REFRAMING THE MIGRATION DEBATE:

Challenging the Assumption of the Negative Outcomes of Immigration

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the ethical justification of migration policies, focusing on the argument for open borders and its potential positive impact on host countries. The problem addressed is the widespread assumption that hosting migrants is something inherently undesirable (and which then requires justification). This work aims to challenge that premise by demonstrating the benefits of open borders for the *host countries citizens* and not just for the migrants that reap the gains of relocation. The methodology includes a review of political theory, covering the core arguments posed for closed and open borders, as well as the debate around the duties of the state towards its citizens and what that entails for the migration discussion.

Empirical evidence on the economic, social, and cultural impacts of immigration are integrated to substantiate the argument and highlight that, if (a) states have a moral duty to act in the best interest of their citizens, (b) immigration provides significant net positive effects and (c) potential negative effects of migration can be mitigated effectively, then (d) *states should be promoting immigration as a strategy to act in their fiduciary role towards its population*. This thesis contributes to the political theory debate by proposing that some of the communitarian arguments for closed borders can be used to justify open borders, if one addresses the assumption of negative outcomes derived from immigration.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2020, there were an estimated 281 million international migrants in the world, which corresponded to less than 4% of the global population. This figure is more than double what it was in 1990 and more than three times than that of 1970, highlighting an accelerating trend which is expected to increase even more in the coming decades due to climate change effects, growing economic inequality and political instability across the world (IOM, 2021). Despite representing a very small percentage of the world population, this migratory flow has been closely linked to economic, social, political, religious, and ethnic theoretical and empirical discussions, especially with the formation of global and national institutional frameworks for migration policy in the 20th century.

Within political theory, the issue of migration connects to many central arguments surrounding the role, the rights, and the duty of states. This includes questions around control of movement of people across and within their borders, the constitution of citizenship and the rights, privileges, and obligations it might entail, the prerogative to make distinctions between types of immigrants and the different grounds used to justify their entry and settlement in the polity (Fine, 2016, p.2).

Where it concerns the case for opening or closing borders, that is, incentivizing or not the flow of international migration, different schools of thought in political philosophy have started from various premises and reached quite different conclusions. Some proponents of egalitarianism, for instance, defend that open borders are necessary to fulfill a core commitment to moral equality, especially under distributive justice considerations (Carens, 1987). Libertarian and utilitarian arguments could also be of service in defense of open borders, as the state's immigration policy could be considered as an infringement of individual rights, as it

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interferes with freedoms of movement and property (which are paramount for libertarians), and border limitations create inefficiencies and reduce overall utility (Wellman, 2020).

Amongst the arguments against open borders, David Miller (2016) highlights the right to self-determination that states and people have, which implies both a right to exercise boundaries on the membership of the group and the legitimacy of the desire to preserve its culture and homogeneity, justifying a nationalist partiality and a justification not to deal with the burdens that immigration might create. Michael Blake (2005) builds on the self-determination argument, defending the states' right to membership control based on the obligations that the state incurs towards its citizens through the use of coercion. Since this means that the duties of a state towards foreigners are distinct from those of its citizens, they are not morally bound to provide the same type of rights or assistance.

Contributing to the political theory debate on the morality of migration, this thesis aims to build an argument for open borders based on the premise that immigration is a positive and desirable outcome for political communities. Using empirical data to support that assumption, the thesis' goal is to build a justification for open borders based on the moral duty that states have towards their existing members to act in their best interest.

Most of the discussions in the political philosophy of migration start from the (often implicit) premise that it is an undesirable outcome, centering on the negative implications to both the home country (with "brain drain" being a significant cost to the economy and political lives of the country, for example) and the host country (with questions around the potential disruption of social cohesion and labor market impact from a large flux of immigrants). The case for open borders is normally centered on human rights issues, regarding the political and socioeconomic conditions of the migrants' home countries as the justification for a cosmopolitan approach.

Starting from the diametrically opposite point, this thesis aims to build the case that states have a moral duty towards its current and future citizens to promote the entrance of migrants in the polity, based on the assumption that migration is a net positive outcome for the host countries. The argument is built on the premises that (a) the state has a duty to act in the best interest of its citizens; (b) migration can have a large net positive effect for the host countries; and (c) most of the negative effects of migration can be mitigated. If these can be shown to be true, they could entail not only a defense for an open border policy but also the active encouragement to welcome migrants, as states would otherwise end up with a suboptimal outcome and be failing their duties towards their citizens.

Premise A is explored through a review of the main concepts and arguments presented by political theory. Following the research agenda set out by Blake (2012) and Song (2018) for a deeper engagement of political theory with empirical scholarship on migration, the premises B and C on the positive net benefits of migration and the mitigation of negative effects is supported by empirical research that point out the gains and risks for the state that is receiving immigrants.

The thesis is structured in the following manner: the first chapter provides an overview of the current philosophical debate around the ethics of migration, with a focus on the debate around open and closed borders, to situate this body of work. The second explores the different the discussion on moral obligations of the state towards its citizens and their implications on migration. In the third chapter, the core argument is set up by evaluating the arguments against immigration against the empirical evidence of its impact in the host country, detailing the possible effects of open borders through different angles, including economic growth and fiscal balance, natality rates, cultural and ethnic diversity. The fourth chapter expands on the theoretical implications of the model suggested, including the impact on global migration patterns and effects on countries with different levels of socioeconomic development if such

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approach was adopted. In closing, there is a summary of the argument, its implications, and limitations.

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CHAPTER 1 – THE ETHICS OF MIGRATION

1.1 Introduction

Migration is a social phenomenon defined by the spatial displacement of individuals or groups, either temporarily or permanently, due to various economic, social, and political factors, which creates meaningful impact in both the places of origin and destination. The main empirical and theoretical discussion, however, centers on international immigration, defined by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (1998) as "the process by which non-nationals move into a country for the purpose of settlement", as it raises important policy and ethical questions on the role of states and polities in the definition of borders, membership to the political community and the impact that immigration flows can create in the global and national politics.

