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# THE MIGRATION – CORRUPTION NEXUS

Melissa Siegel



# Outline

1. What is corruption
2. Why should we care
3. 11 Key linkages
4. New research and examples of these linkages



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## What do I mean by Corruption?

- Corruption is more than mere bribery, and can be simply understood as the abuse of a trusted position for personal gain.

Corruption may include many activities including: bribery, embezzlement but also nepotism, extortion, etc.



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# Corruption

## Scales of corruption

- Petty corruption
- Grand corruption
- Systematic corruption

## Corruption in Sectors

- Government/public
  - Political corruption
  - Police corruption
  - Judicial corruption

Corruption in  
education/universities

Corruption in labor unions

## Methods

- Bribery
- Embezzlement, theft and fraud
- Extortion and blackmail
- **Types of corrupt gains**
  - Abuse of discretion
  - Favoritism, nepotism, clientelism



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# Why should we care?

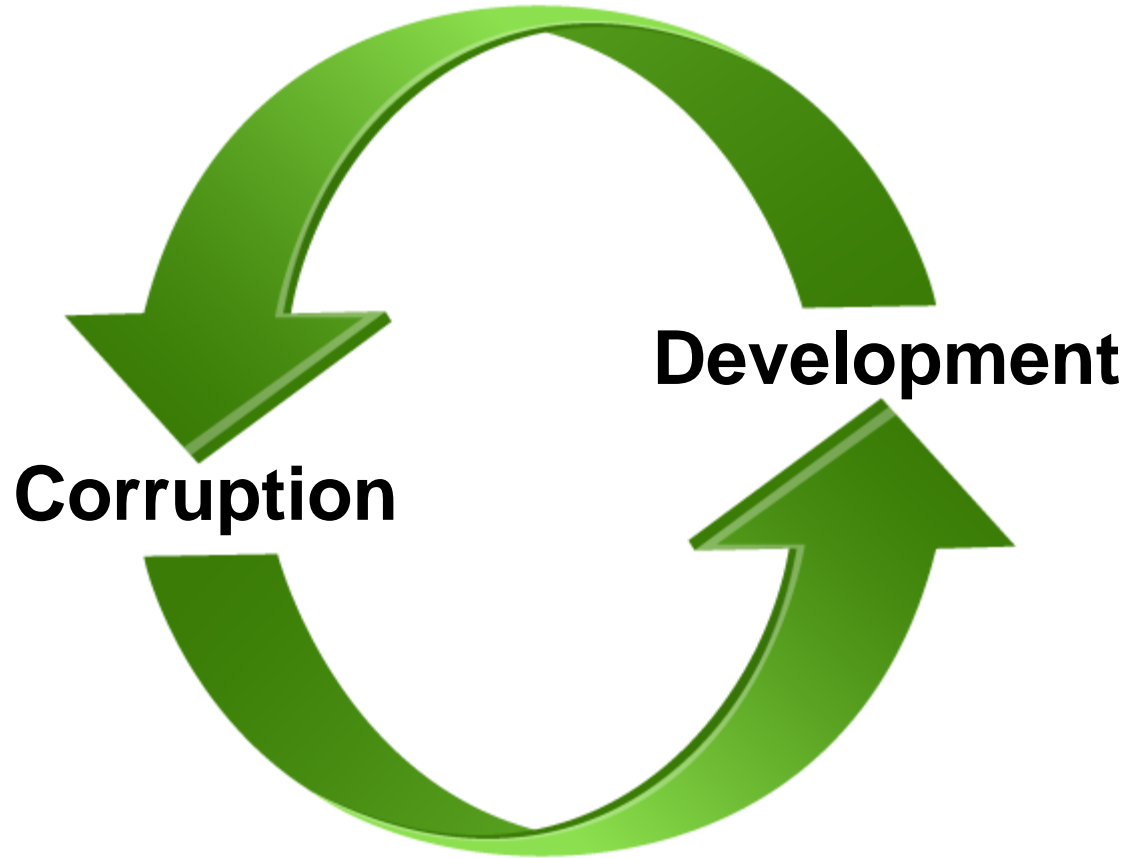


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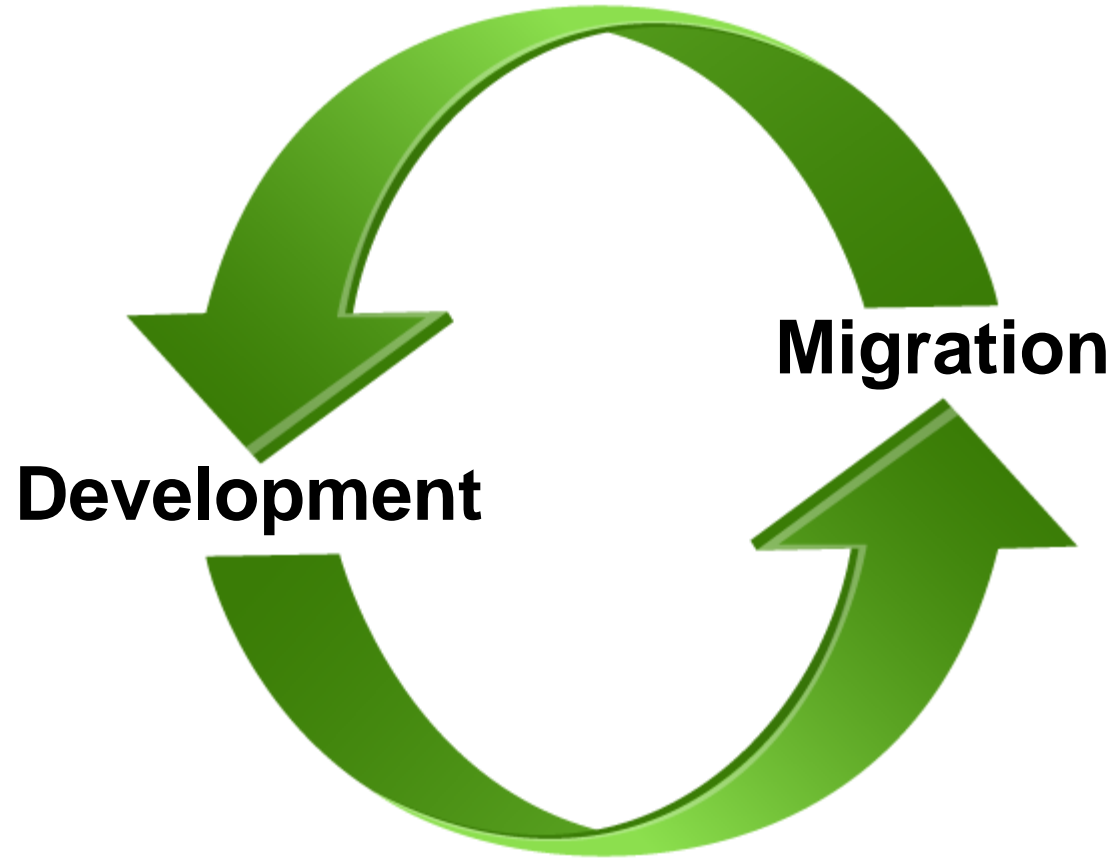


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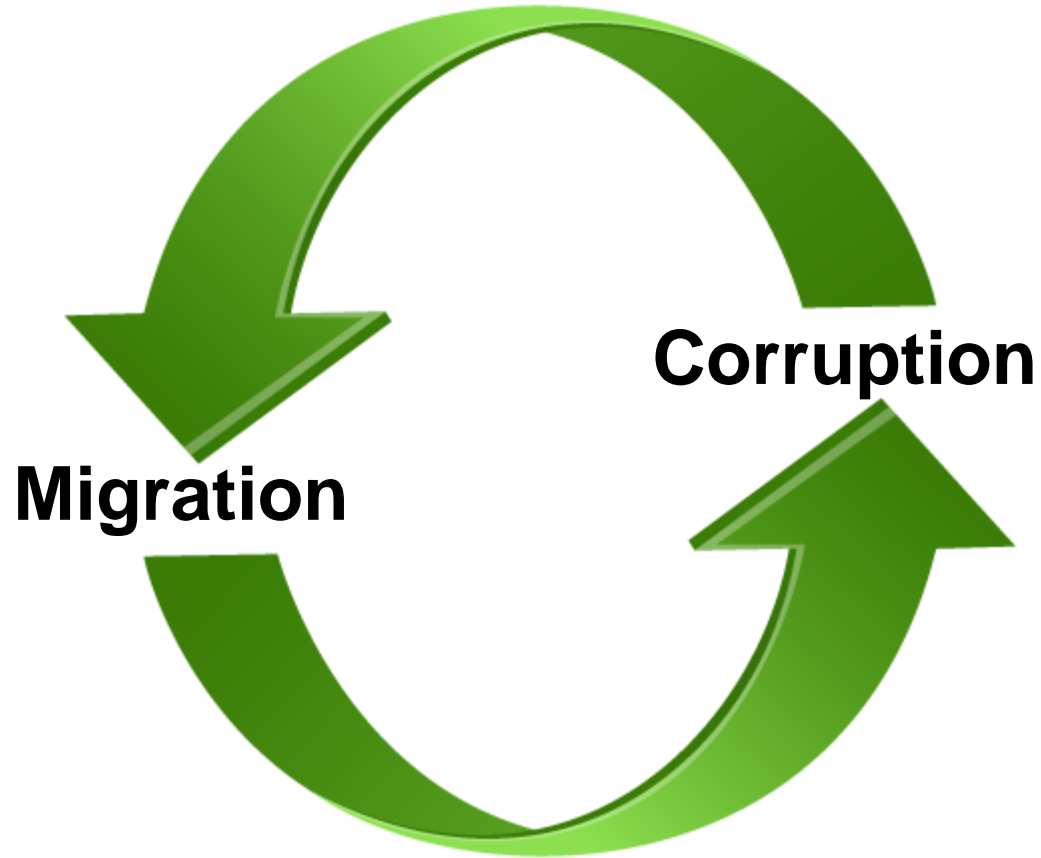


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**Where does the link  
between migration  
and corruption fall?**



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# Patterns of Corruption and Migration

- Countries where corruption is perceived to be widespread are largely countries of emigration.
- Conversely, countries where corruption is perceived to be less of an issue are primarily countries of immigration.



