

Borders, independence and post-colonial ties : the role of the state in Caribbean migration

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political independence is obtained and borders are closed. So the potential for ethnic- or class-based discrimination and fear of personal and financial losses may lead people to oppose independence and to migrate as independence approaches. Conversely, those with favorable expectations of the country's future may find independence to be a time of renewed opportunities leading to lower emigration and also to small increases in return and immigration.

An important message from this study is that open borders do not necessarily lead to very large migration volumes. When open borders are retained, as in the case of many former colonies which gained autonomous non-sovereign status, anxieties are minimized, reducing migration aspirations. Contrasting to closed border settings, migration displays more stable patterns, primarily following educational and employment opportunities in the country of origin and destination. Moreover, open borders allow various forms of mobility, including travel for tourism and family visits and short-term stays. As expected, the living conditions in the country of origin remain an important determinant and migration may escalate rapidly at times of severe socio-economic and political crises - including conflict- in the origin country. Thus, rather than very large migrations, open borders encourage higher (circular) mobility, including short-term visits and return flows.

This study found strong evidence that while migration policies may affect migration in the intended manner, they may also generate important 'substitution effects'. Impending border closure triggered important short-term migration hikes, while the introduction of migration policies that targeted potential migrant workers generated deflection to other destinations or/and migration policy categories, i.e. family reunification or tourist visas followed by overstaying. Thus, policy-makers should be aware that when migration policies are introduced, migration may shift in unexpected ways, including generating increases in irregular migration or encouraging migrants to explore new crossing and entry points or altogether different destinations.

The findings also suggest that timing and sequencing of events should be given full attention in studying migration and migration policy effects. For example, in the case of independence and border regime establishment, evidence shows that closing the border before or after independence led to the development of alternative migration destinations or the concentration of migration in the former colonial state, respectively. In addition, researchers should consider both short- and long-term migration effects of migration policies. We have seen that border regimes generated an immediate shift in migration followed by a long-term adjustment process. The rapid migration increase before policy implementation, followed by a rapid decline give the false impression that the policy produced the

desired objective of reducing migration. However, the policy generated an increase in migration that would not have occurred otherwise, and in the long-term migration tended to steadily increase again, as migrants found ways to overcome restrictive migration policies. It is only when observing migration trends in the medium to long term that these effects become apparent.

Migration policies interact with other processes of political, social and economic transformation, which may be crucially important in shaping migration patterns. At times, policy reforms that have no direct association with migration may shift migration aspirations. For example, the introduction of free tertiary education may initially decrease migration as students are able to pursue further studies in the country of origin; however, should a job market not develop to accommodate an increasing number of skilled workers, such educational reform may lead to long-term emigration rises. This highlights how migration is closely associated with a wide variety of events and policy changes which impact living conditions in origin and destination countries and people's migration aspirations. Even in this case, the timing of the introduction of migration policies in relation to other important socio-economic events such as political elections, important reforms such as the introduction of free tertiary education or of a new taxation system in origin and destination countries may affect migration patterns.

To conclude, this study suggests that in contexts of high uncertainty people try to find a sense of security in many ways (e.g. by pursuing an education), including but not exclusively through migration. However, within a country, certain segments of the population may feel secure, or a policy may increase their security, while the same policy may increase the uncertainties of other segments of the population. For example, the provision of social services may diminish anxieties and reduce emigration aspirations, minimizing the effects of independence and border closure, or in most context reducing uncertainty during economic downturns. However, young adults may be more affected by impending border closures and decide to emigrate regardless of social service provision such as job trainings, while other people may feel that a heftier taxation system to support the expansion of the social system is unacceptable, becoming the basis for emigration. Thus, when considering possible migration effects, it is imperative to consider the complex interaction of multiple factors and their distinct migratory effects on segments of the population according to political ideology, class, ethnicity, gender and age.