The discussion on the ethics of immigration is grounded in a larger debate on global distributive justice, as it addresses the vast inequalities in wealth, health, and living standards between different countries and populations that often motivate the flows of migrants. The key questions are whether affluent nations and individuals have moral obligations to support those in poorer regions and how such duties should be fulfilled, meaning that the principles of justice that apply within states should also extend globally, ensuring that all individuals have access to basic needs and opportunities irrespective of their nationality.

As an individual's country of birth is one of the key determinants on their living standards and immigration involves both leaving and entering national borders, the academic debate on immigration ethics in political theory has been mainly focused on the host state's moral right to control migrant flows (Song, 2018), encompassing a spectrum of views from the conventional right of states to control immigration to the advocacy for open borders based on

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moral equality and freedom of movement. Whereas critics of open borders raise concerns about state coercion, national identity, and social trust, proponents emphasize global justice and the arbitrary nature of restrictive citizenship.

Communitarian theorist emphasizes the significance of political communities and the preservation of national identity. This view supports the idea that states have the right to control their borders to maintain social cohesion, cultural integrity, and public order. Communitarians argue that political communities are defined by shared values, traditions, and a sense of belonging, which can be disrupted by large-scale immigration. Michael Walzer, David Miller and other communitarian theorists usually contend that states must balance their responsibilities to their citizens with humanitarian obligations, often advocating for a selective immigration policy that prioritizes the integration of immigrants into the existing cultural framework. This perspective underscores the importance of collective self-determination and the right of communities to shape their membership and future.

The liberal perspective on migration is rooted in the principles of individual freedom and autonomy. Proponents argue that freedom of movement is a fundamental human right, akin to other civil liberties such as freedom of speech and association. This view suggests that individuals should be free to migrate in pursuit of better opportunities and to escape adverse conditions, challenging the legitimacy of restrictive immigration policies. Notable liberal theorists, like Joseph Carens and Philip Cole, highlight the moral arbitrariness of birthplace as a determinant of one's life chances. This perspective emphasizes that immigration restrictions are unjust forms of discrimination that deny individuals their right to equal opportunity.

Cosmopolitanism extends the liberal commitment to individual rights and equality to a global scale, advocating for the ethical treatment of all human beings regardless of nationality. Cosmopolitans, such as Thomas Pogge, argue that principles of justice should not be confined

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within state borders but should address global inequalities and injustices. They assert that affluent states have moral obligations to provide refuge and opportunities to those from less advantaged regions, as global distributive justice requires the dismantling of barriers that perpetuate inequality. This perspective calls for more open borders and international cooperation to address the root causes of migration, such as poverty and conflict, thereby promoting a more equitable global order.

This debate continues to evolve, with ongoing discussions about the balance between state sovereignty and individual rights in the context of global migration, and this chapter will offer an overview of the main perspectives on the closed vs open border debate and how they shape the work of this thesis.

1.2 The closed borders argument

The conventional perspective posits that states have the right to control immigration. This view is rooted in the notion that states have jurisdiction over their territories and the power to decide who may enter and reside within their borders. The arguments for closed borders span several key areas, including cultural preservation, economic sustainability, distribution of state benefits, political functioning, security, political self-determination, democracy, jurisdiction, realism, and indirect cosmopolitanism (Wellman, 2020).

One of the first political theorist to better explore the closed borders debate was Michael Walzer in his seminal work "Spheres of Justice" (1983), where argues that political membership is a crucial social good as it grants access to other fundamental benefits. He contends that the distribution of this membership should be determined by existing members and uses three analogies to explain the nature of political communities: neighborhoods, clubs, and families.

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Unlike neighborhoods, which lack formal admissions policies, political communities need to control immigration to maintain security, welfare, and cultural identity. Clubs, which can select members but cannot prevent exits, highlight that states also cannot restrict emigration. Families, morally bound to certain outsiders, illustrate that states have obligations to accept persecuted co-ethnics and relatives of citizens. Thus, while states have the right to control admissions to preserve their distinct cultures, they must also fulfill humanitarian obligations, such as aiding refugees and displaced persons, reflecting a balance between self-determination and global justice.

Walzer articulated two of the central arguments for closed borders: that the preservation of a state's distinctive culture is a moral imperative for nations and that states have an inherent right to self-determination. David Miller (2005) builds on the cultural imperative point and states that people have a legitimate interest in maintaining their nation's cultural continuity, which makes limiting immigration from culturally distinct groups justifiable in order to prevent rapid and dramatic changes that could make citizens uncomfortable in their own homeland. He later highlights that a shared culture is necessary to foster the trust and mutual sacrifice necessary for democracy and welfare provision, being then vital for ensuring political stability and continuity (Miller 2014).

Another related argument is that open borders would strain the welfare state, as large numbers of poor immigrants might overwhelm the system, creating a worse outcome for existing citizens. Unrestricted immigration would create significant strains on public resources, social services, and infrastructure, potentially undermining the quality of life and social cohesion for existing residents whose provision of extensive social benefits is predicated on a sense of mutual obligation and trust among citizens. Kates and Revnick (2014) suggest that maintaining the sustainability of these welfare systems necessitates controlling immigration to

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manageable levels to ensure that newcomers can be effectively integrated, and that the system remains viable.

Wellman (2011) supports the closed borders position by highlighting that legitimate states have a right to political self-determination, which includes the freedom of association. This right allows states to exclude outsiders, just as individuals can choose whom to associate with. Therefore, a state's freedom of association justifies its right to exclude any and all foreigners it does not wish as a part of the community. This point, also previously raised by Blake (2001), posits that immigration restrictions do not violate moral equality because state coercion is justified only within its territorial borders. States owe political equality and membership rights to their citizens but have different obligations to foreigners, primarily humanitarian assistance.

