Governing Environmentally-Related Migration in Bangladesh: Responsibilities, Security and the Causality Problem*

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Environmentally-related migration is often cited as one of the human consequences of environmental stress, especially in the context of climate change. Nonetheless, there is a lack of effective and appropriate governance strategies that address the issue due to the complex and multicausal character of environmentally-related migration and the tendency to discuss the issue through security-based discourses that favor alarmist narratives.

This paper suggests alternative approaches in responding to environmentally-related migration that seek to avoid these pitfalls. Through the case of Bangladesh, this paper illustrates the need to form cross-sectoral governance policies that avoid oversimplifying environmentally-related migration. Specifically, the paper highlights the limits and dangers of the security-based framework to environmentally-related migration and calls for policy coordination as a potential pathway forward.

Introduction

A growing and confident body of work asserts that environmentally-related migration is a logical and at times inevitable ramification of environmental change. Such projections come from traditional security communities (e.g., CNA, 2007; Jane's, 2009), intergovernmental bodies (e.g., UN Department of Public Information, 2007, 2011; UNDP, 2008; IPCC, 2007; ADB, 2012), as well as think tanks and academia (e.g., Myers and Kent, 1995; Smith and Vivekananda, 2007; Stern, 2007; Campbell et. al., 2007; Dupont, 2008; White, 2011). General currents of these otherwise diverse arguments suggest that environmental factors, such as water scarcity, cyclones or sea-level rise, may cause migration across but mainly within national borders (e.g., Foresight Project, 2011).

However, such attention to the issue of environmentally-related migration has thus far yielded few tangible improvements in governance at either international or domestic levels. One key reason explaining such inaction is the complex nature of the phenomenon of environmentally-related migration, which is characterized by multi-faceted causal pathways and highly varying characteristics in different settings (Ewing, 2010, 2012; Ullah, 2004). It is difficult in the first place to neatly attribute specific human activities to changing environmental and climatic conditions; as such changes typically reflect a range of interactions between human activities and environmental settings. Floods, for instance, do not occur simply because of heavy rain, but rather because such precipitations outstrip water management systems. Likewise, salinity intrusion in southern Bangladesh follows from sea-level rise or cyclones, but also from large-scale shrimp farming. Even as such relationships between societies and natural environments become better

understood, the ramifications of environmental changes and abrupt events still intrinsically depend upon the social contexts in which they play out.

Similarly, people do not move simply because temperatures get higher, resources become scarcer or weather conditions worsen. Rather, people move because such environmental changes have social and economic consequences on their lives and livelihoods, policies prove incapable of mitigating these consequences, and better conditions are thought to exist elsewhere (Foresight Project, 2011). These characteristics of environmentally-related migration can problematize government action on the issue. The myriad facets of population movements, driven in part by environmental changes, do not lend themselves to a clear demarcation of responsibilities, coherent response agendas, or political impetuses for action. The result is often a lack of mature governance structures for addressing the relationship between environmental change and migration.

In the vacuum left by ineffective governance, fairly narrow security-based narratives have come to frame much of the environmentally-related migration discourse. Such approaches often argue that climate change may spur large-scale movements across international borders, and in doing so lead to insecurities at national and international levels (Dupont, 2008). The complexities of migration dynamics render these claims difficult to validate or refute outright, and frames which focus on wide-ranging security challenges risk underrepresenting the distinctive conditions that define individual cases. These shortcomings, however, have not consistently impeded the policy influence of security-based arguments. Rather, such security-based positions have been made to promote at least three approaches to governance, relating respectively to adaptation funding, emissions mitigation strategies, and traditional security policies more generally.

This paper argues that such security-based narratives on environmentally-related migration create a number of problems. First, apocryphal arguments about climate change and large-scale global instability, within which population movements often feature heavily, reduce the complexity of why people move to a degree that is not supported empirically. Such reductive argumentation can prejudice certain causes over others and in turn lead to narrow and constricted policy prescriptions. Second, highly securitized frames, while drawing attention to some emergent challenges, risk subverting the interests and conditions of the people involved in migratory events to larger security considerations. Both migrating and receiving people and communities often face potentially dire situations, and subsuming these plights within strategic discourses is not the most effective pathway for redressing them. Finally, there are morally hazardous risks that environmental change and migration connections can be exaggerated or misrepresented to enable security policies that serve interests other than those connected to the phenomenon itself.