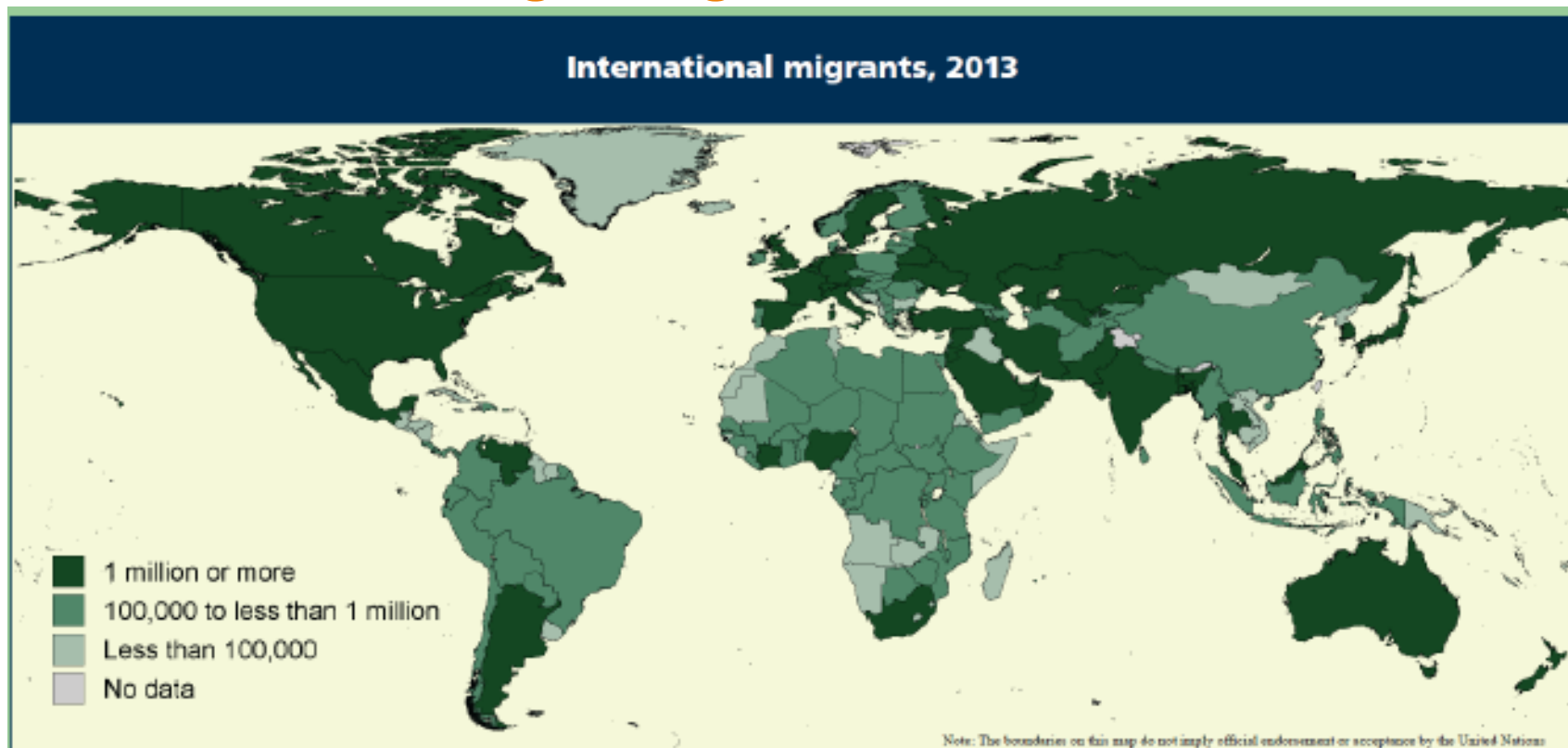
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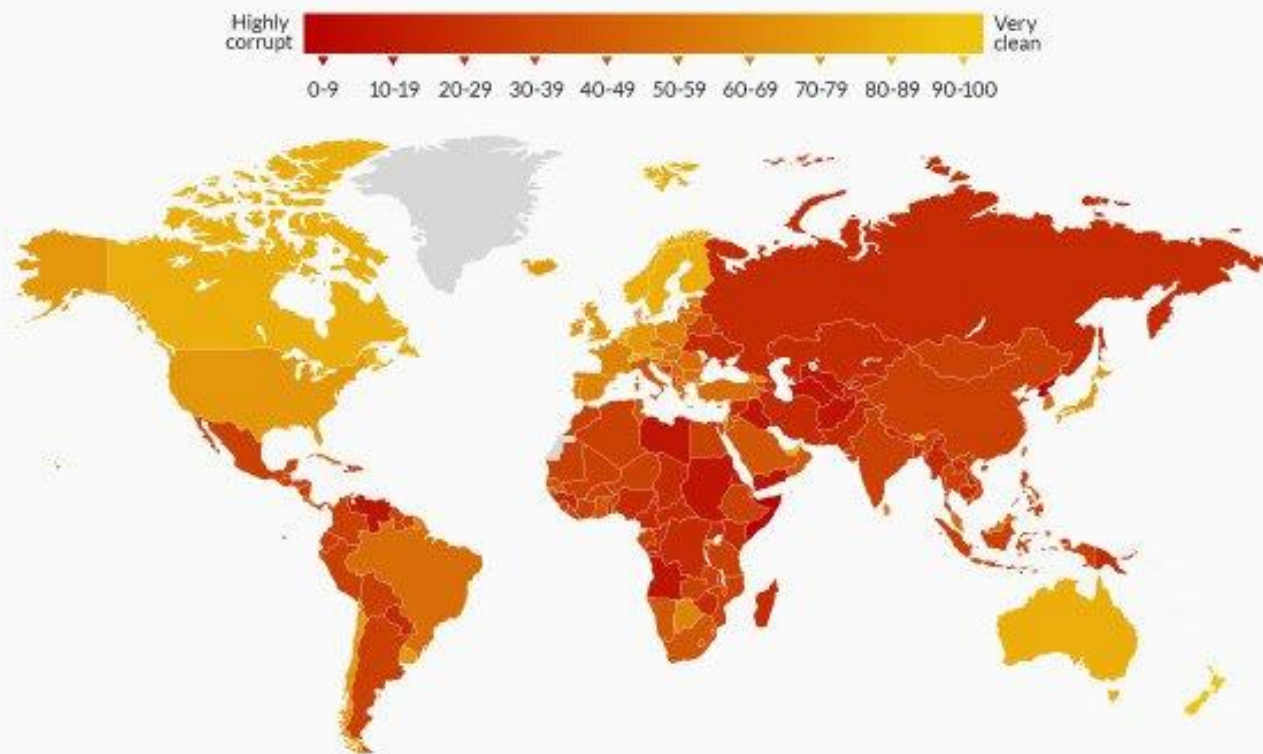
# Where do most migrants go?



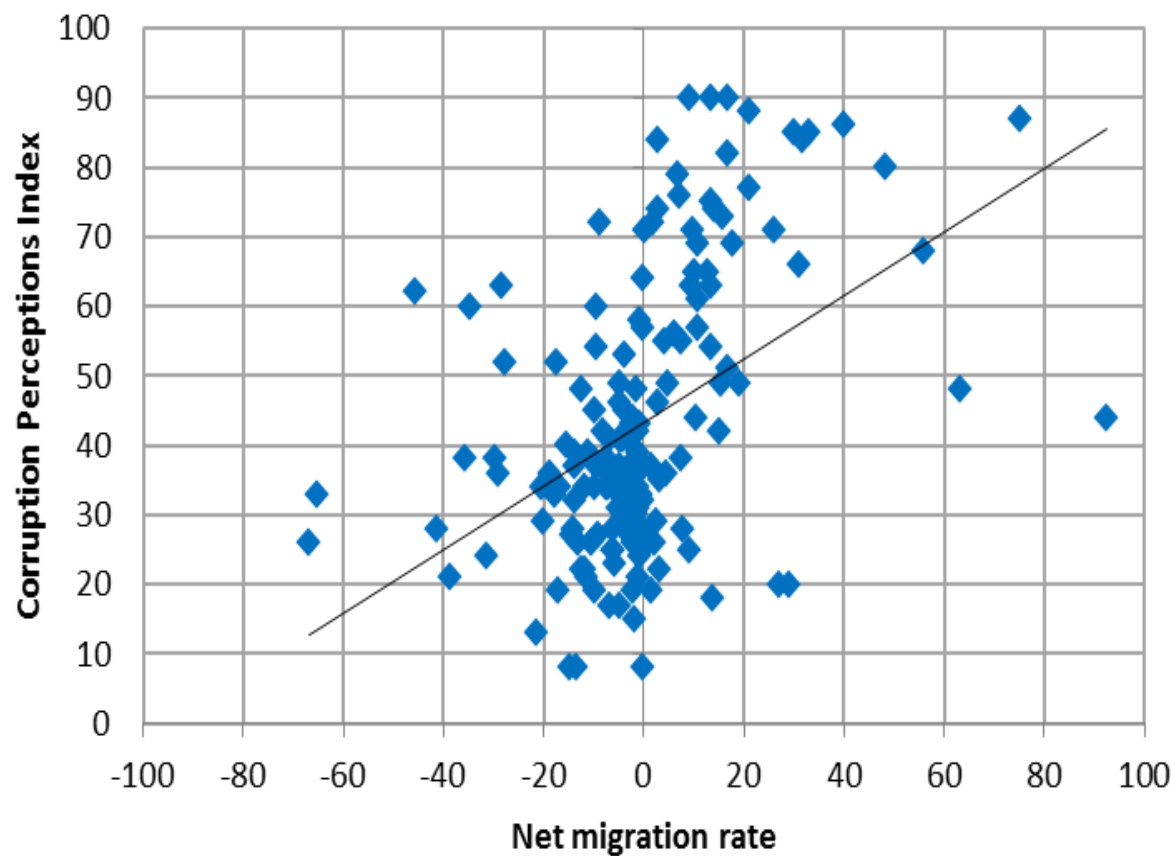
United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2013). *International Migration 2013 Wallchart* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.XIII.8).

# Corruption Across The World Visualised

Countries and territories ranked on perceived public sector corruption in 2014



@StatistaCharts Source: Transparency International



Source: Carling, Paasche & Siegel (2015)



## Migration and Ideas of Corruption

- Migration brings together people with different backgrounds and perspectives, and varying ideas about what constitutes corruption.
- This is not only the case at migration destinations, but also in the communities that migrants leave behind, as those who have left and possibly acquired new perspectives retain transnational ties, possibly transferring their (new) ideas.