Innovation of findings

The main innovation of this study rests in having generated evidence concerning the unanticipated effects of independence, the establishment of border regimes and

major migration policies introduced by destination countries over the years. The conceptual framework developed in this study is a valuable tool offering a systematic approach to understand such unanticipated *migration substitution effects*. The inclusion of the analysis of migration patterns in a non-sovereign country that has retained open borders with the metropolitan state also adds new empirical evidence of migration drivers and dynamics in open border contexts. As just shown, important original insights have also emerged on the importance of the timing and sequence of events and the need to consider who will be affected by these events – i.e. class, ethnicity, age and gender – and their perspectives on upcoming changes.

This study advances an improved and expanded conceptualisation of post-colonial ties which moves beyond decontextualised definitions and proposes that both colonial and post-colonial experiences create specific worldviews, i.e. mental world maps. These worldviews can vary greatly from country to country, even neighbouring countries, with the passage of time and with the deepening of relations with new potential destination countries, such as through commercial and educational links.

This study's findings provide explicit evidence of how political, ideological, economic, technological and social factors affect emigration in origin countries. Because states often regulate these areas through policy-making, these findings reveal the wider role of states, including origin countries, in shaping migration. In particular, the more state policies generate uncertainties, the more they may increase migration aspirations as segments of the population attempt to reduce their risks through migration to 'safer' countries. Conversely, by acting as 'stabilisers' of political and socio-economic conditions, states may reduce migration aspirations.

Non-academic target audience

This study provides ample evidence of interest to policy-makers, border control agencies and other government authorities responsible for migration. For these government authorities, this study provides nuanced evidence of short- and long-term effects of border regimes, political status change as well as non-migration policies that may alter migration in origin and destination countries, such as economic reforms, mechanization, ideological shifts, authoritarianism and educational reforms. This evidence can also enrich current debates that surround the quest for independence and state formation in various locations throughout the world.

This study's findings should also be of great interest to development experts, given the multiple links between development and migration processes. In

particular, the case studies offer insights on the role of economic strategies, labour displacement and rural-urban migrations; the effects of the increase in education levels and the growth of professional aspirations which may generate strong migration aspirations; and the role of social security provisions in reducing risk and uncertainties and their links to decreasing migration aspirations. Development experts can gather evidence on how socio-economic development generates responses that at once stimulate and reduce emigration. Thus, this study provides further evidence that development efforts whose main purpose is to reduce mobility are likely to fail in this objective.

The topics touched upon with this study are also valuable to journalists and reporters on migration issues. By providing evidence of potential unanticipated effects of closed border regimes and the long-term migration effects of continuous open borders, journalists and reporters find important evidence to challenge heavily politicized and divided migration debates. Moreover, this study offers good examples of the mechanisms underlying important historical migrations, such as Surinamese migration to the Netherlands, and offers richer migration stories that are rooted in wider and longer term processes of economic development, inequality, conflict and discrimination, ongoing and increasingly selective migration policy and travel restrictions. With such evidence, a fresh message could be relayed to the public, which moves away from the sensationalisation and criminalisation of migration to emphasize the mounting aspirations for better opportunities and improved living conditions among people in developing countries.

Output

The insights from this study are appropriate for dissemination through a series of outlets and publications both for an academic audience and in a more accessible version for the public. Among academic journals, I aim to publish the various chapters in journals such as *International Migration Review*, *Population and Development Review* and *International Migration*. Publications in non-academic publications will aim to provide accurate empirical evidence, clarify concepts and promote more nuanced pictures of migration. Examples of these outlets are blogs, editorials, interviews with journalists and participation in public debates. To disseminate information on the case studies, I plan to develop country profiles to be published on the website of the Migration Policy Institute, an important source of migration information freely available to the public online.

The findings from this study will also greatly contribute to my teaching curriculum. I find that teaching becomes more engaging when textbook material is complemented with a researcher's work. Moreover, by sharing research findings,

not only will the students gain from hands-on research, but researchers also gain from the students' comments and feedback, making it a very valuable process.

Given the utility of the findings to development workers, the author plans to participate in debates on development strategies so as to promote greater understanding on the potential migration effects of many development policies. Moreover, I intend to participate in conferences attended by policy-makers, such as Metropolis, where this study's insights may provide points of reflection and raise awareness of the possible unexpected consequences of conventional migration policies.

The time and resource investment required for these dissemination activities will be available within the context of my current position as a researcher and lecturer at the University of Amsterdam.