In response, this paper argues for rights-based approaches that account for multicausal forces and a range of specific (e.g., environmental, cultural, political, economic, and historical) circumstances affecting such migration. Governance approaches need to resonate with human stories and the perceptions of the migrants and receiving communities in order to efficiently promote the full realization of rights. High levels of complexity need not prevent such policy developments. For such action to be effective, strategies need to encapsulate the multi-faceted nature of environmentally-related migration within governance mechanisms. Otherwise, governance mechanisms fail to resonate with the particular situations of the migrants and communities vulnerable to environmental impacts, and are condemned to be at best ineffective, at worst counterproductive and dangerous.

The paper is structured as follows. The first two sections discuss the ways in which multicausality creates governance challenges for managing environmentally-related migration. The first section concentrates on the lack of concrete actions that effectively address environmentally-related migration. The second section deals with the construction of environmentally-related migration as a security issue, and argues that such approaches risk creating ineffectively narrow forms of governance. Following from these governance challenges, the third section suggests alternative rights-based pathways for addressing environmentally-related migration that embrace its multi-faceted nature and strive to place the interests of those affected by environmentally-related migration at the center of governance strategies.

The paper calls upon the case of Bangladesh to illuminate the manner in which these governance challenges and proposals play out in vulnerable settings and on an international level. Bangladesh is particularly exposed to environmental and climate challenges, including extreme events, such as cyclones, floods, storm surges, and droughts, as well as protracted environmental processes, such as deforestation, salinity intrusion, and soil erosion, among others. Moreover, the country's high demographic density, low development level, and tumultuous political circumstances impact Bangladesh's adaptive capacities (Lewis, 2011). Unsurprisingly, therefore, Bangladesh is often cited as one the states most concerned with environmentally-related migration (e.g., IOM, 2010), and thus provides an apt case-study to illustrate the arguments provided in this paper.

Multicausality as an Impediment to Action

To date, the most significant international recognition of climate-related migration lies in paragraph 14(f) of the "Cancun" Agreements adopted by the 16th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Conven-

tion on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2010), which called for "measures to enhance understanding, coordination and cooperation with regards to climate change-induced displacement, migration and planned relocation, where appropriate, at the national, regional and international levels." Two years later, parties to the UNFCCC (2012) reiterated this vague assertion by recalling the need for "enhancing the understanding of … how impacts of climate change are affecting patterns of migration, displacement and human mobility." A perhaps more promising step has been the recent launch of the Consultative Committee of the Nansen Initiative by the governments of Norway and Switzerland, aiming to agree on international guidelines for cross-border displacement due to climate change and natural disasters. The committee's task is to "carry out a series of consultations with governments and representatives of civil society in regions which are particularly affected, on the basis of which a global dialogue will then be organized with a view to formulating a protection agenda" (Reliefweb, 2012). Nonetheless, it remains unclear how these developments will play out in future years and whether new mechanisms at the international level will be forthcoming. This general dearth of frameworks regarding environmentally-related migrants should not be considered as the accidental consequence of insufficient institutional know-how. Rather, states and international institutions continue to consciously avoid the topic at least in part because of the conceptual indefiniteness surrounding the notion of environmentally-related migration.

Compounding this problem is an oft-repeated amalgamation of environmentally-related migrants and conventional refugees in an "environmental refugee" narrative (Mayer, 2011b). Conventional refugees are individuals who are at risk of being persecuted because they are part of a certain group in a given country of origin.[1] Certainly, the determination of the status of a conventional refugee raises many practical issues, if only because refugees generally do not travel with documented evidence of their persecution. However, the conceptual background at least is quite well established. Therefore, the definition of the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees is generally workable (despite some unavoidable grey areas). Unlike conventional refugees, environmentally-related migrants cannot be included in a clear-cut definition.

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[1] The Convention relating to the Status of Refugees refers to a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (art. 1(A)(2)).