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# 11 Linkages between migration and corruption



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# Linkages between migration and corruption

- #1 Corruption Facilitates Illegal Migration*
- #2 Corruption Enables Protection of Refugees*
- #3 Corruption Stimulates Migration Desires*
- #4 Corruption Impedes the Development Benefits of Migration*
- #5 Corruption Discourages Return Migration (long-/short-term)*
- #6 Corruption Promotes the Transnational Ties of Elites*
- #7 Migration Sustains Corruption (“morality drain”)*
- #8 Social Remittances Reduce Corruption*
- #9 Migration Upends Corrupt Social Structures*
- #10 Corruption Undermines Assistance to Migrants*
- #11 The transfer of corruption across borders*

Based on: Carling, Paasche & Siegel (2015) +



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# *#1 Corruption Facilitates Illegal Migration*



- Circumventing laws and regulations is a key motivation for bribery and the field of migration is no exception.
- Corrupt officials can produce false documents, turn a blind eye to human smuggling, or shield employers of illegal immigrants.
- Corruption usually plays a key role in trafficking.
- Men and women experience corruption at borders differently.
- Corruption can stand in the way of orderly migration management. This is the most widely acknowledged connection between corruption and migration.



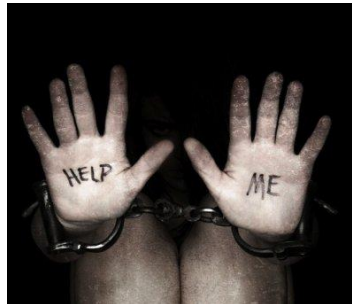
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# *#1 Corruption Facilitates Illegal Migration EXAMPLE*

- **Corruption and Human Trafficking in Nigeria**
- There is a well-established Nigerian system of human trafficking for prostitution in Europe, originating mainly in Edo State.
- For Nigerian human traffickers, corruption is present throughout the stages of recruitment, transport, and exploitation abroad. Traffickers rely on bribes to keep their business running, paying off public officials to turn a blind eye, and buying genuine passports under the table to lure in victims.
- Corruption is endemic in Nigeria, and undermines the state and the rule of law it is meant to provide. Weak institutions offer weak protection for victims and small risks to trafficking networks.



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# Corruption and Human Trafficking in Nigeria (continued)

- there are financial advantages for many participants beyond the traffickers themselves, including public officials in Nigeria but also those tasked with immigration control in transit and destination locations.
- Corruption greases the wheels of the transnational trafficking industry



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## *#2 Corruption Enables Protection of Refugees*

- The flip side of the previous point
- People with a well-founded fear of persecution often depend on corruption in order to seek protection in another country.
- European countries, for instance, actively limit the number of asylum seekers by making it as difficult as possible for prospective candidates to reach European borders and seek asylum.
- Paradoxically, the most professional human smuggling services, which are often most dependent on corrupt officials, offer the safest forms of travel. This is because high-quality forgeries and well-placed collaborators can ensure travel by regular means of transportation.



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## Opportunities for bribery

- To exit refugee camps, guards and security personnel are often bribed.
- Corruption in the issuance of falsified or fraudulent identity or travel documents may require bribing the relevant public administration in charge, or bribery may be required to facilitate the use of such fraudulent documents (e.g. by lack of scrutiny).
- Documentation fraud may involve the purchase of passports and visas through corrupt officials in embassies.
- Another common scheme is 'visa smuggling', often involving the creation of fictitious companies to sponsor an illegal immigrant.
- 'Approved destination status' allows for multiple people to enter using one legitimate visa.

- Bribery of customs officials, immigration officers or border police at border crossings of transit and destination countries is usually necessary, even with falsified documentation.
- Bribery of transportation officials who stop vehicles to inspect cargo will be required to avoid detection or to pass check-points.
- Corruption in the form of bribery or coercion can induce or intimidate law enforcement officials to look the other way (and not open investigations or initiate prosecutions).
- Corruption in the form of bribery or coercion can induce or intimidate members of the judiciary to not convict smugglers or other participants of the illicit scheme.
- Immigration officials may be bribed to fail to implement a deportation order.
- Officials may also be bribed to facilitate the illegal housing and employment of immigrants upon arrival.

Source: OECD, 2015, p.3

# *#3 Corruption Stimulates Migration Desires*

## **Direct:**

- The desire to move abroad is often driven by a lack of faith in local opportunities.
- If corruption and nepotism are perceived to undermine meritocracy, turning towards opportunities elsewhere is a plausible reaction, especially among the highly-skilled.

## **Indirect:**

- We know that widespread corruption can hamper economic development and undermine the rule of law. The resulting poverty and insecurity can in turn stimulate the wish to leave.



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## *#3 Corruption Stimulates Migration Desires*

### *EXAMPLE from GIZ study*

1. Study sets out to develop a theoretical framework explaining the links between corruption and (irregular) migration, which can be applied to different country contexts. It identifies how corruption impacts **human security** and thereby **directly or indirectly leads to (irregular) migration**.
2. Two case studies: Mali and Ukraine

# Corruption as motive for migration (direct and indirect)

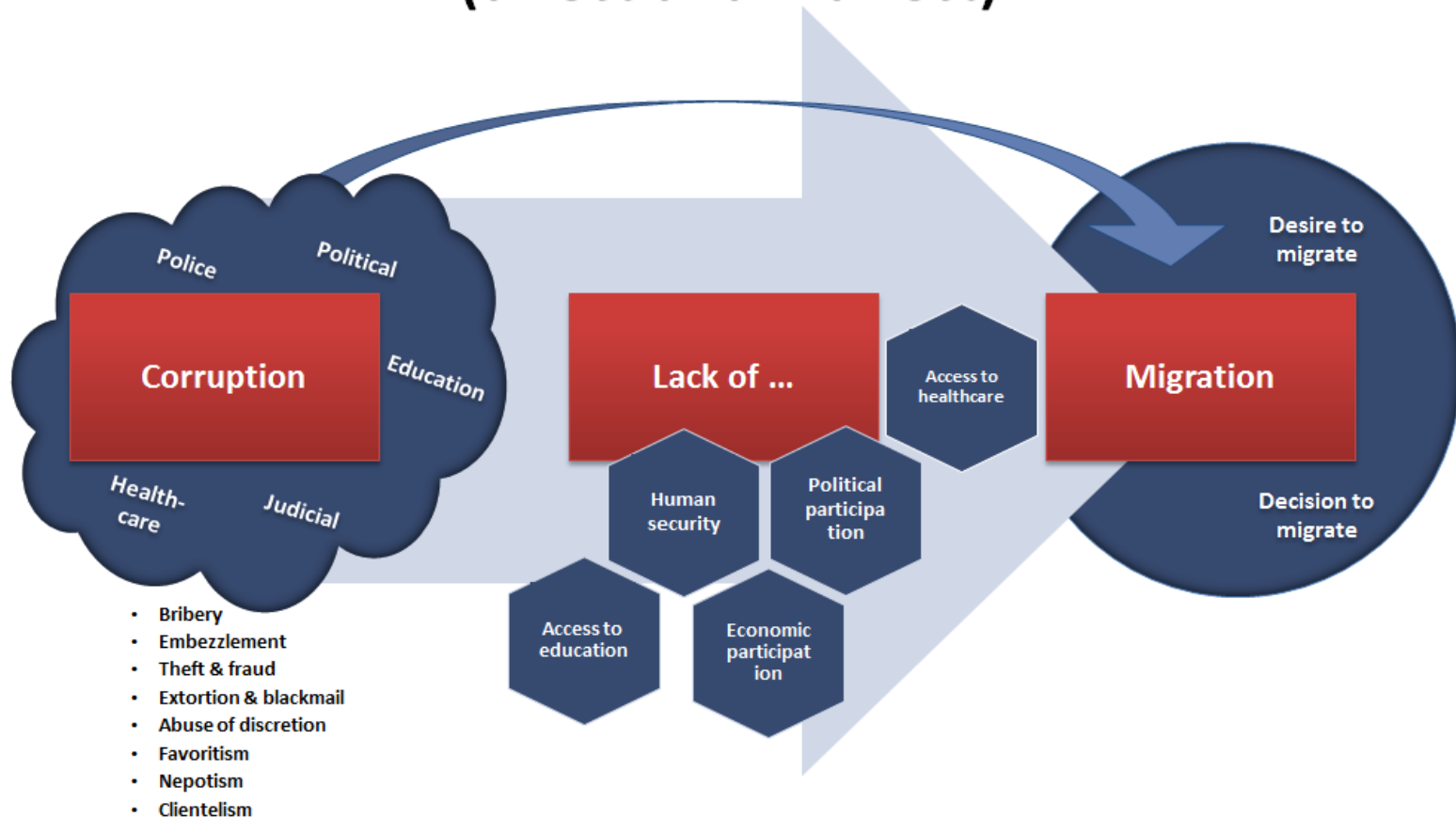
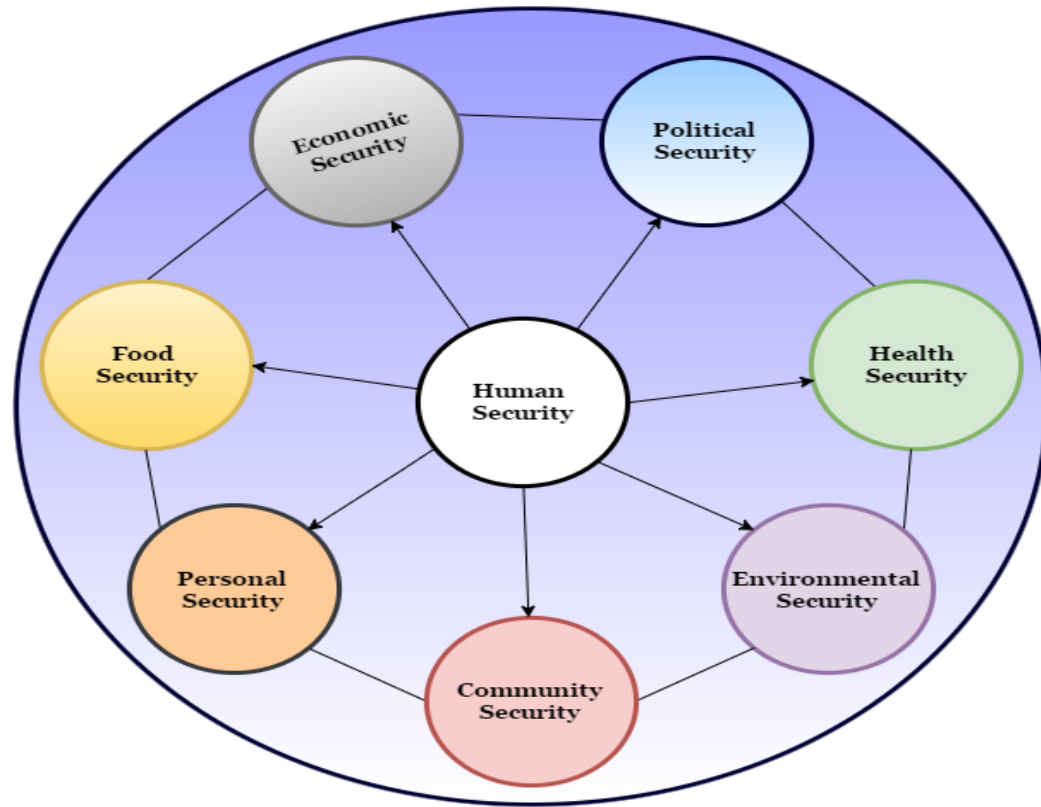
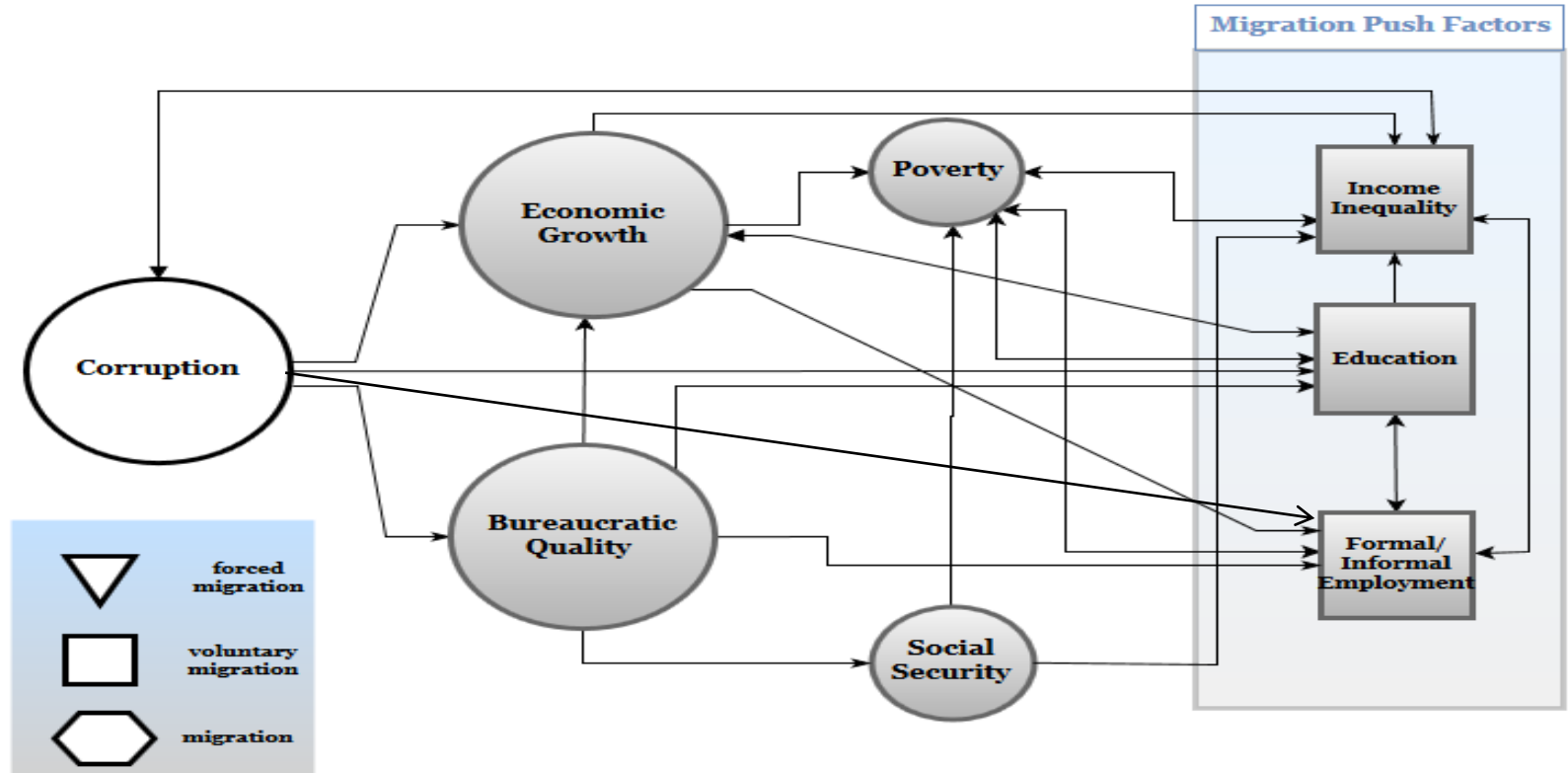