Economic arguments against open borders often claim that an influx of immigrants would harm the domestic economy by increasing competition for jobs and driving down wages, particularly for less skilled workers. Therefore, it would not be in the citizens best interest to choose to open borders for the benefit of foreign migrants at the expense of their own well-being. Some security arguments emphasize the need to protect citizens from potential terrorist threats and crime committed by immigrants.

It is important to highlight that many of the theorists that support closed borders are not, in fact, against all kinds of immigration and refute all global distributive justice concerns. Most, if not all, acknowledge the legitimacy of opening borders for refugees and asylum seekers. Miller, for instance, asserts the need for a middle ground in immigration policies, one that recognizes both the legitimate interests of states and the rights of individuals seeking to migrate, advocating for a regulated immigration system that prioritizes the integration of immigrants and the preservation of national values. Furthermore, he challenges the cosmopolitan view that

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duties of distributive justice necessarily entail open borders, asserting that wealthy states can fulfill their obligations to poorer countries through other means (such as international aid and development policies), without the need to open their borders. He suggests that states have a right to prioritize the welfare of their own citizens while still contributing to global justice in other ways (Miller, 2005, p. 198), an important point that will be further explored in chapter 4.

1.3 The open borders argument

Many political theorists reject the conventional view and defend open borders, arguing for the need to remove immigration restrictions based on the liberal premise of moral equality. Joseph Carens, a leading proponent, compares restrictive citizenship to feudal privileges, highlighting their moral arbitrariness and difficulty in justification (Carens, 1987, p. 252). He argues that being born a citizen of a wealthy country, like being born into a wealthy family, is a matter of luck that unfairly determines life prospects. Carens builds his case for open borders using utilitarianism, libertarianism, and liberal egalitarianism, all of which assume the equal moral worth of all human beings.

By extending John Rawls' original position to a global context, Carens's argument is that individuals would choose principles guaranteeing freedom of international movement if they were unaware of their nationality, so liberal democratic states must open their borders as restricting immigration is an unjust form of discrimination, akin to that based on class, race, and gender.

Thomas Pogge advocates for a cosmopolitan approach to global justice that implies significant relaxation of immigration restrictions, pointing out that affluent states have moral obligations to address global poverty and inequality also because these are often perpetuated by

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current global institutions and policies. He emphasizes that these inequalities are not just the result of local failures but are also exacerbated by the actions and policies of wealthy nations. Therefore, affluent states have a duty to reform global practices and institutions to ensure human rights are respected and to mitigate the poverty and inequality that they themselves have helped create in the world (Pogge, 2002).

Moellendorf (2002) argues for global equality of opportunity, implying that open borders are necessary to provide equal chances for all individuals, regardless of their birthplace, and offering an important critique on the traditional state-centric view of justice that prioritizes the rights and interests of citizens over non-citizens. Freedom-based arguments, such as the one offered Kieran Oberman (2016), argue strongly in favor of open borders, positing that immigration should be recognized as a fundamental human right and challenging the conventional view that states have extensive discretionary powers to control their borders. He asserts that the right to immigrate is essential for accessing a range of life opportunities and for the fulfillment of individual potential, therefore restrictions on immigration are morally indefensible and states have a duty to justify their border control policies not only to their own citizens but also to potential immigrants.

In a similar vein, Abizadeh (2008) critiques the notion that state sovereignty automatically grants states the right to exclude outsiders. He argues that if a state's coercive power extends beyond its borders, then the principles of democratic legitimacy require that the exercise of this power must be justified to all those subject to it, regardless of nationality. This implies that border controls must be subject to democratic deliberation that includes the voices of both citizens and non-citizens. In line with Abizadeh’s point, Cole (2000) raises an important critic through the "liberal asymmetry" position, which supports the right to emigrate but denies the right to immigrate. He finds this position not only ethically indefensible but also conceptually incoherent. Cole asserts that if individuals have the right to exit, they must also

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have the right to enter another country to realize the full range of life opportunities available to them. This symmetry between exit and entry rights is crucial for upholding the liberal commitment to individual freedom and moral equality.

Lastly, libertarians also contribute defense of open borders, basing it on the principles of individual liberty, property rights, freedom of association, and economic efficiency. Libertarians argue that immigration restrictions are incompatible with these principles and that individuals should be free to move across borders without state interference. They emphasize that freedom of movement is a fundamental human right, asserting that individuals should be free to travel, reside, and work wherever they choose, as long as they do not violate the rights of others (Nozick, 1974). Additionally, libertarians argue that state-imposed immigration restrictions infringe upon property rights by preventing property owners from inviting others onto their property (Vallentyne, 2007). The principle of freedom of association further supports open borders, as individuals should have the right to form and maintain associations with people from other countries (Huemer, 2010). Economically, libertarians claim that open borders lead to greater efficiency and prosperity by allowing labor to move freely to where it is most needed, thereby maximizing productivity and growth (Clemens, 2011). Furthermore, the minimal state and non-aggression principle, which holds that the state should only prevent harm to others and not initiate force, supports open borders since immigration restrictions constitute an unjust initiation of force (Block, 2010).

Most cosmopolitan and liberal scholars critique sovereigntist arguments, contending that justice and human rights should prevail over nationalist sentiments, and that sovereignty should not justify perpetuating global inequalities through restrictive immigration policies. However, most authors foresee reasonable limitations to open borders, such as Carens acknowledgment of exceptions for national security and potential public order issues stemming from sudden large-scale immigration.

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1.4 Considerations on the open vs closed borders debate

In this thesis, I present a defense of open borders. However, instead of supporting the liberal and cosmopolitan perspectives, my aim is to address the concerns posed by communitarian authors and propose that their very concern about the state's cultural survival and economic prosperity is actually an argument for immigration and not against. Much of those claims are based on hypotheticals and on chapter 3 I will present some empirical evidence to showcase what the scientific and policy literature have to support or refute those claims. In this section, I will briefly address two of the core theoretical standpoints that communitarians present against immigration: the cultural imperative and the right to self-determination.