Unlike persecution, environmental stress does not distinguish between people from different perceived "groups." If environmentally-related migrants from a given country are to be protected, there is no easy way to distinguish between individuals fleeing an environmental phenomenon and other migrants. Of course, it may be that an environmental phenomenon specifically impacts on a given region of a country. In certain circumstances, natural disasters, such as a cyclone or a flood, may displace specific populations generally for a limited period of time, but slow-onset environmental changes (including the repetition of natural disasters) usually have less ascertainable immediate consequences for human settlement (Lilleor and Van den Broeck, 2011). In particular, proving that one individual comes from a region affected by environmental hazard(s) can be exceedingly difficult given the fact that individuals often move internally before moving internationally (Foresight Project, 2011). In other words, virtually any individual leaving a country or a region affected by an environmental phenomenon could have a reasonable claim to be an environmental migrant. Environmentally-related migrants cannot readily be distinguished from voluntary economic migrants, in part because they often *are* environmentally-related *economic* migrants (people displaced by the economic consequences of environmental phenomena). Such difficulties are inherent to determining why a migrant has moved, and by extension create problems for claiming that particular parties are responsible for managing any resulting implications.[2]

Additionally, the conceptual ambiguity of the debate on environmentally-related migration leads to two different argumentative appeals to the notion of "responsibility;" either to call for a responsibility of the state directly concerned (in this example, the government of Bangladesh), or to call for a responsibility of the international community toward the affected populations. On the one hand, external observers and some citizens may highlight Bangladesh's own "responsibility" vis-à-vis "its" "environmental migrants" (McAdam, 2012; UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, 2012). Human rights law provides a sound general legal basis for such claims. According to international human rights law, a state must protect the population within its jurisdiction (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 2; International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, art. 2). As in many other countries, such duties are

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[2] While climate change may increase environmental stresses and exacerbate migration, there does not seem to be any obvious reason to foresee a general change in the nature of environmentally-related migration (comp. Gemenne, 2011). Then, again, such scenarios are hard to predict.

recognized in the constitution of Bangladesh (art.15). This notion of responsibility is disconnected from any culpability and it is only rooted in distributive justice: the government of Bangladesh is responsible because it is "its" population, not because it is its "fault."

On the other hand, however, the government of Bangladesh (like other affected states) has expressed strong claims of a "responsibility" of the international community (Hasina, 2009a, 2009b, 2013). In these claims, the notion of "climate refugee" is used to highlight a duty of the international community. A general legal and political basis for this argument lies in the concept of a common but differentiated responsibility (*see* discussion in Biermann and Boas, 2010; Mayer, 2011a). In fact, the argument for an international responsibility may itself be based on two different ideas (Mayer, 2012). Most often, it is linked to the notion of culpability and the implementation of a corrective justice framework: because states are responsible for climate change, they should assist Bangladesh's efforts to deal with its fallout. Legal notions, such as the no-harm principle and the responsibility of states for internationally wrongful acts, support this idea. Alternatively, the argument for an international responsibility may be framed as distributive justice, excluding any reference to culpability but calling on some form of humanitarian duty of the international community. Legal roots can be drawn from the analogy with the protection of refugees (although different *forms* of protection would have to be invented), the duty of international cooperation to the benefit of developing countries for the protection of social, economic and cultural rights,[3] or the extension of the notion of a "responsibility to protect," for now only recognized in cases of genocide, war, crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity (UN Secretary General, 2009). Additional support to this argument can be found in the use of a human rights language in international environmental governance. The Cancun Agreement, for instance, "emphasize[d] that Parties should, in all climate change-related actions, fully respect human rights" (UNFCCC, 2010: para. 8).

Yet arguments for a global "responsibility" have not led to systematic action. Similarly, Bangladesh and other affected countries fall short of their rights-based "responsibilities" towards migratory populations under a human rights framework. Despite being vociferous in international forums, the government of Bangladesh has done little to effectively protect environmentally-related migrants. While both national reports of Bangladesh on

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[3] International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights (art. 2.3).

climate change adaptation briefly mention migration as a consequence of the adverse effects of climate change, they do not encourage any concrete measures to address it within the national context (Government of Bangladesh, 2005, 2008). In fact, the Bangladesh National Adaptation Plan of Action only mentions the need to contain internal displacement, instead of addressing environmentally-related migration as an adaptive strategy providing livelihood opportunities for migrants (Government of Bangladesh, 2005). The official position of Bangladesh also denies cross-border migration between Bangladesh and India (Abul Kamal Azad, as cited in Friedman, 2009), although such movements are clearly part of the regional history (Lewis, 2011; Ramachandran, 2005). These movements, related to environmental changes (Swain, 1996), are a charged political issue in both the Indian and Bangladeshi public discourses (Rajeswar, 2003; Makkar, 2009; Nagi, 2008). In a sign of possible progress, the Ministry of Environment and Forests took part in an international research consortium initiated in 2012 with the University of Dhaka and the University of Sussex to develop new knowledge on climate change, migration and governance in Bangladesh. It is unclear whether the report expected by mid-2013 will be followed by action by the Government.

