

Migration doesn't have to be a failure of adaptation

An escape from environmental determinism

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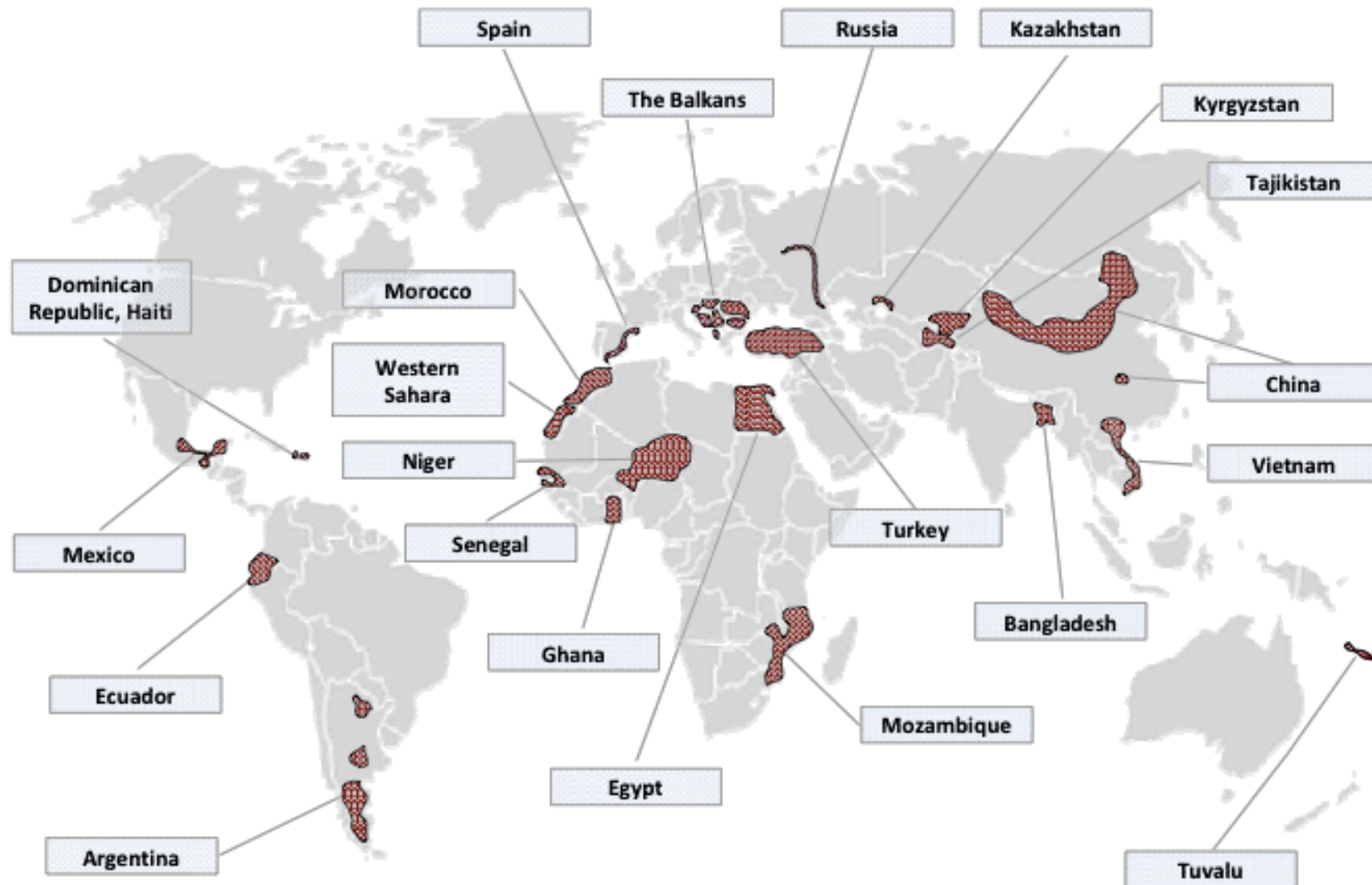


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Key empirical conclusions

- ▶ Most of migration movements associated with environmental degradation are internal movements, either on (very) short distance or from rural to urban areas.
 - ▶ International migration is the exception, not the rule.
- ▶ Environmental drivers are mixed with other drivers, but represent an additional constraint to migrate.
- ▶ Migration does not necessarily increase when the environmental situation becomes worse.
 - ▶ Migration can be reduced in case of severe drought.
- ▶ Migration is often used by the migrants as a coping strategy.
- ▶ Those that are the most vulnerable are often unable to migrate.
 - ▶ Migration requires both economic and social capital.



Yet the dominant discourse on the topic is disconnected from these observations

- ▶ Migrants are seen as expiatory, resourceless victims of climate change.
 - ▶ Many of them don't consider themselves as victims, or don't want to be considered as such.
 - ▶ Migrants are resourceful agents – they are not the most vulnerable
- ▶ Migration is perceived as an adaptation failure
 - ▶ In many cases, it can be an adaptation strategy
- ▶ We assume a direct, causal relationship between climate change and migration.
- ▶ We expect that these displacements will be forced and international.
- ▶ We assume that the nature and extent of the migration flows will depend upon the impacts of climate change.
- ▶ Climate-induced migration often perceived as a threat to security.
 - ▶ In many cases, it can actually improve human security.

▶ **This discourse remains rooted in environmental determinism and promotes a security agenda**

Adaptation as a key factor

- ▶ Though migration is often presented as a failure of adaptation to environmental change, many migrants used migration itself as an adaptation strategy.
- ▶ Migrants are not resourceless in the face of environmental change, and portraying them as such might do some harm:
 - ▶ On the conceptual level
 - ▶ With regard to assistance and protection
 - ▶ With regard to development policies
- ▶ Two key policy challenges
 - ▶ Enabling the right to leave
 - ▶ Enabling the right to choose



Enabling the right to leave

- ▶ The right to leave is the key condition of asylum, originating after the Peace of Westphalia.
- ▶ This right is currently jeopardised by environmental change.
- ▶ The most vulnerable often find themselves unable to leave
 - ▶ Because they don't have the resources to do so
 - ▶ Because of barriers to migration
- ▶ Their life, health and livelihood are directly exposed to danger
 - ▶ *Migration as a risk-reduction strategy*
 - ▶ *Issue of pro-active population displacements*



Enabling the right to choose

- ▶ Many of the migrants are forced migrants, and many of the stayers are forced stayers.
- ▶ Adaptation needs
 - ▶ In the origin region, adaptation will reduce the environmental constraints to migration.
 - ▶ Adaptation will also be needed in the destination regions.
 - ▶ In many cases, a sensible adaptation policy would be to promote and facilitate migration: migration can be a key tool to improve human security.
- ▶ Adaptation and migration policies need to be consistent with each other.