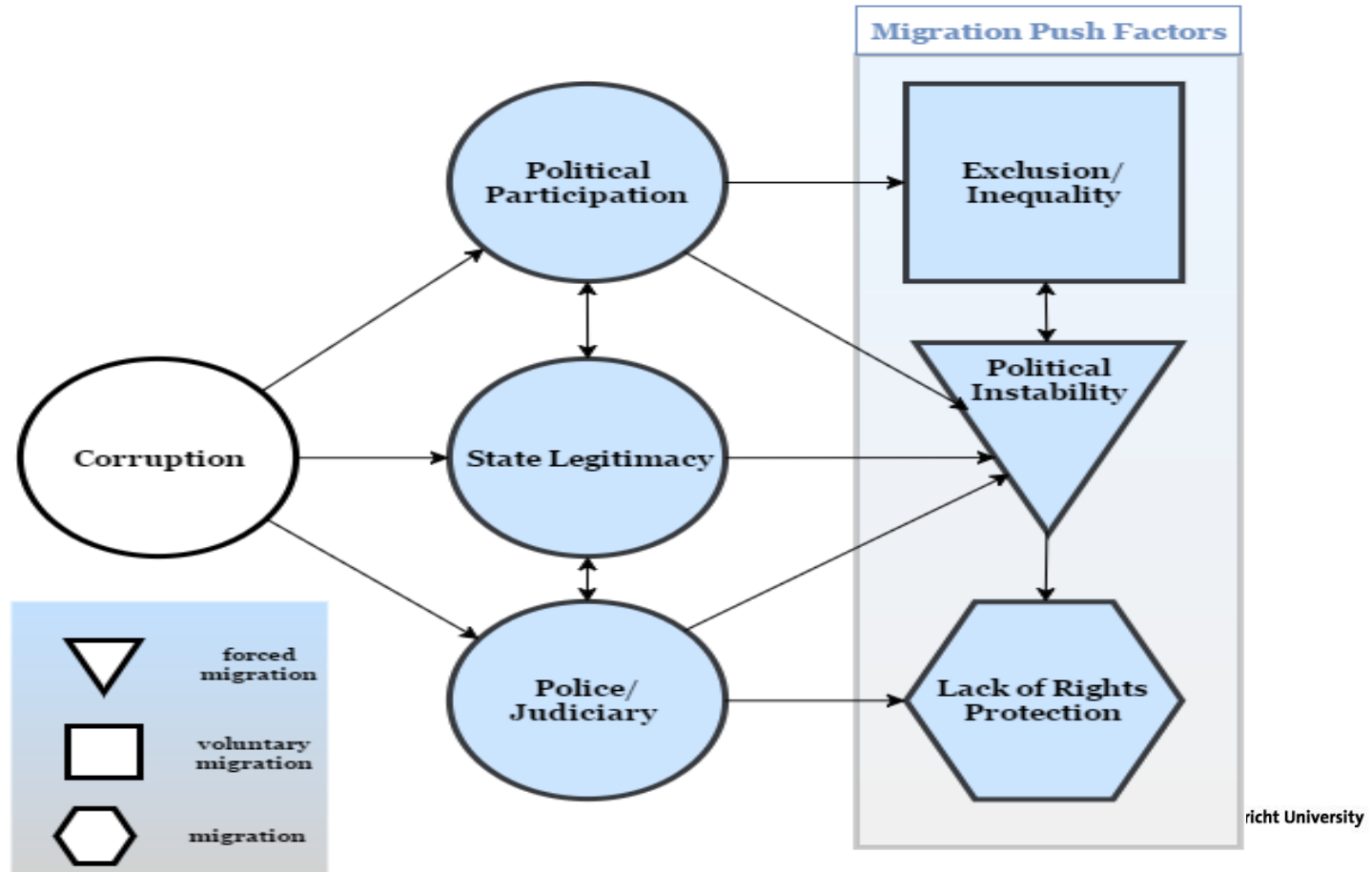
Figure 1 The Human Security Concept



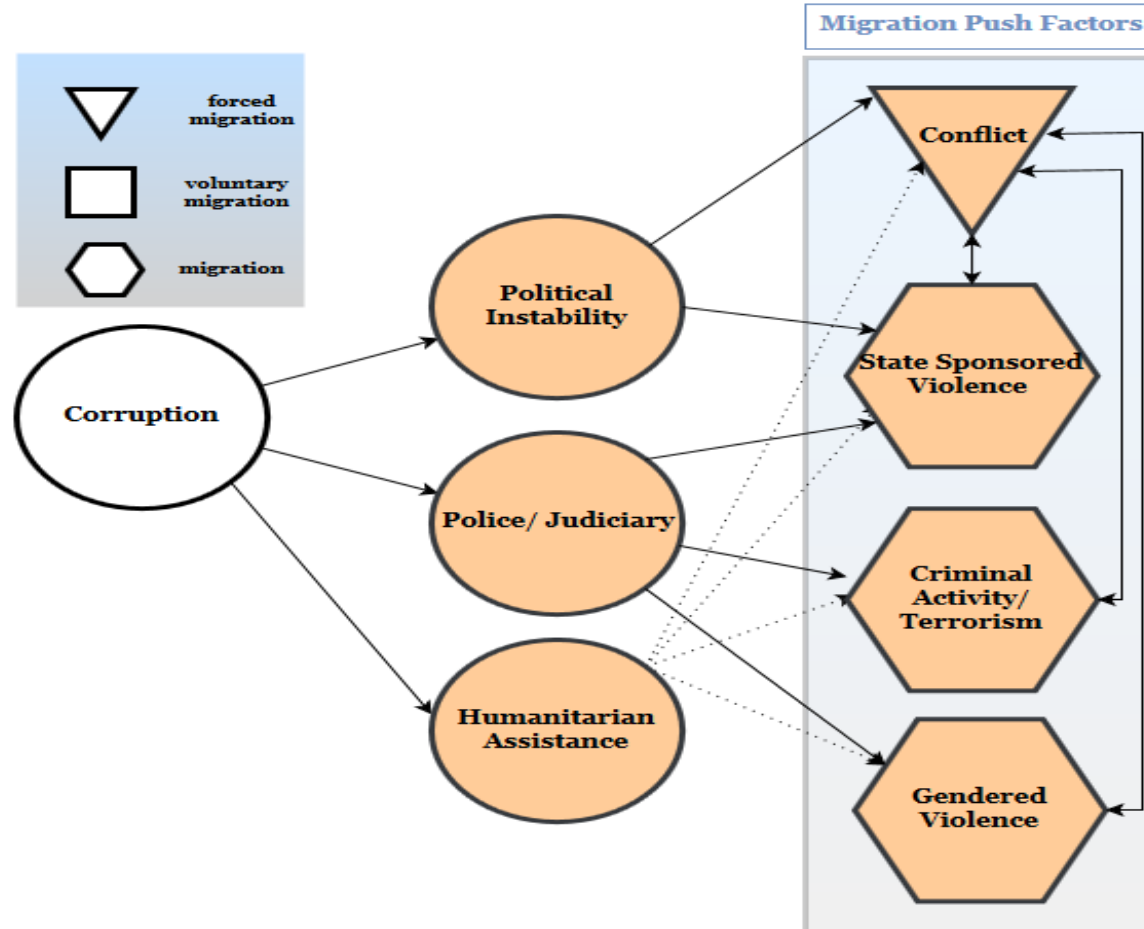
# Indirect links between corruption and economic security