A risk is that both the government of Bangladesh and the international community use ambivalent notions of "responsibility" to avoid addressing environmentally-related migration; instead projecting responsibility onto the other. For example, promoting the right to international migration from Bangladesh should not divert attention from the need for domestic measures such as housing improvements and the protection of land property (Displacement Solutions, 2012). Bangladesh (like other countries) may seek to circumvent its human rights responsibility by asserting the culpability of the international community, while the international community may also too quickly forget its own responsibility rooted in the climate change regime and in ethical notions of global justice and global solidarity. Rather than acting as mutual scapegoats, both systems can act in tandem – with international support helping states comply with their human rights obligations. Under any circumstances, shortcomings in one sphere should not excuse the inaction of the other.

Security-based Discourses and their Policy Implications

A second governance challenge associated with environmentally-related migration is the propensity for security-based discourses to come to the fore, which can in turn lead to suboptimal governance strategies. The complex multicausal character of environmentally-related migration provides a conducive environment for irrational fears and security-based

perspectives to arise. Scientific uncertainties and the angst flowing from the unprecedented challenges raised by climate change also contribute to the development of such perspectives.

A risk is that actors drawing on security-based discourses take advantage of this space of uncertainty by emphasizing certain causes, figures, estimates and consequences, while disregarding others, with a view to dramatize and gain attention over the environment-migration issue. Hartmann, for example, revealed the strategic use of climate-related migration to justify US military investments in Africa (2010). Likewise, the UK Government has relied at times on alarmist narratives on climate change and migration as a means to promote greater action by the international community on the mitigation of climate change (Boas, 2012). In particular, when identifying climate change as a primary cause of displacement (and denying the multicausal origin of migration), such actors may draw on alarmist estimates of millions of "climate refugees" and refer to direct consequences of conflict and distress (Dupont, 2008; Muniruzzaman, 2013). A report of the Norwegian Refugee Council, for instance, was emotively titled "Future Floods of Refugees: A Comment on Climate Change, Conflict and Forced Migration" (Kolmannskog, 2008). Söderblom, in a similar vein, warned that "potentially millions of poor and unskilled regional neighbours [will] come begging for a new life" and creating innumerable strains for transit and receiving communities (2008). Bangladesh has long served as a key source country for such arguments, and Myers (2002) has (in)famously predicted that climate change would create 26 million Bangladeshi "environmental refugees" by 2050. Among other problems, such reasoning risks denigrating the role of non-environmental factors underpinning migration trends, and often ignores the possibility that many migrants will remain within their own country rather than cross international borders (Jager et al., 2009:72; Foresight Project, 2011).

Security-based discourses predominantly also portray environmentally-related migration as a threat to national and international stability, triggering conflicts and mass movements towards the Global North (Kaplan, 1994; Beckett, 2006, 2007; CNA, 2007). As a logical source of such migration, Bangladesh has been framed as a powder-keg for future instability. For example, during her time as the UK's Foreign Secretary, Margaret Beckett had this to say in her advocacy to stakeholders: "imagine if rising sea levels, as predicted, displaced millions of people in Bangladesh, that is bound to raise tensions in an already volatile region" (2006). Such positions tend to emphasize that Bangladesh is an underdeveloped country characterized by increasing Islamist extremism and less than stable political institutions (Campbell et al., 2007:5, 57; WBGU, 2008:3, 123; Muniruzzaman, 2011b; *see* discussion in McAdam and Saul, 2010). Arguments suggest that its high

physical vulnerability to climate change as a low-lying state, in combination with rapid demographic changes, may trigger large-scale migration both internally and abroad. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was quoted for example as saying that most climate change migrants "would seek migration, and they would be from LDCs moving within their borders, or beyond, and such movements would cause social disorders, political instability, cross border conflicts, and upheavals" (*The Daily Star*, 2010). Accordingly, these characteristics lead to Bangladesh featuring prominently in discussions of climate security, mass migration, terrorism, chaos, and threat for regional and international peace and security.

