Disaggregated Patterns of One-Sided Violence: Explaining Refugee and IDP Migrations[1]

By

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Abstract

This research evaluates the effect of one-sided violence (OSV) on forced migration and determines under what conditions forced migrants seek safety within their state, thereby becoming IDPs, or across borders, becoming refugees. This study uses data from the UCDP-GED and the UN for 47 African states from 1990 to 2014. Findings show that the intensity of violence is more important than the size of the area affected by violence when individuals decide to flee and become IDPs. It follows that the disaggregation between perpetrators of the violence (state and non-state actors) and their targets' affiliation with the group perpetrating violence (politically included or excluded by the groups) is critical in determining who becomes an internally displaced person (IDP) or refugee. When the group perpetrating violence attacks groups they do not represent, people flee as IDPs to other parts of their state. However, when the group perpetrating violence attacks groups they represent, people flee as refugees.

Introduction

The Syrian Refugee crisis is testing the resource capacities of countries to host millions of refugees across the Middle East and Europe. However, not all civil wars lead to such mass migration across international borders. In some cases, such as in South Sudan, citizens fleeing violence largely remained within the state as internally displaced persons (IDPs) (UNHCR 2015). In light of the recent Syrian Refugee crisis and the unexpected mass refugee exodus to Europe, this paper addresses under what conditions individuals flee violence within their state, becoming IDPs, or, cross national borders, becoming refugees.

This paper argues that refugees are products, rather than the causes, of conflicts. We also provide agency to refugees and IDPs by theorizing their decision-making process to leave their homes in the face of violence. This is tested through lagging conflict intensity and IDP and refugee migrations. These show that conflict leads to increased migrations. We measure

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conflict intensity through the number of one sided violence (OSV) events and the number of casualties which, when combined, act as an immediate impetus forcing individuals to flee.

We further argue that disaggregating between the perpetrators of violence (state and non-state actors) and their targets' affiliation with the group perpetrating violence (politically included or excluded by the groups) is critical in determining who becomes an IDP or a refugee. There is a lack of statistical analysis disaggregation of migration types, and this creates a logical fallacy that assumes that all migration types are influenced similarly. We address this limitation by examining the effect of OSV using two dependent variables, one for refugees and one for IDPs.

For this analysis, UN and UCDP- GED Data for Africa from 1990 to 2014 is used, and contrary to previous work in this area, our research finds that the intensity of OSV matters more than size of the area affected by violence (Sundberg, Melander 2013). Moreover, we find evidence to support the notion that IDPs and refugees follow different forced migration patterns; when the group perpetrating violence attacks groups they do not represent, people flee as IDPs to other parts of their state. Conversely, when the group perpetrating violence attack groups they represent, people flee as refugees.

The significance of this research lies in its power to aid understanding of different forced migration patterns. In the face of future conflicts, this research would allow us to better predict the probability of large IDP or refugee migrations. This will help policy-makers and the international community reduce the reaction-time and increase the efficacy of humanitarian assistance, as assistance can be directed to where the highest need will be, either within the state or to its neighbouring states.

We particularly seek to increase the ability to predict whether citizens will seek refuge abroad or become IDPs. We believe it is important to understand the conditions under which people flee to allow for early responses, not only to mitigate humanitarian crises within the country experiencing conflict, but also those countries receiving refugees as suggested by (Sachs 2016).

Literature Review

Research has disaggregated violence that influences forced migrations by types of conflict; this disaggregation does not take into account the differences between types of forced migrations, namely IDP or refugees. Nevertheless, the cause of migration is widely agreed upon; though interstate wars occur less frequently than internal wars, violence as a whole leads people to flee home in pursuit of safety (Weiner 1996; Schmeidl 1997). Many previous studies concluded that civil wars, both with or without foreign intervention, are major determinants of forced migrations (Zolberg et al. 1986; Schmeidl 1997; Weiner 1996; Davenport et al. 2003; Melander, Öberg 2006). Genocides and politicides have also been argued to be strong predictors of refugee flows (Weiner 1996; Schmeidl 1997; Davenport et al. 2003), with OSV perpetrated either by dissidents or by the government (Moore, Shellman 2004). Such claims are supported by Adhikari, who argues that a threat to physical integrity in a civil war is the major cause for migration (Adhikari 2012, 2013).