The preservation of state culture is a fragile stance to defend, as culture is ever evolving and a state can (and often does have) a multiplicity of cultures – how are we to define then what is the culture to be preserved? It only considers the purposes of culture to facilitate communication and create social cohesion in a group, discounting its role as a vehicle to transmit knowledge and regulate behavior to help communities better adapt to their environments. As society is ever changing, a monolithic culture is not going to be well-suited to promote the survival and prosperity of its member – therefore, *a static culture is not desirable*. And the permission to accept relatives of citizens and co-ethnics implies that some sort of cultural porosity is tolerable – what is then the line that establishes whether a migrant is similar or distinct enough culturally? The assertion that a shared culture is necessary to foster democracy and welfare provision is empirically false, as some of the most democratic countries in the world are very plural, such as Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Switzerland.

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The argument on the right to self-determination is sounder but also has some limitations. Though a cornerstone of international law and political theory, it is subject to significant limitations to maintain global stability and justice. The principle, as articulated by the United Nations Charter, grants peoples the right to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social, and cultural development. However, this right is not unlimited. For instance, Rawls (1999) argues that self-determination must be balanced against principles of justice and human rights, preventing actions that harm other states or violate basic human rights. Similarly, Pogge (2002) contends that the international community has a duty to intervene when a state's exercise of self-determination results in severe injustices, such as gross human rights violations or aggression against other states.

Additionally, even communitarian political theorists like Michael Walzer (1977) emphasize that the right to self-determination does not include the right to wage unjust wars or commit acts of aggression. These limitations ensure that the right to self-determination among states is exercised in a manner consistent with broader ethical and legal norms, promoting global peace and justice. If one considers closed borders to be an act of aggression against poor migrants and inconsistent with broader ethical principles, then the line of when closed borders are justifiable becomes also very difficult to establish. Another important point raised by Carens is separating the legitimacy of who should make the decisions on immigration and the moral content of that choice, as “one can think that someone has the moral right to make a decision and still think that the decision itself is morally wrong” (Carens, 2013, p.6).

In one thing almost all authors who are for or against open borders seem to agree: immigration is not a positive phenomenon for host countries. Even cosmopolitan authors, often start from the premise that immigration is necessary in order to fulfill principles of justice but not as a desirable outcome. Pogge and Moellendorf (2008), for example, stress the moral obligation of wealthy countries to address global inequalities and support the development of

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less advantaged regions, thereby *reducing the need for migration* driven by poverty and lack of opportunity. The exception seems to be the libertarian argument, anchored on the predicted economic growth caused by the efficiency gained by the removal of state borders. In chapter 3 and 4 I will address this premise, but it is important to highlight that there is usually the implicit assumption that immigration is a negative and undesirable outcome, that can be morally justified but not usually wished for.

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CHAPTER 2 – THE STATE'S FIDUCIARY DUTY

2.1 Introduction

The concept of the state encompasses the political entity with sovereign authority over a defined territory and population, where the relationship between the state and its citizens is foundational. This relationship is shaped by mutual obligations, including the state's duty to protect, provide for, and respect the rights of its citizens while citizens owe allegiance and compliance to the state's laws. The state's obligations including ensuring citizens' well-being, protection, and participation in the political community, entailing safeguarding fundamental rights and liberties, providing social and economic resources, and facilitating active citizenship.

The concept of the state's fiduciary duty towards its citizens is deeply embedded in political theory and philosophy, emphasizing the state's responsibility to act in the best interests of its populace. This duty mirrors the fiduciary obligations found in legal and financial contexts, where trustees are bound to prioritize the welfare of their beneficiaries. The foundational idea is that the state, as a governing entity, holds power and resources in trust for its citizens and must therefore ensure their well-being and protection (Pettit, 1997). This fiduciary role implies a moral and ethical obligation to govern justly and equitably, promoting the common good. Thus, the state's fiduciary duty encompasses creating and maintaining legal and social frameworks that safeguard individual rights and promote social justice. It requires the state to be accountable, transparent, and responsive to the needs of its citizens, reflecting a commitment to democratic principles and human rights (Dworkin, 1986).

To better analyze the communitarian arguments that defend closed borders based on the state's obligation to prioritizes its own citizens, this chapter will provide an overview of the political theory literature around the states duties towards their citizens and the implications

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they might have to an argument in favor of open borders, covering the core useful concepts presented in debates on the social contract, justice and distribution of resources,

2.2 The social contract

Classical social contract theorists, including Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, argue that the legitimacy of state authority is derived from the consent of the governed, established to serve the interests of its citizens. Hobbes posits that individuals surrender their natural freedoms to a sovereign authority *in exchange for protection of life and property and the maintenance of order*. Locke emphasizes that the social contract is grounded in *the protection of natural rights, including life, liberty, and property,* arguing that *a government that fails to protect these inherent rights loses its legitimacy.* Rousseau, by introducing the concept of the general will that represents the collective interests of the people, argues that true freedom is found in obedience to laws prescribed by the collective body, with the *state's primary obligation being to reflect and enact the general will*, ensuring collective self-determination and the welfare of all community members.

The state's fiduciary duty towards its citizens, as derived from social contract theory, has important implications for the immigration discussions. If the state's legitimacy and authority are based on its duty to protect and promote the welfare of its citizens, *then immigration policies must be evaluated on their ability to enhance the common good*. From Locke's perspective, the protection of natural rights, including the economic rights to property and livelihood, suggests that immigration should be managed to avoid harming citizens' employment and economic opportunities. However, it also implies that immigration policies must be just and respect the rights of individuals seeking to immigrate, ensuring that the state does not arbitrarily exclude those who can contribute positively to society.