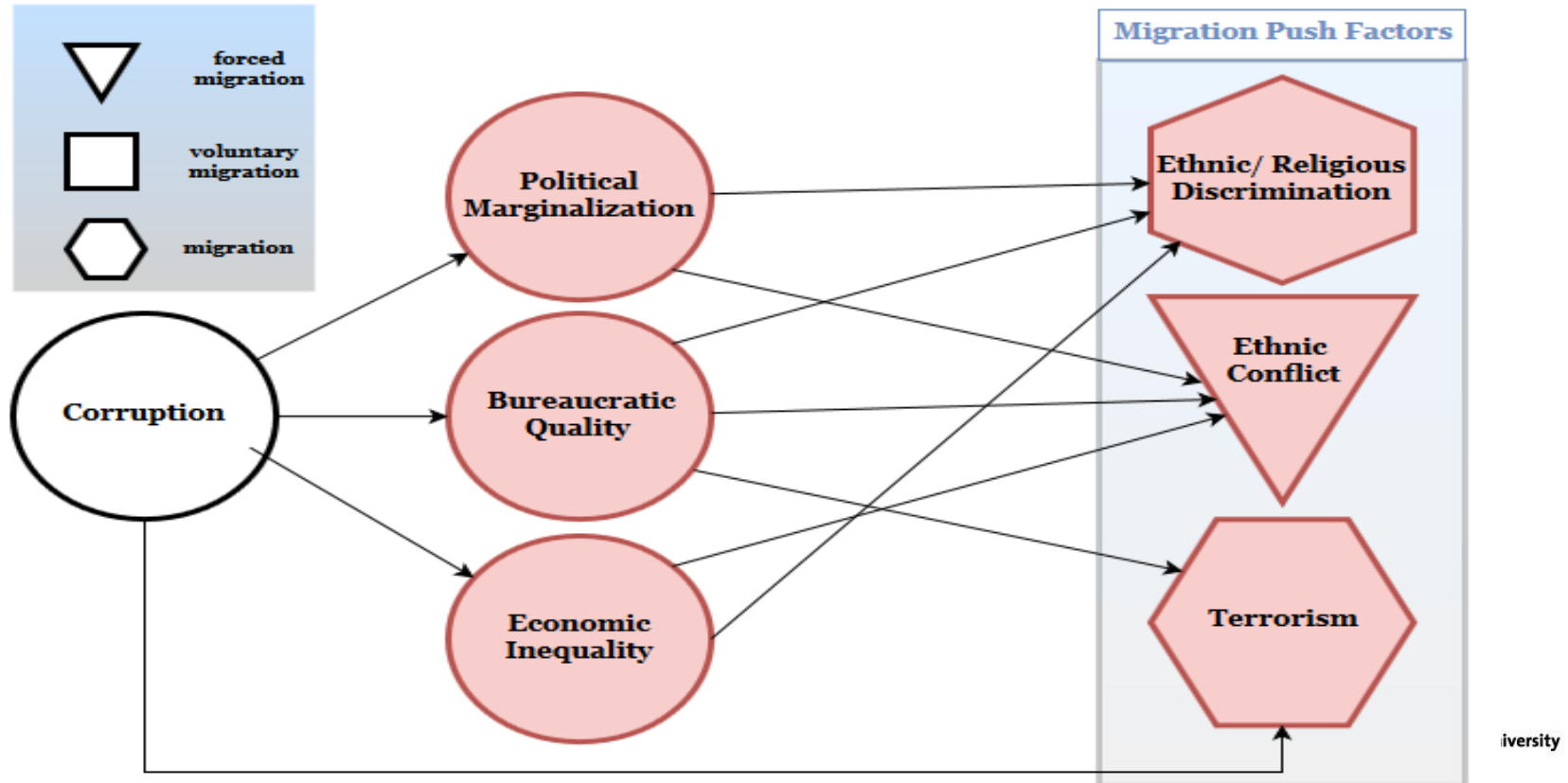
# Indirect Links between Corruption and Political Security



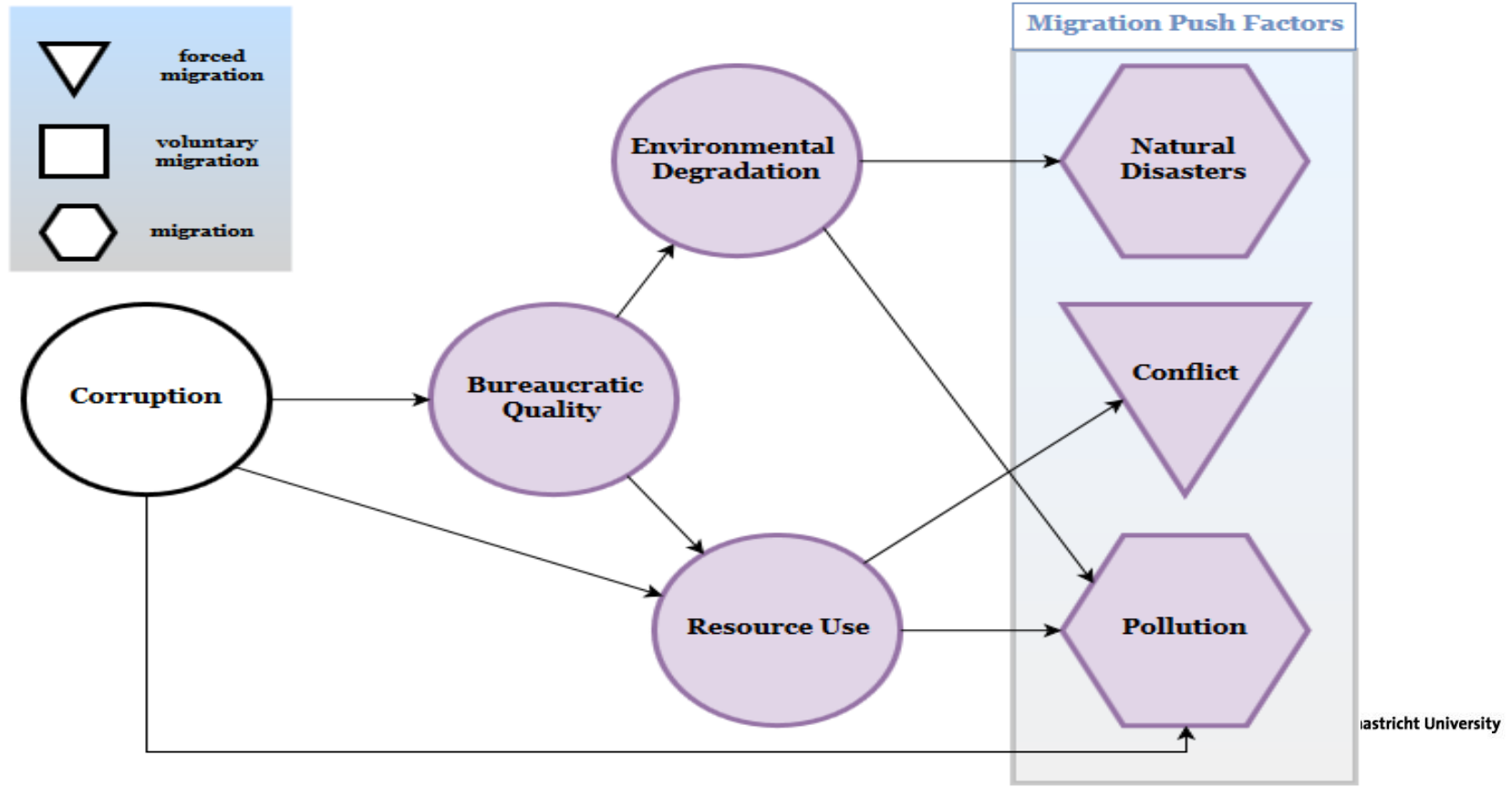
# Indirect Links between Corruption and Personal Security