Yet debates also exist around how different types of conflict impact the size of forced migrations. It has been argued by some that ethnic rebellion only triggers small refugee migrations (Schmeidl 1997), while others find that ethnic conflicts generate massive refugee flows (Newland 1993; Weiner 1996). What these studies do not take into account is the proposition that the pattern of displacement might be affected by the variation in types of civil and international conflicts and motivations for perpetrating the violence (Lischer 2007). This is in part supported by Davenport et al., (2003) who find that the more multi-dimensional conflicts are, the more likely people are to flee. With regards to the scope of the conflict, there is supporting evidence that the larger the area affected by violence and the more urban the centres affected are, the more people feel threatened enough to flee (Melander, Öberg 2006, 2007). The differing evidence for what type of conflict or violence most influences forced migrations makes outcomes of this topic's research ambiguous.

Previous research has also evaluated how timescales play into migration patterns. With respect to time dependence, past migration positively correlates with present migration, as information acquired from people that have fled before lowers the personal and social costs for relocation (Davenport et al. 2003). But it is worth taking into account that the exchange of information and established organisation of other societies might impede migration, as people may hear of the negative circumstances of others and be more inclined to retain their current lives having over time learned to accept and survive within their turbulent environment (Adhikari 2012, 2013). Furthermore, some argue that the personal history of previous forced migration has a positive impact on predicted refugee flows (Moore, Shellman 2004, 2006, 2007). Yet once again we find that there are others who find that the personal history of previous forced migration decreases the risk of future refugee flows (Melander, Öberg 2006).

Research has also delved into how quality of life factors influence migration. Findings about political factors influencing migration flows in particular are varied. On the one hand, institutional human rights violations only cause small elite migrations but do not predict large migration flows (Schmeidl 1997), while oppressive authoritarian regimes have the potential to cause large migration flows (Weiner 1996; Melander, Öberg 2007). Yet political oppression may increase the incentive to flee, while simultaneously reducing the ability to leave the country (Hatton 2016). In these situations it follows that economic factors influencing migrations have found that underdevelopment and population pressures have little impact on refugee migrations (Davenport et al. 2003; Melander, Öberg 2006; Schmeidl 1997; Massey 1990). On the other hand, some have found that a lower level of development is, at least indirectly, positively correlated with migrations flows (Adhikari 2012, 2013; Hatton 2016; Zolberg et al. 1986), and that higher economic development is negatively correlated with the decision to flee (Moore, Shellman 2004, 2007).

While there is little research on when people choose to flee internally or across borders, there is research on how people choose countries to flee to when they decide to become refugees. Scholars emphasize the importance of a country's proximity (Salehyan 2008; Rüegger, Bohnet 2015; Hatton 2016; Choi, Salehyan 2013), language (Moore, Shellman 2004, 2007), and ethnic ties (Rüegger, Bohnet 2015), in influencing their choice of host countries. Proximity seems to be more important than ethnic ties and economic development (Moore, Shellman 2004, 2007; Hatton 2016), although the infrastructure of the home country is also of some relevance

(Adhikari 2012, 2013). Importantly, policies in receiving countries significantly affect the decision to flee (Hatton 2016; Zolberg et al. 1986). Yet some suggest that all the opportunities or obstacles facing forced migrants do not have a significant effect on flight patterns (Schmeidl 1997).

Finally, with regards to the impact of refugees on host countries, scholars have found that refugees may contribute toward an increasing probability of militarized interstate disputes between the sending and the receiving countries, are likely to generate spill-over effects of domestic conflicts, are a burden for the economy of the host country and might negatively affect its security and stability (Zolberg et al. 1986; Salehyan 2008; Salehyan, Gleditsch 2006; Tumen 2016; Martin 2016).

While the literature explores broad factors affecting migration patterns, a key gap arises in how forced migrations are evaluated statistically within the studies. Firstly, many studies only include refugees in their independent variable (Zolberg et al. 1986; Weiner 1996; Schmeidl 1997; Rüegger, Bohnet 2015), for instance how migrants influence other factors, but fewer studies analyse what affects how many people migrate. Secondly, most studies fail to disaggregate forced migration types like IDPs and refugees (Davenport et al. 2003; Melander, Öberg 2006, 2007; Moore, Shellman 2004, 2007; Lischer 2007; Adhikari 2012, 2013), or disaggregating who perpetrates violence against who (Fjelde, Hultman 2014). This creates a problematic logical fallacy that assumes that these migration patterns are similarly influenced by external factors. By disaggregating migration types, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of migration patterns, and the potential power to predict when conflict will create IDP or refugee crises. A third key gap this research aims to support is through the examination of how forced migrants spread conflict, rather than depicting migrants as consequences of violence.