More specifically, such securitized discussions can be distinguished into three forms of arguments. These have in common the tendency to deny the complex causality of migration, to identify environmentally-related migration as a security issue, and to plead for relatively narrow types of solution – none of which necessarily benefits the situation of the environmentally-related migrants. The first represents a *preventive security* paradigm developed to encourage global action on the mitigation of climate change. Key vocalizers of this line are NGOs, Western European governments, and some developing states highly vulnerable to climate change. Such arguments use security as a rationale to push for ambitious and binding mitigation policies to prevent perceived dangerous consequences of climate change, including mass environmentally-related migration. This reasoning was instrumental, for instance, in the UK's decision to initiate a UN Security Council debate in April 2007 on climate change and security (UN Department of Public Information, 2007; Sindico, 2007:32; Boas, 2012). Bangladesh represents an important partner to actors promoting mitigation action on climate change by means of security-based discourses, due to its perceived climate vulnerability and low adaptive capacities. In congress, such countries can "generate a [human and moral] voice that will highlight the impact of climate issues, including to exert more leverage within the UN negotiations" (FCO, 2009:40).

The second security-based frame is the *victim-compensation* narrative, which has been constructed particularly by developing states directly or indirectly affected by climate change and by NGOs (sometimes in complement to the first narrative, as in the case of Bangladesh). The victim-compensation discourse attempts to use security as a strategic tool to attract adaptation funding (Baillat, 2012). The use of the notion of "climate refugees" by the government of Bangladesh can be understood as a way to raise awareness among the international community about the risks of insufficient adaptation in Bangladesh (Hasina, 2009a). The argument is that affected states require assistance (and, in particular, financial support) to deal internally with climate change adaptation, without which the interna-

tional community would face mass influx of international "climate refu-gees." Such arguments have provided Bangladeshi leaders with a pulpit from which to elicit international attention, as exemplified by Sheikh Hasina's 2011 address to the UN General Assembly in which she "de-manded" that the "global community share the burden of climate migrants and displaced people" (2011).

Thirdly, a *military-industrial complex* approach presents an additional framing of environmentally-related migration challenges.[4] This framing sees security communities, such as the Ministries of Defense and security think tanks, appropriate the issue of environmentally-related migration into their storylines. These arguments were solidified during 2007 when multiple key reports were released on climate change and security, portray-ing environmentally-related migration as a major security threat (CNA, 2007; DCDC, 2007; Campbell et al., 2007). These works offer the traditional security community with an expanded agenda in a post Cold-War era, thus allowing them to justify important new activities (Deudney, 1990). One can trace these shifts to Bangladesh as well. For instance, Major General Muni-ruzzaman, a retired senior officer from the Bangladesh Army and current President of the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies, pro-motes a greater role for the military in capacity-building activities and responses to natural disasters by referring to a scenario of mass migration and climate conflict (Muniruzzaman, 2011a).

Meanwhile, media and civil society actors play a growing role in the development of these storylines as they tend to highlight dramatic trends on environmentally-related migration. Indian news articles for instance claim that Bangladeshis "may inundate India" (Nagi, 2008), which is highly problematic given that India "is already facing a huge problem of illegal Bangladeshi migrants who are a burden on its economy" (Makkar, 2009). NGOs, such as Greenpeace India, further fuel a notion of insecurity by referring to 75 million possible climate migrants from Bangladesh and by stating that "[the] bulk of people from Bangladesh are very likely to immigrate to India" (Rajan, 2008:1; *See* Christian Aid, 2007 for a similar type of report).

The solutions promoted through these three discourses are narrow in focus: they concentrate respectively on mitigation, adaptation funding, or on the realm of the military. Once again, these approaches underrepresent

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[4] In his farewell address on 17 January 1961, US President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned Americans: "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military industrial complex" (Eisenhower, 1961).

the multicausal nature of environmentally-related migration and risk neglecting the needs of environmental migrants themselves. A more subtle set of actions is needed, including climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster risk reduction, migration management, development, land and property rights arrangements, and capacity building – which is admittedly more easily said than done.

