating a civil war between the Arab and Islamic dominant group which controlled the state from the capital of Khartoum in the north and minority groups in the south. The north-south regional conflict became much more severe as the country began producing oil in the south and exporting it through the north during the late twentieth century, which brought investments from Chevron and then Canada's Talisman (El Jack 2007). The ensuing human rights abuses against the local population forced out both companies only to be replaced by state-owned corporations from China,

India, and Malaysia. With the diplomatic and political support of the United States and the United States South Sudan became an independent country in 2011.

The State v. Western Sudan

Forced migration in Sudan's western Darfur region came to world attention in the early 2000s when the UN was forced to consider whether the Sudanese state had engaged in genocide (Prunier 2005). In Darfur, the Sudanese state claimed public ownership of land that for hundreds of years had been allocated according to the local population's customary pastoral and farming conceptions of land tenure rights (Tubiana 2007). Historically, the sedentary farmers gave cattle and camel herders temporary passage and grazing rights even when many of these migrants began coming from Chad in the 1960s. But first Libya and then the Sudanese state mobilized the pastoralists (who are predominately Arab) for political reasons and promised them permanent land occupied by non-Arab groups such as the Fur. It is noteworthy how ethnicity and the environment became organically bound in the identities of pastoralist Arabs and the farming Fur. In fact, the Darfur Peace Agreement of 2006 did not recognize ethnic land claims, only the right of local groups to have access to natural resources: "Tribal land ownership rights, historical rights to land, traditional or customary livestock routes, and access to water, shall be recognized and protected" (quoted in Tubiana 2007:83).

In North Darfur, the Sudanese state found allies among the nomadic Cabbala who had been attempting to gain land rights for more than 250 years: "the key to this [military] integration was that the enlisted and newly empowered Arab Janjaweed (Arabic for jinn on horseback) forces were members of landless nomadic groups increasingly in need of arable land" (Hagan and Rymond-Richmond 2008:896). Conversely, the state found few allies for its war among the Baggara in South Darfur because most had land rights. The harsh ecology in Darfur meant that political economy conflicts were motivated by water, crops, and livestock. Reports by Darfur refugees in Chad indicated that the Sudanese state and the Janjaweed militia primarily caused their displacement by taking food and water rather than through killing, abductions, and home destruction (Hagan and Kaiser 2011). Darfur refugees in Chad also reported large losses of cows, goats, and sheep as well as sacks of groundnuts and sorghum (Vanrooyen et al. 2008). In the Um Kher district of Western Darfur (Kett and Trani 2012), the two most common reasons IDPs gave for leaving their homes were theft and crop destruction. By forming alliances with paramilitaries, as well as permitting some army officers to form partnerships with merchants in war zones, the Sudanese state "allowed local coalitions to pursue their own political and economic interests in sustaining local war economies" (de Waal 2007:19).

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The political economy of resource conflicts explains the underlying dynamics of forced migration in the world's three longest producers of refugees and internally displaced persons: Afghanistan, Colombia, and Sudan. Each country had natural resources at the heart of the conflict that drove forced migration; and each country had dominant political and economic interests that contested the use of natural resources--their access, appropriation, production, distribution and transportation--which have triggering forced migration. These dominant political and economic interests have been represented by states and other institutions of violence: militaries and paramilitary forces, private militias, insurgent groups, and national and multinational corporations (such as Unocal, Chevron, Canada's Talisman, and national corporations of China, India and Malaysia). The patterns of conflict at the regional, national, and transnational level have produced regional, national, and transnational displacement (see table 3).

Table 3. Types of Forced Migrants In Populations of Concern to the UNHCR Originating From Afghanistan, Sudan, and Colombia in 2014 (in percent).

Type	World	Sudan ¹	Colombia	Afghanistan
IDPs	56	70	93	19
Refugees	28	25	6	73
Stateless	8	0	0	0
Returned IDPs	4	4	0	1
Asylum Seekers	3	1	*	2
Other	1	0	*	5
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Source: UNHCR 2015.