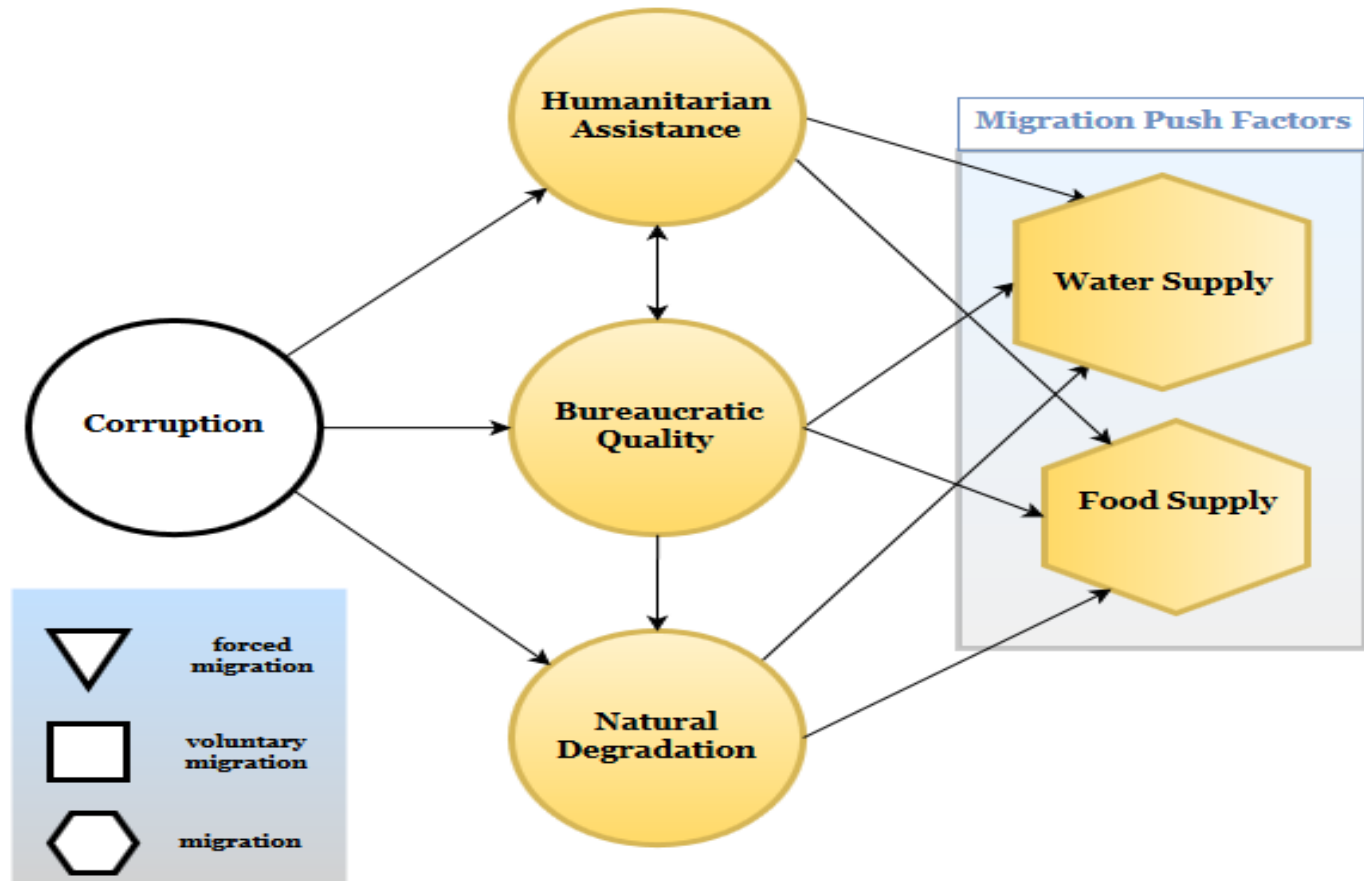
# Indirect Links between Corruption and Community Security



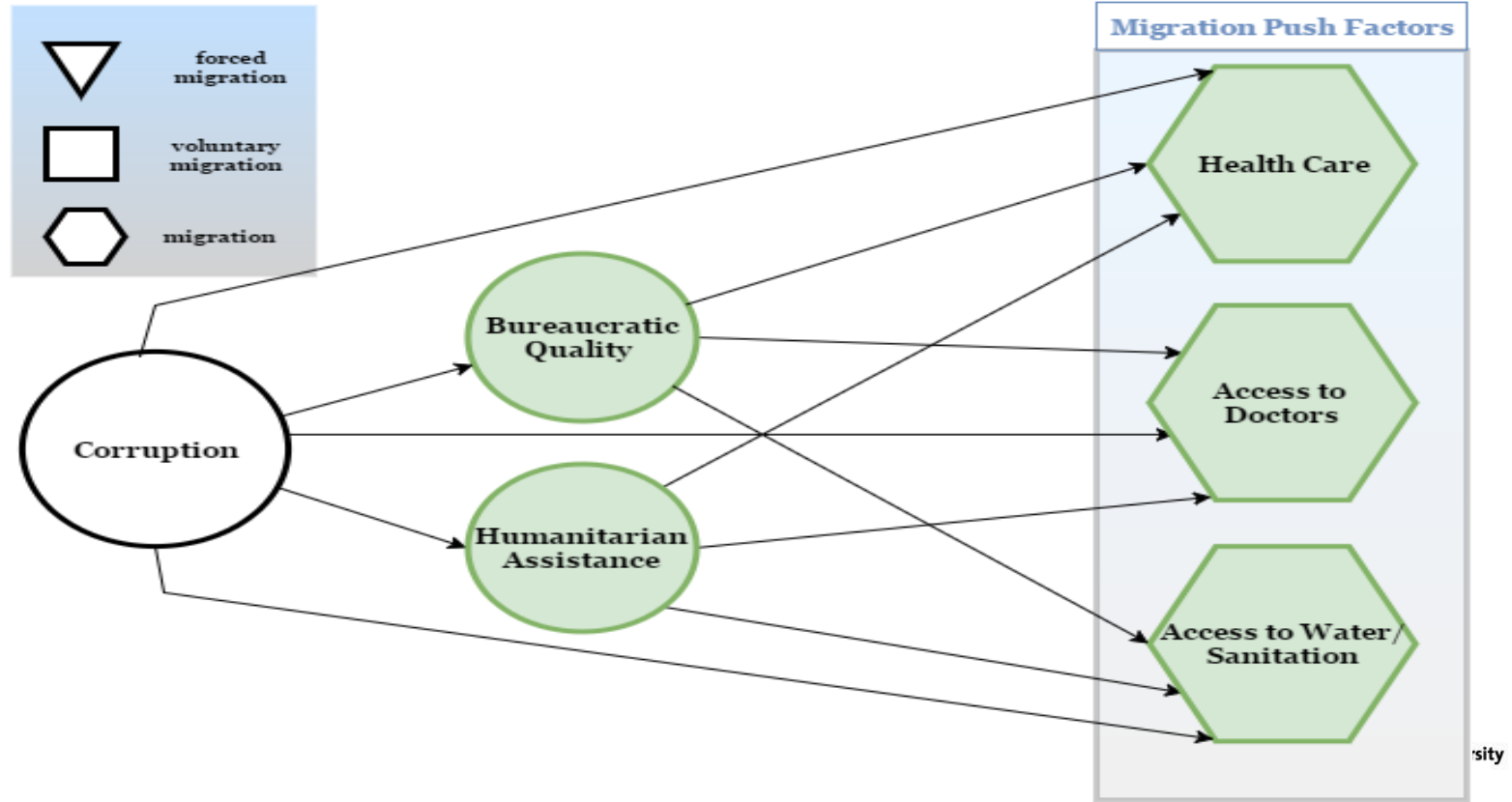
# Indirect Links between Corruption and Environmental Security



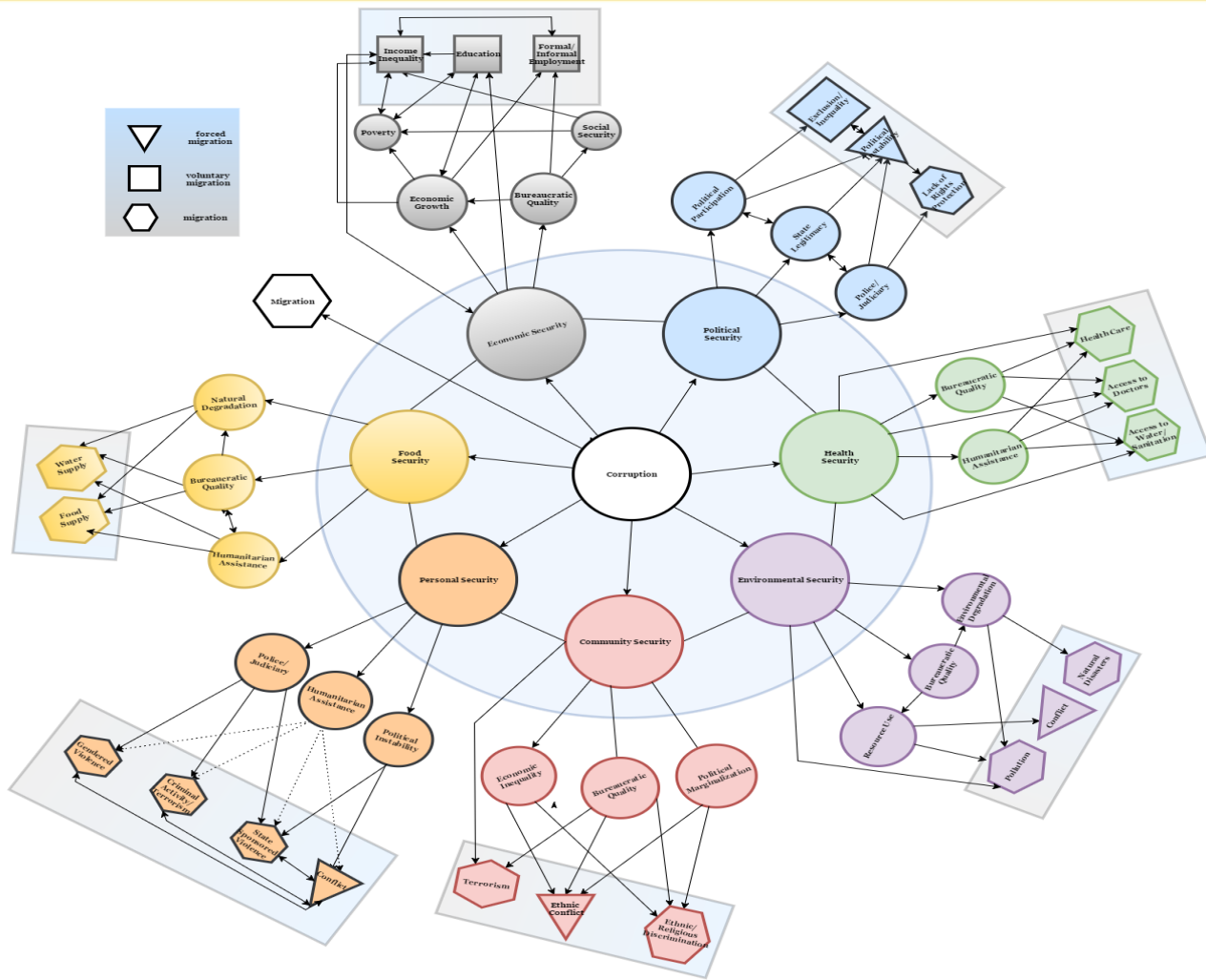
# Indirect Links between Corruption and Food Security



# Indirect Links between Corruption and Health Security







## EXAMPLE: Mali

- Endemic corruption in (fragile) Mali affects all human security dimensions and can therefore indirectly motivate migration.
- Corruption affecting one dimension can also have negative impacts on other dimensions
- Various insecurities of the Tuareg population exacerbated through several forms of corruption explain the outbreak of numerous rebellions over time and also the most recent conflict.
- These crises again affect the human security dimensions of the remaining parts of the Malian population, leading to a vicious circle of corruption, human insecurities and migration.



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## *EXAMPLE: Ukraine*

- Corruption, especially high level political corruption plays a major role in Ukraine and leads to many outcomes that have been shown to lead to the decision to migrate.
- All human security dimensions are affected by endemic corruption with economic and especially employment spheres most important.