Moreover, these three types of security-based discourses on environmentally-related migration risk may result in more traditional types of security measures being employed as coping mechanisms. The usage of a security rationale may strengthen fears about immigration and subsequently trigger the adoption of extraordinary measures to counter the so-called threat.[5] In the Bangladeshi context, security-based discourses may provide India with an additional justification to increase its border controls. India already fenced a large part of Bangladesh's borders, and Bangladeshis are regularly being shot when trying to cross (HRW, 2010). Security-based thinking on the so-called millions of "climate refugees" could complicate the border situation even further. Once environmentally-related migrants from Bangladesh are viewed and dealt with as threats, they may end up in a negative spiral. Irregular migrants, once criminalized, are often compelled to enter illegal networks, operate outside of official government systems, participate only in unregulated and untaxed economies, and, in the worst cases, become exposed to human trafficking and exploitation. To this extent, constructing environmentally-related migration as a security issue may result in the development of actual issues related to cross-border criminal activities. The utmost danger of the security-based perspective on environmentally-related migration is the ability of a discourse to become a political reality.

Recognizing Multicausality and the Necessity of Coordination

The complex causal linkages between environmental change and migration may thus lead to inaction or simulate narrow forms of governance that do not do justice to environmentally-related migration challenges. As a result, there is a considerable risk that the momentum of addressing environmentally-related migration may be hijacked by pre-existing agendas (e.g., security, climate change mitigation or anti-migration policies). Nevertheless, multicausality should and can be dealt with and alternative ap-

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[5] *See* Buzan et al. (1998) for an analysis of securitization as a path towards extraordinary measures.

proaches hold promise for acknowledging multicausality and addressing it in more satisfactory ways. To this end, there remain strong rights-based arguments for developing policies and normative frameworks to tackle with environmentally-related migration (Bell, 2004).

Effective normative frameworks on environmentally-related migration should acknowledge the multicausal origins of environmentally-related migration, while still pursuing pragmatic policy responses. Such overarching governance strategies not only prevent inaction and mismanagement, but will also more effectively protect the rights of migrants and receiving communities by taking their particular and context-specific situations into account. The devil will be in the details, however, and some specifics of such a strategy are outlined below.

Firstly, one-size-fits-all approaches should be avoided. Early scholarship on the governance of environmentally-related migration proposed universal standards somewhat analogous to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (William, 2008). However, such an approach assumes that an individual protective status could be granted to a clear-cut category of "environmental refugees" defined and enforced by the law. As argued previously, the complex causality of migration in the context of environmental change makes it difficult to distinguish, among individuals displaced, between those displaced "because of" environmental change and those for whom the environment was at best a negligible factor. Moreover, the legal needs of environmentally-related migrants vary greatly, depending on the form of migration: temporary and permanent migrants, most evidently, have different needs. Different populations, in different socio-economic or cultural settings, may also have specific needs. Technical training may, for instance, be a key component of policies aiming at enabling potential environmentally-related migrants to remain *in situ* (CDKN, 2013). While this complexity represents arguably an insurmountable hurdle to the development of universal (and therefore abstract) standards, it does not necessarily impede localized and concrete policies targeting particular groups, localities, or countries. Therefore, instead of a top-down approach, it may be advisable to collect, report, and evaluate existing best practices for managing migration within the context of environmental change. Such a process may develop something like a "multi-civilizational forum of best practices," whereby experiences are collected and further circulated across communities, states and supra-national regions (Mayer, 2013). These best practices should be specific to different forms of migration, distinguishing for instance between policies addressing spontaneous migration and those organizing community resettlement or emergency evacuation.

Secondly, the multicausal origin of environmentally-related migration has significant institutional implications that should be acknowledged and engaged with. These situations call for multi-sectoral coordination and invite the mainstreaming of environmentally-related migration within a host of existing policies and normative frameworks relating *inter alia* to climate change mitigation and adaptation, human rights protection, development, disaster risk reduction, land use and urban planning, humanitarian relief, and migration management (McAdam, 2011).[6] Rather than relying upon a specifically dedicated institution, a cluster approach is necessary to coordinate different pre-existing institutions at multiple levels of governance. Such an approach may follow the example of the UN interagency standing committee developed in the context of humanitarian relief (Messina, 2007; Jury and De Maio 2007).