* Less than 1 percent.

¹ Includes South Sudan, which became a separate country in 2011.

Of the three cases, Afghanistan has repeatedly had its geography contested by imperial and global powers for trade and transit routes that have been and continue to be integral to world commerce, especially commerce

between Asia and Eurasia. It is one of the few countries in the Global South that was never a European colony. The Durrani dynasty founded the country's modern state in 1747 and the country's last monarch ruled until 1973 (Tanner 2009). The refugee crises began in 1979 with the invasion by the Soviet Union (Braithwaite, 2003) which wanted access to maritime shipping routes in the Arabian Sea and eventually the Indian Ocean (Niazi 2008; Harrison 1981). Despite the tendency to view Afghanistan as an ethnic conflict between a Pashtun majority and a Tajik minority (Braithwaite 2009), none of Afghanistan's numerous ethnic groups have created nationalist independence movements, such as those in southern and western Sudan. The main cause of the Afghan refugee migration is still intervention by global powers and meddling by regional ones (Tanner 2009) that vie for influence in Kabul to gain control of international trade and transit routes.

Unlike Sudan and Colombia, there are comparatively few IDPs in Afghanistan but the country is one of the world's largest producers of refugees (UNHCR 2015). The Iran-Afghanistan-Pakistan transnational refugee zone was the largest in post-World War Two history until it was surpassed by Syrian refugees in 2014. Estimates of the proportion of all living Afghans who have been refugees at one point in their lives range from one-third to 64 percent and possibly even two-thirds, but even using the lowest figure "more Afghans have lived as refugees than any other population in the world's recent history" (Kronenfeld 2008: 57). Even after the UNHCR assisted millions of Afghan refugees to repatriate to Afghanistan from 2001 to 2005 (Kronenfeld 2008), Pakistan still hosts 1.6 million Afghan refugees and Iran hosts over 900,000 (UNHCR 2015). Putz (2015) also estimates that 2.5 million Afghan refugees are still camped in Iran and Pakistan. In 2015 Europe received a record 1.3 million asylum seekers: Syria was the main source country and Afghanistan was second (BBC 2016).

In Colombia, forced migration primarily results from farmland seizures by powerful political and economic groups. As Colombia has a comparatively strong democratic state, it does not produce large numbers of refugees that flee to neighboring countries. Instead, Colombia reveals what we term "societal displacement" due to its long history of violent land appropriation in all parts of the country, a problem that became worse in the 1990s, with the increased scramble for resources. By 2001, 29 out of 32 subnational departments in Colombia reported forced migration and all 32 departments reported hosting IDPs from other departments (Arboleda and Correa 2003). This societal displacement is very distinctive. Most global populations of concern to the UNHCR can be enumerated by province, such as West Darfur for Sudanese IDPs and Khyber Pakhtunkwa province for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. But for Colombia the UNHCR cannot enumerate IDPs by department because displacement is a continuous process that has gone on for decades meaning that "the entire national territory is affected" (Arboleda and Correa 2003:833). Instead, UNHCR simply states: "dispersed in the country/territory."

In the case of Sudan, the contested natural resource wealth is oil and agricultural and pasture land. The contestant parties are the state of Sudan, which has its principal seat in the north in Khartoum, and the southern Sudanese whose region is endowed with the oil wealth that they want to keep for themselves. The north claimed eminent domain over what it saw as a "national resource." The conflict was further inflamed by the transportation lanes that ran through the north. Even if the south had a total control of its oil fields, it still needed passage for oil shipment to national and international markets through northern ports on the Red Sea. Khartoum exploited the south's dependence to its advantage. Shunned by the world for the international indictment of its president on account of genocidal crimes, the central government in Khartoum sought control of south Sudan's natural resources with military means, to subsidize its daily operations, which further worsened forced migration. Similarly, the state unleashed its Janjaweed militia to ignite a conflict between Arab pastoralists and African farmers in Darfur in western Sudan. Human Rights Watch (1994) reported that 1.3 million Sudanese were killed in the conflict by the early 1990s. These resource conflicts led to internal displacement in both regions, and some refugees in the countries bordering these regions. The majority of Sudanese IDPs (1.097 million) are in the provinces of North, South, and West Darfur (UNHCR 2015). A sizeable population of IDPs (213,000) are in the area that became South Sudan in 2011. The majority of Sudanese refugees (262,000) reside in the areas of Chad bordering Darfur, while 64,000 refugees reside in South Sudan's neighbors: Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda.