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Rousseau's concept of the general will further implies that immigration policies should reflect the collective interests of the community, balancing the benefits of cultural diversity and economic contributions with the need for social cohesion and collective self-determination. This means that *the state should not only protect its citizens from potential negative impacts of immigration but also recognize the potential positive effects that immigrants can bring.* By fostering inclusive policies that integrate immigrants into the social fabric, the state can fulfill its fiduciary duty by enhancing the overall welfare and resilience of the community.

2.3 Justice and distribution of resources

In the realm of political theory, John Rawls' concept of justice as fairness provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the state's fiduciary duty towards its citizens. Rawls argues that the state owes its citizens an equal distribution of basic liberties and arrange social and economic inequalities to benefit the least advantaged members of society. This is achieved through the original position and the veil of ignorance, ensuring impartiality and fairness. The *state's obligation, therefore, is to structure institutions that uphold just principles, creating a society where resources and opportunities are justly distributed and all citizens*, regardless of their background, have equal chances to succeed (Rawls, 1971).

Contrastingly, Robert Nozick's (1974) libertarian perspective presents a critique of redistributive justice, emphasizing that a just distribution arises from the voluntary exchanges of individuals operating in a free market. Nozick's entitlement theory asserts that individuals are entitled to their holdings if they were acquired through just means, advocating that what the *state owe citizens is minimal action focused solely on protecting individuals from force, theft, and fraud, and enforcing contracts* without engaging in redistributive interventions. On the other hand, Martha Nussbaum's capability approach argues for a broader understanding of justice, emphasizing the *state's duty in enabling individuals to achieve a set of basic capabilities*

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necessary for a dignified life. Nussbaum contends that justice requires the state to provide conditions that allow all individuals to develop their potential and fully participate in society, focusing on actual opportunities available to people rather than mere resource distribution (Nussbaum, 2011).

For the immigration debate, Rawls' framework would suggest that the state should design immigration policies that promote fairness and benefit the least advantaged members of both the host society and the immigrant population. However, he does not explicitly advocate for open borders; instead, he supports the right of states to regulate their borders to maintain social stability while also recognizing the moral obligation of wealthier societies to assist poorer ones to reduce migration pressures. In contrast, Nozick's libertarian view of minimal state intervention, would imply that immigration should be regulated primarily through market mechanisms and individual rights, focusing on voluntary exchanges and the protection of property rights.

Nussbaum's approach and emphasis on global justice and the interdependence of human capabilities aligns with arguments for more open borders, suggesting that state's responsibility to ensure that both nationals and immigrants should have access to essential capabilities such as education, healthcare, and political participation. However, she does not discuss whether the potential reduction of state's capacity to develop these capabilities in its own citizens conflicts with her global justice outlook.

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2.4. Rights and liberties

Liberal political theory emphasizes the state's duty to protect individual liberties and rights, ensuring that citizens can pursue their own paths to happiness without undue interference. John Stuart Mill's harm principle asserts that the only justification for exercising power over an individual is to prevent harm to others. This principle underscores the s*tate's*

obligation to protect individual freedoms, including speech, expression, and action, as long as they do not harm others. Mill's perspective highlights the importance of minimal state interference in personal liberties, advocating for a state that safeguards these rights to enable personal development and autonomy (Mill, 1859). Dworkin (1977) further strengthens this view by arguing that *individual rights should be seen as trumps that override collective goals and social policies*. Dworkin maintains that rights protect individuals from the tyranny of the majority, ensuring that justice is upheld even when it conflicts with utilitarian considerations. He acknowledges the necessity of balancing these rights with social responsibilities, suggesting that the *state must protect fundamental rights while also promoting a just and equitable society*.

However, this liberal focus on individual rights is critiqued by Sandel (1982), as it overlooks the importance of community and shared values, emphasizing that individuals are deeply embedded in social contexts where their identities and values are shaped by communal relationships. He contends that the *state's obligations should include fostering a sense of community and promoting the common good,* rather than solely protecting individual rights. This communitarian perspective suggests that the state has a broader fiduciary duty to create conditions that support social cohesion and collective well-being, recognizing the interdependence of personal freedoms and social responsibilities.

What do these views entail for immigration? Mill's emphasis on individual liberties suggests that the state should allow individuals the freedom to move and settle where they choose, if it does not harm others. This could support more open immigration policies, promoting the freedom of movement as a fundamental right. Dworkin's view reinforces this by suggesting that the rights of immigrants should be protected against majoritarian biases. From this perspective, the state has a duty to create immigration policies that respect the rights of immigrants, integrating them into society and protecting them from discrimination and exploitation.

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However, Sandel's communitarian critique introduces a need to balance individual rights with the promotion of the common good. While liberal principles might support more open borders, Sandel's view would emphasize the importance of ensuring that immigration policies also foster social cohesion and address the needs of the community. This implies that the state must consider the impact of immigration on social structures and communal values, crafting policies that promote integration between immigrants and native citizens.

2.5 Welfare provision and social Justice

The state's fiduciary duty towards its citizens encompasses not only the protection of basic civil and political rights but also the provision of social and economic rights, as argued by theorists like T.H. Marshall and Amartya Sen. Marshall's (1950) concept of citizenship includes social rights, asserting that *access to education, healthcare, housing, and employment opportunities is essential for substantive equality and full participation in society*. Amartya Sen's (1999) approach further supports this view by emphasizing the importance of creating an environment where individuals can realize their capabilities and lead fulfilling lives. According to Sen, policies that enhance education, healthcare, and social security are critical for social justice and development. The welfare state model, as advocated by Marshal and Sen, underscores the *state's obligation to provide comprehensive social services*, ensuring a basic standard of living for all citizens and promoting social justice through proactive welfare policies.

Critics of extensive state intervention, such as Hayek, argue that such measures can lead to government overreach and threaten individual freedoms. Hayek (1944) contends that central planning and state intervention in the economy can undermine personal liberties and lead to authoritarianism. He advocates for a limited role of the state, focusing on protecting individual

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freedoms and maintaining a free-market economy, arguing that the *state's obligation should be to create conditions for economic freedom rather than extensive welfare provision*.