Argument

This paper argues that the factors influencing IDP and refugee migrations differ, and seeks to clarify under what conditions people flee, and when these forced migrations lead people to seek safety within their state versus crossing borders to other states. The mechanism argued is that conflict intensity and the combination of who perpetuates OSV (state or non-state actors) and against whom (politically included or excluded groups) influences the decision of where to flee (The Economist 2015).

Current trends in IDP and refugee movements are often lumped together as one aggregate trend. UNHCR declares that worldwide displacement from conflict is currently at an all-time high (UNHCR 2015); however, their declaration can be misleading. When IDP and refugee migrations are disaggregated and mapped according to year, opposing trends appear, with refugees on the whole decreasing in numbers since the 1990s, while IDP numbers steadily rising since the early 2000s, as shown in *Figure 1* (Norwegian Refugee Council 2015). The data also has a significant difference in scope; when disaggregating UNHCR data, IDP migrations far exceed refugee migrations, with 65.3 million people noted as "forcibly displaced," and with 21.3 million of those being refugees (UNHCR 2015). As IDPs alone number about 40 million people, they are nearly twice as numerous as refugees. Since there are key differences

in the scope and direction of IDP and refugee migrations, this paper seeks to explore what influences these differences in migration types. We argue that there are two key aspects affecting IDPs and refugee migrations: the intensity of the conflict, and the dynamics between who perpetrates violence against who.
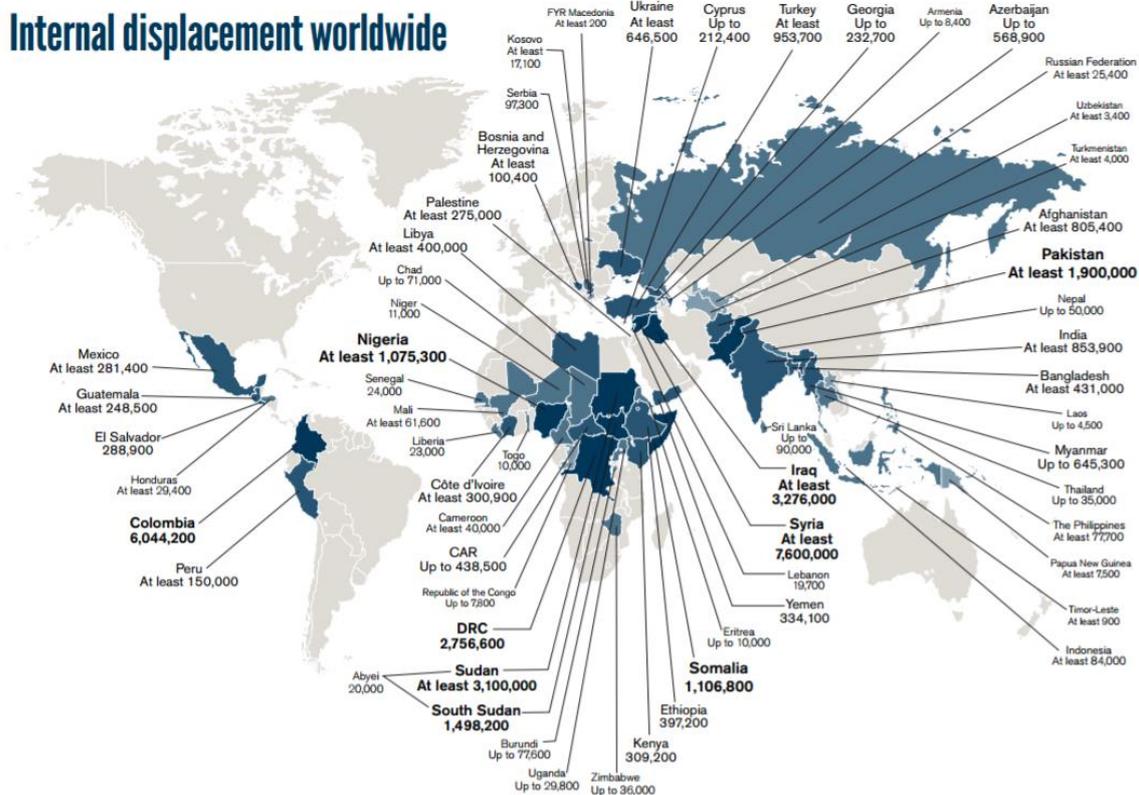