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## #4 Corruption Impedes the Development Benefits of Migration



- Migration can alleviate poverty and facilitate development, remittances, investments by migrants, and development initiatives by diaspora groups.
- This potential is undermined by corruption when migrants' money is tapped into by self-enriching people in trusted positions in origin societies.
- If bribes are required for construction permits, licenses, planning permissions and the like, the benefits of migrant-driven investment are reduced.



## *#4 Corruption Impedes the Development Benefits of Migration*

- If remittance receivers are targeted for extortion, the incentive to send remittances may be reduced.
- Corruption can also block the reintegration of highly-skilled returnees in developing countries and obstruct knowledge transfer.
- This could happen, for instance, if nepotism trumps merit in hiring processes, or if corrupt practices prevent professionals from being able to put their knowledge to use.
- Many highly-skilled returnees are motivated by a desire to make a contribution to their country of origin. Obstacles in the form of corruption can be severely demoralizing.



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## Evidence from current research

### *#4 Corruption Impedes the Development Benefits of Migration*

- **Latin American remittance receivers targeted for extortion**
  - Used public opinion survey AmericasBarometer (13 countries)
    - Specifically police bribes
    - Find evidence in some but not all countries of remittance receivers being asked for bribes by policy
    - This extortion is thought to work through a “signaling effect,” where receiving remittances signals more wealth or more liquidity to potential extorters.



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## Evidence from current research

### *#4 Corruption Impedes the Development Benefits of Migration*

- **Remittances and Corruption in Africa**
  - Used Africa Barometers data from 2008
  - we specifically investigate whether international remittance receivers are more likely to pay a bribe to get a document or permit, to get water or sanitation services and/or to avoid problems with police
  - We find clear evidence than remittance receivers are paying more bribes



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## *#5 Corruption Discourages Return Migration (long-/short-term)*

- If migrants have adapted to the less corrupt society in the destination country, the corruption in the country of origin may be a reason for them to not return.
- Requests for bribes by officials at border controls have even been found to complicate short return visits and frustrate migrants.
- For long term settlement, corruption can substantially complicate the process of establishing and running a business, and therefore makes economic reintegration more difficult.



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## *#5 Corruption Discourages Return Migration (long-/short-term) continued*

- if migrants have become accustomed to low-corruption societies, returning to a country where corruption is widespread can instill a sense of alienation from the homeland.
- In post-conflict settings, corruption can disrupt property restitution mechanisms or reintegration assistance and thereby discourage the return of refugees.



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## Evidence from current research

### *#5 Corruption Discourages Return Migration*

- **Corruption and it's effects on Italian migration**
  - Study conducted in Germany and the Netherlands with Italian Academics (n=14NL & 10DE)
    - Main findings: corruption (nepotism) not necessary a reason for migration but absolutely a reason not to return



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## *#6 Corruption Promotes the Transnational Ties of Elites*

- In countries that struggle with high-level corruption, the few at the top who stand to benefit often develop transnational connections.
- Earnings from corruption can make international migration possible, even from states whose passports are of little help for international travel.
- Corrupt elites also have particular motives for transnational mobility, deploying their wealth out of reach, or even preparing for a quick exit if prosecution is looming.
- A case in point is the so-called “naked officials” in China—powerful men who profit from corruption and have sent their families and money abroad to reduce their vulnerability.



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## #7 Migration Sustains Corruption (“morality drain”)

- The key issue here is **selectivity** of migrants.
- If people who emigrate from countries with widespread corruption are voting with their feet—protesting against what they find unacceptable—the result may well be a kind of **“morality drain.”**
- That is, migration deprives society of voices that could have contributed to the fight against corruption.

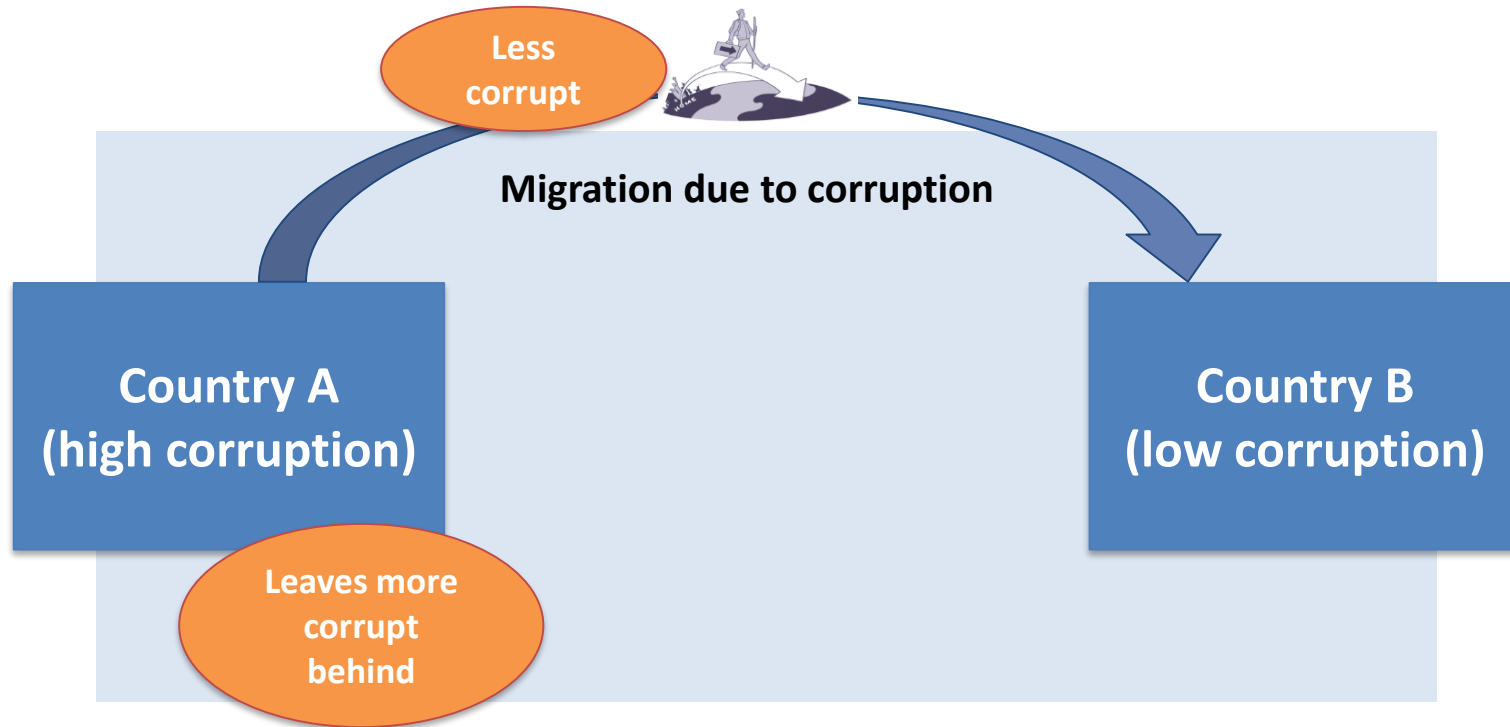


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# Morality drain



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## *#7 Migration Sustains Corruption (“morality drain”) EXAMPLE*

- Many migrants leave Latin America searching for better economic opportunities abroad, sending remittances back to support those left behind.
- Using data from the AmericasBarometer, a unique household survey of 24 Latin American countries, we investigated the link between corruption (specifically extortion by the police) and an individual’s intention to migrate.
- Individuals in contact with corruption and averse to corruption, separately and together, exhibited a higher likelihood to migrate.



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## *#8 Social Remittances Reduce Corruption*

- When migrants retain close ties with their countries of origin, they regularly transmit norms and values, known as social remittances, in a diffusion process from the destination society back to the origin country.
- Since migrants tend to move from high- to low-corruption countries they might develop a more critical view of corrupt practices and thus contribute to the spread of such anti-corruption norms in their communities of origin.