While Marshall and Sen did not explicitly discuss immigration, it is possible to infer that they would support full integration of immigrants in the host country, but it is unclear whether their argument for expansion of social rights would be supported if the admission of new members to the political community reduced the likelihood of the existing members to access them. Hayek, as most libertarians, would generally support the free movement of labor as a component of economic freedom. However, as societal order and functioning markets depend on a stable legal and institutional framework, this position might support more liberal immigration policies to enhance economic freedom if they do not entail political instability or increased social policy costs.

2.6 Citizenship and participation

Democratic theorists emphasize the *state's fiduciary duty to ensure meaningful political participation and representation for all citizens*, safeguarding political rights such as the right to vote, freedom of speech, and assembly. Habermas (1996), for instance, advocates for a deliberative model of democracy, where the state facilitates public discourse and decision-making processes that genuinely reflect the will of the people. This model underscores the importance of transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in governance, asserting that the *state's legitimacy is grounded in its ability to represent and serve its citizens' interests.* Similarly, Hannah Arendt (1958), highlights the value of active citizenship and political engagement, arguing that true freedom and political participation are realized through direct involvement in public affairs and deliberation and suggesting that the *state has an obligation to ensure the conditions for active citizenship* by fostering a vibrant public sphere.

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One important corollary of the democratic framework for the immigration debate is the importance of inclusive and rational public discourse in legitimizing political decisions. In this view, democratic legitimacy requires that those affected by decisions, including potential immigrants, should have a voice in the deliberative process. This implies a more inclusive approach to borders, where the rights and interests of non-citizens are considered in political decision-making. Another key tenet of democratic theory is the principle of equality, which implies that individuals should not be discriminated against based on arbitrary characteristics such as nationality. From this perspective, open borders align with the democratic ideal of treating all individuals with equal consideration.

2.7 Considerations on the debate and implications for the discussion on immigration

In summary, the state's fiduciary duty towards its citizens, as outlined by various political theories, involves safeguarding natural rights, ensuring order and security, promoting collective welfare, and upholding justice as fairness. These responsibilities imply that immigration policies should be designed to protect citizens' interests while not arbitrarily excluding those who can contribute positively to society. The state must balance individual rights with the common good, providing essential capabilities and social services to all, including immigrants, to foster social justice and development.

What does it mean for the argument for open borders? Most, if not all, perspectives on the state's obligations towards its citizens would support immigration as long as it does not harm the state's ability to protect individual, collective, political and social rights, as well as the maintenance of order. This implies that if a state is able to mitigate the potential drawbacks and maximize benefits to the country's population of receiving an increased flow of migrants, then there is not much substance to an argument for closed borders based on the state's role in protecting its own common good through meaningful immigration restriction. We will explore

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then these potential gains and losses, based on the concerns raised by theorists mentioned in this chapter and the previous one, through an overview of the empirical evidence in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 3 – TESTING THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST IMMIGRATION WITH EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

3.1 Introduction

The debate over immigration includes various perspectives highlighting both benefits and challenges. Proponents argue that immigration addresses labor shortages, fosters innovation, and drives economic growth. Some studies show that immigrants complement native workers and fill crucial roles in sectors like healthcare, enhancing productivity. Immigrants are also key drivers of innovation and entrepreneurship, with research indicating their overrepresentation among patent holders and high business creation rates. Furthermore, evidence demonstrates that migrants often contribute more to taxes than they consume in services.

Conversely, critics highlight concerns such as job competition, wage suppression, and strain on public resources. Some argue that low-skilled immigration can depress wages and displace native workers, while others note potential fiscal burdens. Social cohesion is another concern, with suggestions that diversity can initially reduce social trust. Despite these challenges, some argue that the long-term economic contributions of well-integrated immigrants can offset initial fiscal strains, ultimately benefiting host countries.

This chapter will explore the empirical evidence on the impact that immigration can have in the host countries, covering the main concerns raised in the debate around closed vs open borders and state obligations covered in the previous chapters, including the economic, political, cultural, demographic and security impacts of receiving immigrants.

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3.2. The economic impact of immigration

Concerns that immigrants compete with native workers, especially in low-skilled sectors, are often discussed in terms of potential job displacement and wage suppression. Borjas (2003) argues that immigration can depress wages and displace native workers in certain sectors, particularly those with a high concentration of low-skilled labor. His analysis shows that an influx of low-skilled immigrants can lead to increased competition for jobs, which may negatively impact native workers. Similarly, Card (2005) provides evidence that immigration can have adverse effects on the employment prospects of less-skilled native workers, highlighting that these workers face more significant competition from immigrants. Borjas and Katz (2007) further discuss the economic impact of large-scale immigration on the labor market, emphasizing the potential negative consequences for low-skilled native workers. However, Peri (2016) notes that these effects are often context-specific and may vary based on local labor market conditions, suggesting that the overall impact of immigration on native workers is not uniformly negative.

The increased labor supply from immigration might lead to downward pressure on wages, particularly for low-skilled workers. Dustmann, Frattini, and Preston (2013) find that while the overall impact of immigration on wages is modest, it can be significant for low-skilled workers, indicating that these workers experience more pronounced wage suppression. Peri and Sparber (2009) suggest that while immigration has a positive effect on the wages of high-skilled workers, it can lead to wage suppression for low-skilled workers due to increased competition. Their research highlights that the labor market effects of immigration are nuanced and depend on the skill composition of the immigrant workforce. Ottaviano and Peri (2012) discuss the distributional effects of immigration, noting that certain groups may experience wage suppression, while others may benefit. Additionally, Monras (2020) emphasizes that wage

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effects can differ significantly across regions and industries, further complicating the overall assessment of immigration's impact on wages.

