

Conflict Resolution and Democratic Transitions

Political conflict and migration: How has violence and political instability affected migration patterns in Nepal?

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This paper is a study of migration during a period of violent political conflict in Nepal. Past studies of conflict-induced migration have generally treated conflict as a homogenous event and focused largely on the violent aspects of conflict. In this study, we examine how specific political and violent events, as well as the general context of conflict, affect migration on a monthly basis. Violent events, such as bomb blasts, gun battles, and abductions can instigate people to migrate in response to perceived physical threat in the future and disruptions in social and economic life. Alternately, political events, such as strikes and protests, government instability, and ceasefires can instigate people to migrate in response to the perceived instability and vulnerability of the weakening political order and government control, apart from its effect on their livelihoods. Preliminary results from our event history models that are based on data from Chitwan District indicate that individuals are more likely to migrate in response to gun battles and less likely to migrate in response to the less threatening events of bomb blasts and the general context of the conflict. In addition, we find higher rates of migration following events signaling government instability and during the state of emergency periods. Table and figure with preliminary results are presented below.

Table 1: Logistic Regression Estimates of Discrete-Time Hazard Models of Out-Migration from Chitwan Valley Study Area

Variable	Odds Ratio	Z-ratio
Violent Event		
Major Gun Battles (# per month)	1.11 *	(1.909)
Bomb Blasts (# per month)	0.96 *	(1.933)
Abductions (#/10 per month)	1.00	(0.430)
During War (0,1)	0.52 ***	(8.945)
Political Events		
State of Emergencies (0,1)	1.25 *	(2.166)
Political Instability (0,1)	1.44 ***	(3.488)
Strikes and Protests (0,1)	0.93	(0.408)

Control Variables		
Gender (female)	0.83 **	(3.084)
Age		
18-20 years old	0.84	(1.225)
21-25 years old	0.90 ***	(3.913)
26-30 years old	0.93 ***	(3.191)
31-40 years old	0.94 ***	(5.297)
41-50 years old	1.02 *	(1.749)
51 + years old	1.00	(0.040)
Marital Status		
Never married	0.79 **	(2.369)
Married, living with spouse	reference	
Married, not living with spouse	1.35 ***	(4.147)
Divorced, separated, or widowed	1.48 ***	(3.440)
Have any children (in 1996)	0.61 ***	(6.089)
Educational Attainment (in 1996)	1.04 ***	(6.039)
Working wage or salary job (in 1996)	1.06	(1.186)
Own any land (in 1996)	0.53 ***	(8.117)
Ever migrated (by 1996)	1.71 ***	(9.706)
Caste/Ethnicity		
Upper Caste Hindu	Reference	
Lower Caste Hindu	0.99	(0.091)
Hill Tibeto-Burmese	1.25 ***	(3.304)
Terai Tibeto-Burmese	0.77 ***	(3.749)
Newar	0.79 *	(2.261)
Months of the year		
January	0.95	(0.304)
February	0.84 ^	(1.452)
March	1.01	(0.093)
April	0.84 ^	(1.457)
May	1.05	(0.450)
June	Reference	
July	0.94	(0.573)
August	1.17 ^	(1.546)
September	1.19 *	(1.690)
October	0.75 **	(2.415)
November	1.03	(0.243)
December	0.89	(1.035)
No. of person-months	181,398	
-2 log likelihood	19,193	
Note: Estimates are presented as odds ratios. Z-statistics are given in parentheses.		
^ p<.10 *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001		

Figure 1: Monthly Rates of Out-migration from Chitwan Valley Study Area (1997-2005).