We draw four theoretical and empirical conclusions from the study of forced migration in Afghanistan, Colombia and Sudan. First, natural resources are at the heart of each conflict in all of our sampled cases: geography in Afghanistan, farmland in Colombia, and oil, farmland and pastures in Sudan. Homer-Dixon (1999; 1994), a key figure in environmental security studies, has argued that the mere presence of natural resources in a conflict is sufficient to characterize it as a resource-based or environmental conflict. We have shown, however, that the mere presence of resources in a conflict does not explain the ways in which a resource causes conflict. We have addressed this inadequacy by what we term the political economy of resource-conflict: the ways in which natural resources are accessed, appropriated, produced, distributed and transported determine if the outcome will be peaceful or violent.

Second, the political economy model, i.e., the politics of economic relations within and between countries, identifies the political and economic actors in each sample country: the state, insurgent groups, global and regional powers, multinational corporations, such as Unocal in Afghanistan, Chevron, Canadian Talisman, and Chinese, Indian and Malaysian state-owned enterprises in Sudan, and drug cartels and criminal syndicates associated with apparent legitimate businesses in Colombia. These interests coalesce around the trade and transit economy of Afghanistan, the landed economy of Colombia, and the oil-and-land-based economy of Sudan. These economic relations entail diplomatic and political mobilization at the national and international levels, prompting state actors and global and regional powers to jump into the fray, which in turn creates a battle-tested line-up of rebel groups such as Islamist fighters in Afghanistan that mutated from Mujahidin, the Taliban and al-Qaeda to now the Afghan

Islamic States (IS); private militaries and guerilla groups particularly FARC and ELN in Colombia; and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and its splintered factions, the Janjaweed, and the National Islamic Front (NIF) in Sudan.

Third, we have shown that the political economy of resource conflicts as triggered migration in all of our sampled countries. Afghanistan became the world's largest producer of refugees that at their peak numbered 8.7 million (Margesson, 2007). Colombia produced the world's largest population of IDPs that in the latest documentation were put at 5.7 million (Guardian 2013). In addition, the Colombian conflict has a death toll of 260,000 people (BBC, 2016a). In the Sudanese conflict, more than a million people were displaced, and 1.3 million killed in the first decade of the civil war started in 1983 (Human Rights Watch 1994). Although our thesis--that the political economy of resource conflicts triggers forced migration--is supported by all of our sampled empirical settings, future research is required before it can be generalized to other cases of forced migration. A sad but excellent candidate, in this regard, is Syria, where our theory can be tested.

Fourth, we conclude that policymakers and planners at the regional, national, and global levels should take into greater account the role of the political economy of resource conflicts when responding to refugee and IDPs crises. Political economy has both accelerating and moderating effects on resource conflicts and forced migration. Our case studies have shown the accelerating effect of the political economy of resource conflicts. In two of our cases (Colombia and Sudan), the high-cost of war has persuaded the dominant political and economic interests to end the conflict. Warring factions in Colombia (the state and FARC) signed a peace deal in Havana, Cuba, on August 25, 2016. Similarly, the wages of war have convinced the Sudanese state to resolve the conflict by letting the south secede from the north and become an independent state, which it did in 2011. The political economy of peace has already moderated the conflict in Sudan, and the Colombian peace deal raises similar hopes. Land reforms is the first of the four-point Colombian peace agreement. Similarly, Sudanese policy makers sought to balance the oil wealth in the south with the passage economy of the north by boosting transit trade between the two to benefit both. The political economy of resources and resource conflicts in forced migration can be very helpful in shaping regional, national, and global policies.

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