Figure 1 Norwegian Refugee Council. Global Overview 2015: People Internally Displaced by Conflict and Violence

Intensity: Initial Migrations

Intensity of conflict is long established as affecting migrations, and we suspect that people choose to flee when there is a direct threat to their lives. This is regardless of a threat being actualized or perceived, as (Schmeidl 1997; Weiner 1996) has found. We will use OSV as our framework for threat to lives, as this targets civilians and creates less ambiguity than if those attacked were combatants. Furthermore, OSV, whether perpetrated by state or non-state actors, has been found to lead to forced migrations (Moore, Shellman 2004).

In the literature, there are many mechanisms of OSV that will lead state and non-state actors to use force. For example, OSV could be used by states to 'ethnically cleanse' an area, or it could be used by both state and non-state actors to control a population. This research utilizes the Kalyvas causal mechanism OSV, where it is a tool deployed to control populations (Kalyvas 2006). As there is evidence that those who engage in OSV against civilians utilize the tool in 'enemy' territory (Fjelde, Hultman 2014), this can be understood as coercing the enemy into submission under that actor. Furthermore, (Fjelde, Hultman 2014) shed light on the dynamic aspect of conflict, showing how states target civilians who support rebels, while

rebels target civilians supporting the state. We seek to expand on this dynamic to see how that influences migration patterns.

Given this, our first hypothesis can be summarized as follows:

> **H1:** *People flee violence, regardless of who perpetrates that violence, due to actual or perceived threat to one's safety.*

The threat to one's safety is captured through the proximity and intensity of violence. Proximity is defined as the area affected by violence, using a smallest convex hull around incidents of OSV, while intensity of events refers to the number of events and number of resulting casualties from violence.

A threat of violence is expected to force people to leave to seek safety, thereby turning civilians into IDPs. However, other factors, including who perpetuates violence, who is targeted, financial capabilities, and how welcoming neighbouring states are to migrants, inter alia, is also expected to affect people's decision in the long-term to stay within national borders or to leave their country.

Conflict Dynamics: Long-Term Migrations

We expect that when making the long-term decision of where to go, a targeted group's preferences for who is in control (the state or non-state actors) influences migrating within the state or externally. We assume an included group's preference is state control, while an excluded group's preference is non-state actor control, as those 'preferences' support the best interests of the group with rebels representing excluded groups and state representing included groups.

We expect that if individuals' preferred group turns against them, then they would lose trust that the actor is working in their interest or will protect them, making people flee further. However, if the opposition group commits violence against them, then individuals would leave far enough to escape the violence, and wait to determine if the violence will continue or if the state will regain control, before determining staying as an IDP or leaving the state, leading to our second hypothesis:

> **H2:** *Conflict dynamics of state and non-state actors perpetuating OSV against included or excluded groups influences the decision to become IDPs or refugees.*

> **H2a:** *When individuals are targeted by their preferred group, they would flee further, thereby more likely to become a refugee.*

H2b: *When individuals are targeted by their opposition group, individuals are faced with the option of either staying in the country, becoming IDPs or leaving and becoming refugees.*

In practice, this hypothesis suggests that if a state uses OSV to 'ethnically cleanse' and disperse a minority in an enclave within their borders, the violence is expected to lead to refugee migrations. But, if the state is fighting for control over an area where their population is the majority, the rebels would target included groups, and an IDP migration would be expected. The chart below maps the research's expectations of who will flee how far.

	Govt OSV	Rebel OSV	No OSV
Excluded	IDP or Refugee	IDP or Refugee	Stay
Included	Refugee	IDP	Stay

Figure 2

However, in situations where migrants could be IDPs or refugees, we expect that additional factors such as money, social networks, or support from receiving states, factor into the decision. Thus, we added variables such as GDP per capita, to control for factors affecting individuals' decision of where to flee, such as financial capabilities and lagged the regressions by a year to capture longer-term migration patterns.