Despite these concerns, migration significantly contributes to filling labor shortages in key sectors such as healthcare and agriculture, where there is often a scarcity of native workers willing to take on these roles. Empirical studies, such as those by Peri and Sparber (2009), have shown that immigrants often complement native workers by taking on low-skilled jobs, thereby enhancing the overall productivity of the labor market. In the healthcare sector, immigrants play a crucial role. Research by Auerbach et al. (2013) indicates that foreign-born health professionals help address critical shortages, ensuring that essential services are maintained. Additionally, Clemens (2011) provides evidence that migration helps stabilize labor markets by filling essential roles that native workers are either unavailable or unwilling to fill, ultimately supporting the broader economy.

Immigrants also contribute disproportionately to innovation and new business creation, driving economic growth. Hunt and Gauthier-Loiselle (2010) demonstrate that immigrants are overrepresented among patent holders, contributing significantly to technological advancements. Their research highlights the critical role of immigrants in fostering innovation. Furthermore, Saxenian (2006) highlights the high rates of entrepreneurship among immigrants, particularly in Silicon Valley, where immigrant entrepreneurs have been pivotal in the development of the tech industry. The Kauffman Foundation (2016) provides empirical data showing that immigrants are nearly twice as likely to start businesses compared to native-born individuals, underscoring their role in fostering innovation and economic dynamism. Additionally, Kerr and Kerr (2018) find that immigrant-owned businesses are more likely to engage in export activities, which can further boost economic growth.

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The increased demand for public services such as healthcare, education, and welfare from immigrants could lead to higher costs and strain public resources. Rowthorn (2008) argues that immigration can impose significant fiscal burdens on the host country, particularly if immigrants are net beneficiaries of public services. Collier (2013) suggests that large-scale immigration can strain public infrastructure and social services, leading to potential economic costs. Smith and Edmonston (1997) provide an analysis of the fiscal impact of immigration, highlighting the potential strain on public services. However, Blau and Mackie (2016) argue that the long-term economic contributions of immigrants can offset these initial strains, particularly when immigrants are well-integrated into the labor market.

In fact, there is evidence that migrants often contribute more in taxes than they consume in public services, providing long-term economic benefits to host countries. Dustmann and Frattini (2014) found that European immigrants in the UK have substantially contributed to public finances, supporting the argument that migrants are net contributors rather than burdens. Rowthorn (2008) similarly argues that younger migrant populations help sustain public finances by contributing to pension systems and reducing the dependency ratio. Additionally, the OECD (2013) report supports the view that working-age immigrants positively impact the fiscal balance of host countries, contributing to economic stability and growth. Moreover, Hinte, Zimmermann, and Ziesemer (2014) indicate that the fiscal contributions of migrants can offset the costs associated with public services and welfare benefits.

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3.3. The cultural impact of immigration

As covered in the first chapter, one of the core concerns of theorists that support closed borders is the erosion of national identity and cultural coherence due to immigration. Huntington (2004) warns of the potential cultural and social disruptions that large-scale immigration can cause, threatening the cultural identity of the host nation. He argues that

without a common culture, societal coherence and stability are at risk. Brubaker (1992) explores the implications of immigration on national identity and citizenship, highlighting the potential tensions and conflicts. His work underscores the complex relationship between national identity and the integration of immigrants, suggesting that the balance between preserving cultural identity and embracing diversity is delicate and challenging.

Difficulties in integrating migrants into the host society can lead to social fragmentation. Putnam (2007) argues that increased diversity can initially reduce social cohesion and trust within communities. His research suggests that people tend to "hunker down" and withdraw from collective life when faced with high levels of diversity. Huntington (2004) expresses concerns about the challenges of integrating culturally distinct groups into the host society, potentially leading to social tensions. He warns that without proper integration policies, large-scale immigration could exacerbate social divisions. Esser (2006) discusses the various challenges and barriers to the successful integration of immigrants, which can lead to social fragmentation if not addressed effectively. He emphasizes the importance of language acquisition, employment opportunities, and social networks in fostering successful integration.

Enhanced cultural diversity due to migration fosters creativity and innovation within host societies. Alesina and La Ferrara (2005) provide empirical evidence that diversity leads to a broader range of perspectives, enhancing problem-solving and innovation. They found that diverse teams and communities are better at tackling complex problems due to the variety of viewpoints and experiences they encompass. Similarly, Florida (2002) argues that cities attracting a diverse population tend to be more innovative and economically successful. His research indicates that the most dynamic cities, such as San Francisco and New York, thrive on their multicultural environments, which drive creativity and economic growth. Furthermore, Page (2007) supports the idea that cognitive diversity leads to better decision-making and innovative outcomes, highlighting the positive impact of cultural diversity on societal progress.

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He demonstrates that groups with diverse backgrounds outperform homogenous groups in solving complex tasks.

Migration enriches cultural life by introducing new customs, foods, and traditions, contributing to a more vibrant and dynamic society. Empirical studies, such as those by Putnam (2007), acknowledge the initial challenges of diversity but ultimately argue that diverse societies develop stronger social cohesion and enriched cultural landscapes over time. Putnam found that, although diversity can initially reduce social trust, over the long term, it fosters a richer, more inclusive community. Vertovec (2007) introduces the concept of "super-diversity," highlighting the multifaceted benefits that come with cultural exchange facilitated by migration. This concept encompasses the complex interplay of various factors such as ethnicity, language, and religion, leading to a deeply enriched societal fabric. Additionally, Levitt (2001) explores how transnational migration leads to the flow of cultural practices and ideas, enriching both the host and home countries. Her research shows that migrants maintain cultural ties with their countries of origin, creating a dynamic exchange of traditions and innovations.