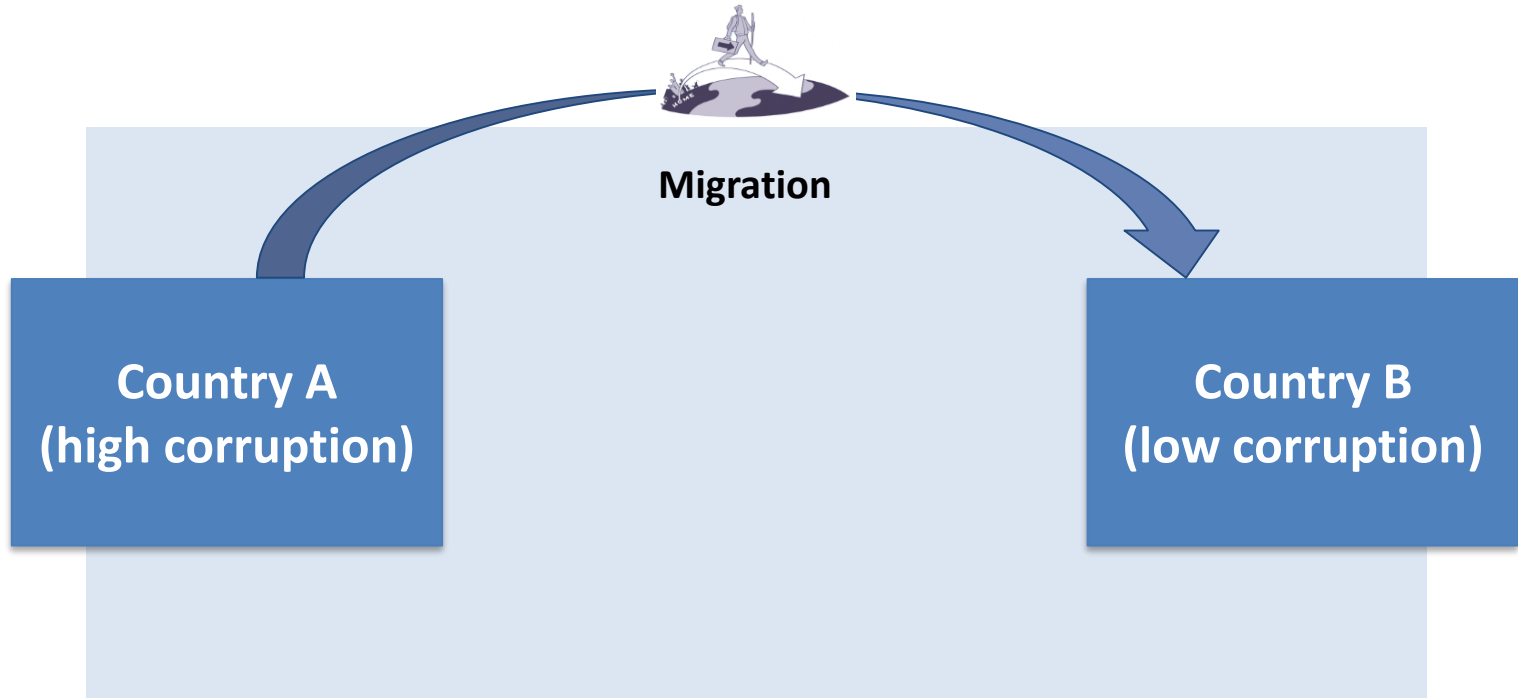


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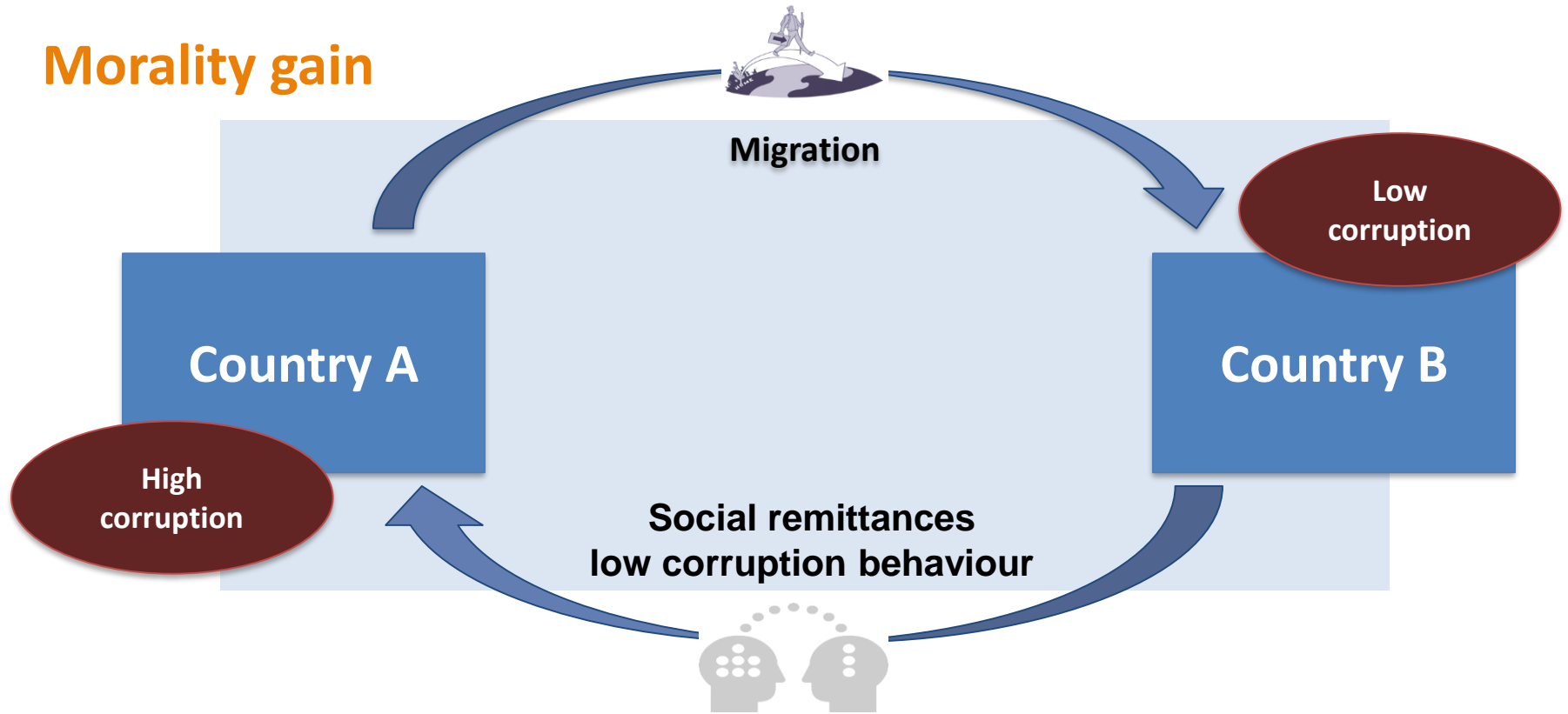
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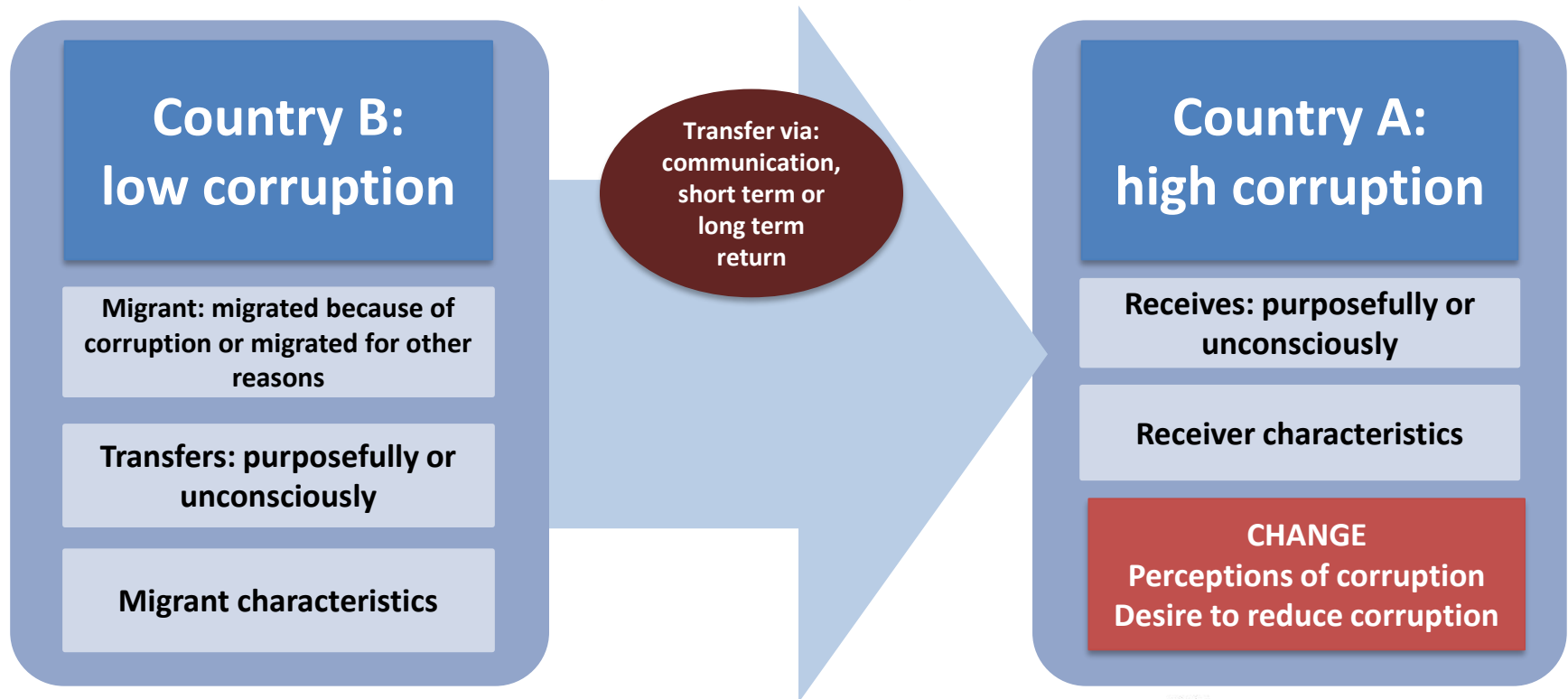
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## Morality gain



## Morality (low corruption) transfer



## ***#8 Social Remittances Reduce Corruption EXAMPLE***

- **Emigration, Remittances and Corruption Experience of Those Staying Behind (Ivlevs & King, 2014)**
- Using Gallup Balkan Monitor survey data
- They find that migrant households are more likely to face bribe situations and be asked for bribes by public officials.
- At the same time, having relatives abroad reduces the probability of actually paying a bribe.



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# Evidence from current research

## #8 Social Remittances Reduce Corruption

- **Migration and its influence on perceptions of corruption: Considering the views of Chinese Students in the Netherlands towards gift-giving and *guanxi*** (the system of social networks and influential relationships which facilitate business and other dealings)

*Do Chinese students' perceptions of corruption change due to their experience in the Netherlands?*

- NL 8<sup>th</sup> least corrupt country while China ranks 100<sup>th</sup>
- Interview with 35 Chinese students in the Netherlands (in the Netherlands for at least 10 months and had previously studied in China)
- This lends support to theories on the transfer of values and norms to migration students. However, there is limited evidence supporting social remittances theory among Chinese students in the Netherlands.



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## *#9 Migration Upends Corrupt Social Structures*

- Migration often transforms societies of origin, not least through remittances and return migrants.
- Where landowners and public officials were key power holders in the past, transnational connections can catapult other individuals and families to prominent positions.
- Such changes may upset entrenched structures of patronage and nepotism, with positive consequences for the fight against corruption.
- On the other hand, the inflow of migrant money might also produce new forms of corruption.
- The social changes brought about by migration represent an opportunity when it comes to transforming or eradicating entrenched corruption.



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## *#10 Corruption Undermines Assistance to Migrants*

- In highly corrupt settings, migrant assistance may be challenged in a number of ways.
  1. corruption can directly undercut program effectiveness, for instance if funds are embezzled, diverted to bribes, or depleted by inflated procurement costs. (Afghanistan)
  2. prospective beneficiaries disappointed by the assistance delivery may attribute perceived shortcomings to corruption (IRAQ)
  3. another mechanism sets in when anti-corruption measures become overly cumbersome, diverting resources away from their most effective uses. (IRAQ)



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## *#11 The transfer of corruption across borders*

- It is also possible for migrants from high-corruption countries to bring corrupt practices with them to destination states.
- Transfer of the perception of corruption (Example: Sweden-Balkans)



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# In conclusion

- Migration and corruption affect one another.
- The effects of migration on corruption are unpredictable, and sometimes contradictory.
  - Migration can reduce corruption through some mechanisms and sustain it through others.
  - Corruption may fuel migration desires, directly or indirectly, and increase an individual's ability to migrate despite restrictive policies.
  - The two-way relationship between migration and corruption adds another layer to the already complex migration–development nexus.
- How migrants view and experience corruption will differ from case to case.
- The experiences of corruption in migration are often gendered



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