Empirics

This study uses data collected from the UN and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) (Sundberg, Melander 2013), and focuses on Africa from 1990-2014 with the unit of analysis focused on the event level. For any event to be included, at least one person had to have been killed from an OSV attack. For the dependent variable, IDP and refugees were tested separately. For the independent variables, intensity was tested using two measurements: the number of casualties and combined area affected by OSV. The dynamics of the violence was tested utilizing both a dummy variable for if the attack was perpetrated by the state or non-state actors, and a dummy for if the area threatened by violence was politically included or excluded. The models use an ordinary least squares regression and are lagged a year while fixing for country and fixed effects.

To look at the data holistically, *Figure 3* shows casualty rates inflicted by states and non-state actors, and resulting migration levels of IDPs and refugees. The average number of casualties from state OSV events is 469, compared to 88 for non-state violence. As states are generally better resourced and have greater institutional capacity and members, it is reasonable that

state sponsored violence is more lethal, with our data suggesting government OSV is nearly 5 times more lethal than non-state OSV.
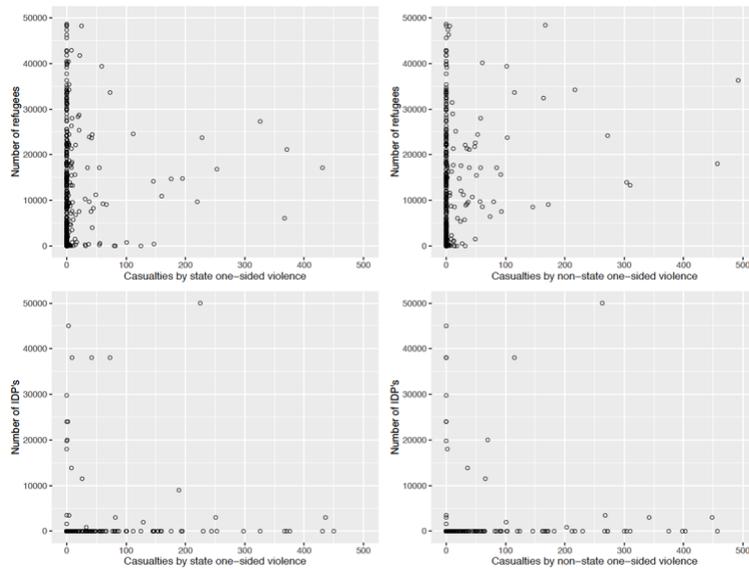