A cluster approach is no panacea however. On the one hand, counter-arguments may highlight the lack of clear demarcation of responsibilities resulting from complex institutional arrangements (*see* discussion in Stoddard et al., 2007; Deschamp et al., 2010). In other words, while calling everyone to act together, a risk is that cluster approaches do not efficiently push anyone in particular to take any specific action (UNHCR, 2010). However, the objection does not address the cluster approach as such, as much as it criticizes certain institutional experiences. Much indeed depends on the coherence of inter-institutional arrangements and their ability to demarcate the responsibilities of the different partners. Conversely, the main issue with the cluster approach may be linked to its lack of capacity to attract resources. Because institutional coordination is often an opaque process which does not call for democratic decisions, cluster approaches may impede awareness raising, thus reducing the pressure on decision-makers to bring in the necessary resources. A potential risk is that instead of addressing the issue of environmentally-related migration in an active manner, "coordination" may boil down to the creation of obscure inter-institutional committees whose decisions do not lead to sufficient action. However, in the context of strong engagement of the international community, the cluster approach, if coordinated within effective institutional arrangements, may be fruitful (Biermann and Boas, 2010:79). At the national level, institutions have often been created to coordinate policies addressing (directly or not) environmentally-related migration; in Bangladesh like elsewhere, such coordination needs to be improved.

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[6] Tracey King suggested the creation of an International Coordinating Mechanism for Environmental Displacement (ICMED) (King, 2006:559).

Thirdly, in terms of substantial global governance, environmentally-related migration should be approached with the notion of a global complex interdependence in mind: just like no man is an island, no political (in)action is without possible consequences on other social or political systems (Keohane and Nye, 1977; Keohane and Victor, 2011). The multicausal nature of environmentally-related migration calls for political action in many different sectors, ranging from development and capacity building, to climate change adaptation, to disaster risk reduction, to land law and so forth. The issue is also often transboundary and, even when populations do not physically cross national boundaries, environmentally-related migration can move through complex global pathways to have indirect implications worldwide. States are far from being wholly independent, and the suffering of one population in Bangladesh has actual or possible, immediate or delayed consequences in many other places of the world. For example, the management of environmentally-related migration in Bangladesh has a clear regional dimension in South Asia and relates to matters of regional cooperation such as cross-border migration, transboundary water sharing and disaster management issues. Unlike the standard security approach problematized in the previous section, the perspective of a global complex interdependence can encompass the myriad causal links between climate change and migration. It can also justify engagement with the international community to support states affected by internal migration, not just with a view of defending the immediate interests of dominant states, but also with a broader view towards the long-term consequences that any specific policy is likely to have.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to problematize the current state of environmentally-related migration response strategies, and offer new directions for dealing with emergent environment-migration challenges. The first two sections revealed the lack of effective and appropriate governance strategies that define the issue area. Because the causality problem is not properly addressed, environmentally-related migration is oftentimes faced with either a dearth of normative frameworks or possibly counter-productive responses following highly security-based approaches. In this context, the third section suggested coordinated rights-based approaches capable of coping with the multidimensional nature of the phenomenon – not just an environmentally-"induced" movement of individuals, but also a phenomenon that occurs in specific socio-political, cultural, and demographic settings. The central thesis of this article is that there is a need for careful analyses that combine the observed and projected physical effects of envi-

ronmental change with the (non-environmental) context within which environmentally-related migration plays out. Such approaches are particularly salient for developing countries which face potentially acute environmental changes and are characterized by socio-political systems struggling to adapt to environmental stresses. Along this line, Bangladesh provides a case in point, not only because of its vulnerability, but also because of the lack of effective and appropriate governance strategies implemented there to date.

While environmental changes have influenced human settlement and mobility throughout history, observed trends send a clear message that the scope of mobility has the potential to increase rapidly in the context of pronounced anthropogenic environmental changes such as climate change. It is therefore essential that work continues to unpack the characteristics of environmentally-related migration through theoretical and empirical analyses of unique case studies. Further research agendas should also be developed to examine such forms of governance and they should adopt methods to analyze the dynamics of migration processes, taking local contexts into account. For a country such as Bangladesh, the stakes could scarcely be higher.

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