Figure 3

Using the models, our data shows evidence for differences between IDPs and refugees with regards to conflict intensity affecting migrations. *Figure 4* shows the ratio of conflict area to total area of a state (Y-axis) and casualties from OSV (X-axis), disaggregated by IDP (left 4 boxes) and refugee migrations (right four boxes) and when rebel and states perpetrated the violence. These graphs, when viewed together, suggest that casualties inflicted by the state have little relationship to IDP trends, and that the relationship from non-state attacks is slight. For example, if 1000 civilians were killed by state actors, roughly 50,000 civilians became IDP's. When the conflict area is controlled by state or non-state actors the number of IDP's is greater when the state is in control. When the state exerts control over the whole conflict area, roughly 4% of a given population become IDP's, whereas if non-state actors control the entire conflict area, IDP numbers are quite small, levelling at approximately 0%.
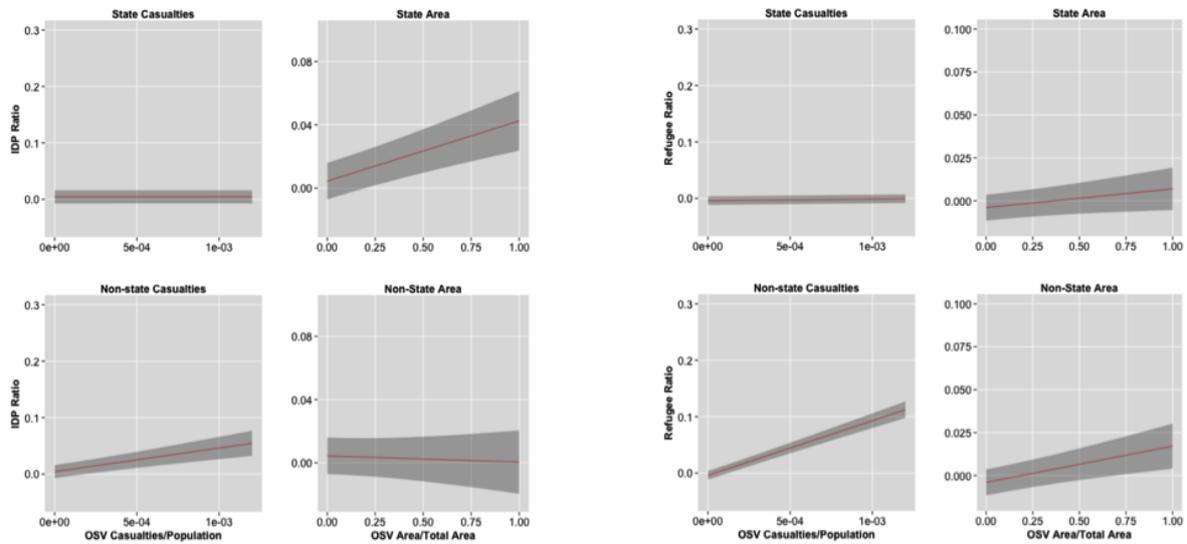
Figure 4 Model Predictions of IDP (left) and Refugee (right) migrations a year after OSV events

For the number of refugees, similar relationships are observed for state casualties - but for non-state casualties the effect is almost twice that of IDPs. In both state and non-state controlled areas of OSV, there are observed increases in the percentage of refugees as the conflict area increases. If the state exerts control over the entire conflict area, roughly 0.5% of a given population became refugees, and in conflict areas of non-state control, the observed effect is close to 1.5% (*see Figure 4*).

Overall, these findings support H1 - that people originally flee due to insecurity about safety. But on the contrary to previous literature's findings, our results suggest that the number of casualties influences migration rates more than the size of the area affected by violence.

Furthermore, when analysing conflict dynamics, the configuration of who perpetrates OSV and against included/excluded groups, we see that when groups target their 'enemy's' population (state targeting excluded groups and rebels targeting included groups), IDP migrations will result. However, when groups target their 'preferred' population (state targeting included groups and rebels targeting excluded groups), refugee migrations result as per *Figures 5-6*.
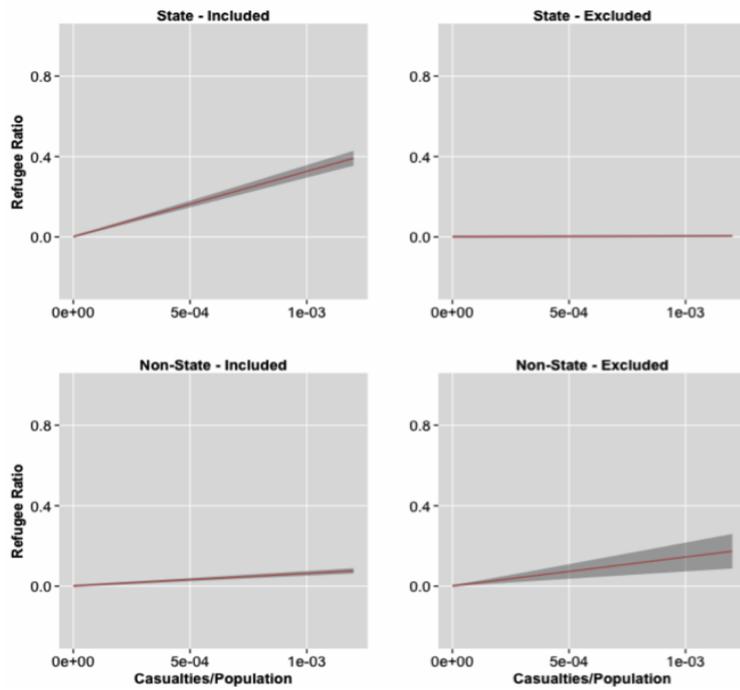
Figure 5 Predicted Refugee migrations based on casualties, disaggregated by perpetrator and target group
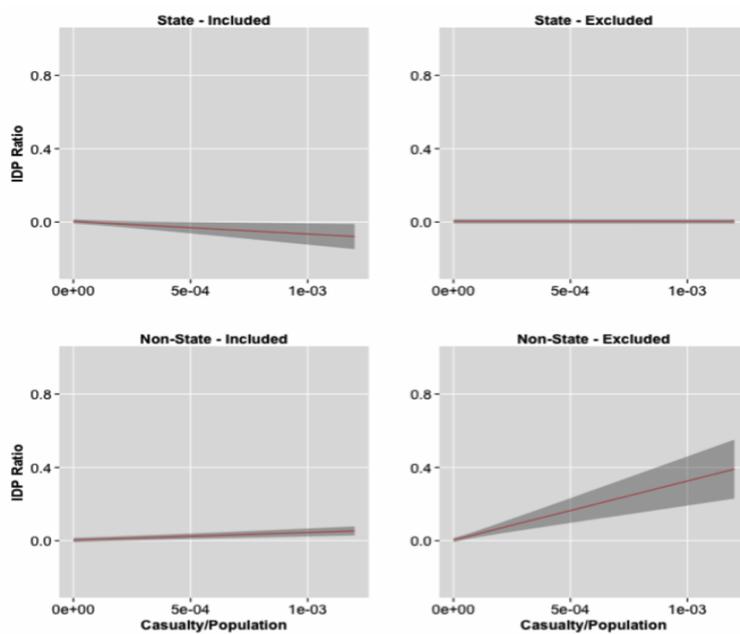

Figure 6 Predicted IDP migrations based on casualties, disaggregated by perpetrator and target group

Our models predict that if a non-state actor kills 1,000 excluded citizens, then roughly 200,000 civilians would flee becoming refugees. However if the state kills 1,000 included citizens, then approximately 400,000 thousand civilians would flee becoming refugees, which can be seen from *Figure 5*. While this supports H2 - that when groups target their own population refugee migrations are expected - it is interesting that states have double the impact of non-state actors in this case. This could be due to uncertainty about how rebel groups will fare vis-a-vis the

state, so people might stay close to see if the state will regain control and end the violence before fleeing as refugees.

Then for IDPs, as seen in *Figure 6*, when the state employs violence on their included groups, there is a negative trend with expected IDP rates decreasing. This trend reinforces the argued mechanism that these included groups would become refugees, ostensibly losing faith in the state to protect them to fleeing further. But if non-state actors kill, for example, 1,000 excluded citizens, then we should expect to see roughly 400,000 people flee internally as IDPs.

Conclusion

This paper examined the relationship between OSV and individuals' decision of where to flee from conflict, disaggregating between IDP and refugee migrations. The models concluded that IDPs and refugees are influenced by conflict factors differently. The relationship between the perpetrators of the violence and the target attacked is evidence as a vital determinant in individual's destinations. Whenever a group perpetrates violence against its own population, it is likely to cause refugee flows as individuals lose their trust in their group to protect them or act in their best interest. On the contrary, when individuals are targeted by the group they are not affiliated with, they would either become IDP or refugees, which can be influenced by other factors such as personal finances to travel, the welcoming nature of neighbouring host countries to refugees, and other variables.

First, this research demonstrates that refugees should not be seen as causes of conflict, as often suggested in the literature or prevalent in public perception, but as consequences of those conflicts. We therefore suggest a set of actions, such as the need to better monitoring conflicts, the building of better and more efficient global networks to deal with potential IDP and refugee crises, and the changing of the framing of refugees in public debates from perpetrators of violence to victims.

Second, by better understanding patterns of forced migration, humanitarian response can be more efficient in cost and timeliness, as services can better predict where forced migrants will go and direct responses earlier instead of waiting to see where camps develop. Responding faster means more lives can be saved from conflict and its externalities such as starvation and disease within unprepared camps, and, by cutting costs, these organizations can help more people in need.

To further develop these models, better and more data is needed. The existing data does not allow for demographic disaggregation to find out who exactly leaves under which circumstances. Moreover, future research needs to look at the time correlation between being an IDP or becoming a refugee, how foreign interventions affect flight patterns, and control for regional effects, as our research only used data on Africa.

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