3.4 The demographic impact of immigration

Migration helps address the challenges of aging native populations by introducing younger demographics. The United Nations (2013) reports that many developed countries face significant demographic challenges, including declining birth rates and aging populations. These challenges can be mitigated by immigration, which brings younger individuals into the population. Coleman (2006) discusses how immigration can offset population decline and support the sustainability of welfare systems. His findings indicate that immigrants contribute significantly to the labor force, ensuring the continued funding and viability of social welfare programs. Espenshade and Tannen (2015) provide evidence that immigrants play a crucial role in maintaining population growth and economic vitality in aging societies. Their research shows

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that without the influx of younger immigrants, many developed countries would face severe economic and social challenges due to an aging populace.

Migrants help stabilize or increase population numbers, which is essential for supporting economic growth and maintaining a balanced demographic structure. Lee (2011) highlights how population growth driven by immigration supports economic expansion and offsets the economic consequences of an aging population. His study demonstrates that immigration contributes to labor market flexibility and helps fill gaps in the workforce that are created by declining birth rates. Reher (2007) argues that immigration contributes to the demographic renewal necessary for sustained economic development. He emphasizes that the introduction of younger, working-age individuals through immigration is critical for maintaining the economic dynamism and competitiveness of developed countries. Additionally, the OECD (2013) underscores the role of migration in addressing demographic imbalances and supporting long-term economic stability. Their report highlights that migrants not only help balance the age structure but also bring diverse skills and perspectives that enhance economic productivity and innovation.

3.5 The security concerns of immigration

Fears about increased crime rates and terrorism, though often unsupported by empirical evidence, are prevalent in anti-immigration arguments. Borjas (2006) examines the relationship between immigration and crime, suggesting that certain groups of immigrants may have higher crime rates. However, research by Butcher and Piehl (2007) finds little evidence to support the claim that immigrants are more likely to commit crimes than native-born individuals. Their study shows that the crime rates among immigrants are generally comparable to or lower than those of native-born populations. Leerkes, Leach, and Bachmeier (2012) explore the complex relationship between immigration and crime, noting that socio-economic factors play a

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significant role. They argue that economic disadvantage and social marginalization, rather than immigrant status per se, are more likely to influence crime rates.

Maintaining secure and controlled borders is a challenge that can be exacerbated by high levels of immigration. Weiner (1995) discusses the security implications of migration and the challenges of maintaining effective border controls. He emphasizes that without robust border management, states may struggle to regulate the flow of people and ensure national security. Andreas (2003) examines the strategies and challenges involved in securing borders in the face of increasing immigration, highlighting the need for advanced surveillance and coordination between agencies. His research suggests that effective border security requires a combination of technological innovation and international cooperation. Massey, Durand, and Malone (2002) analyze the dynamics of border control and the impact of immigration policies on security. They find that restrictive immigration policies often lead to unintended consequences, such as increased illegal crossings and the formation of underground labor markets, which can complicate security efforts.

3.6 The political impact

Increased support for populist and anti-immigration political movements can often be a response to high levels of immigration. Mudde (2007) explores the rise of populist movements in Europe, highlighting their strong anti-immigration stance. His research reveals that these movements gain traction by capitalizing on fears and uncertainties about immigration among the native population. Similarly, Inglehart and Norris (2016) discuss how cultural backlash against immigration has fueled the rise of populist parties in Western democracies. They find that populist leaders often exploit cultural and economic anxieties to garner support, emphasizing themes of national identity and sovereignty. Gidron and Bonikowski (2013) analyze the factors contributing to the growth of populism and its implications for immigration

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policies, noting that economic insecurity and perceived threats to cultural identity are significant drivers of populist sentiment.

High levels of immigration can potentially weaken social cohesion and increase polarization within the host society. Putnam (2007) argues that increased diversity can initially lead to reduced social trust and cohesion. His study suggests that in the short term, people in diverse communities tend to withdraw from collective life, leading to lower levels of social capital. Goodhart (2013) discusses the challenges of maintaining social cohesion in the face of high levels of immigration, noting that rapid demographic changes can strain community bonds and create a sense of dislocation among the native population. Alesina and La Ferrara (2005) examine the impact of ethnic diversity on social cohesion, highlighting the potential for increased polarization. They provide empirical evidence showing that while diversity can enhance creativity and economic performance, it also poses challenges to social integration and trust.

Complementary research supports these findings. Dustmann and Preston (2007) provide empirical data indicating that concerns about immigration can lead to increased support for restrictive immigration policies and populist parties. Sides and Citrin (2007) find that perceptions of cultural threat are closely linked to opposition to immigration. Additionally, Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014) review over 100 studies on public attitudes toward immigration, concluding that economic concerns, cultural threat perceptions, and security fears are significant predictors of anti-immigration sentiment.

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3.7 Implications of the empirical evidence

In summary, *there is no incredibly meaningful evidence of major negative costs of opening borders and those tend to be targeted and are manageable by targeted policies.* Concerns about job displacement and wage suppression are important to highlight, particularly

in low-skilled sectors, as these could create a meaningful impact on one of the most vulnerable segments of the population of the host country. However, the overall impact on wages is typically modest and varies based on local labor market conditions, suggesting that it could be more easily targeted on specific government policies. On the positive side, immigrants often fill labor shortages in key sectors like healthcare and agriculture, complementing native workers and enhancing productivity. Additionally, immigrants contribute significantly to innovation and entrepreneurship, with higher rates of patent holdings and business creation, which drives economic growth. To mitigate the costs associated with immigration, policy solutions include implementing targeted support for native low-skilled workers who may be adversely affected. This can involve job training programs, wage subsidies, and efforts to improve labor market integration for both immigrants and natives. Enhancing the match between immigrant skills and labor market needs, as well as promoting entrepreneurship among immigrants, can further optimize the economic benefits of migration. Therefore, the economic costs are very manageable and the potential windfall very large, as Clemmens illustrates with his "trillion-dollar bill on the sidewalk" analogy to the possible economic gains that open borders could create (Clemmens, 2011).

The evidence suggests that immigration enriches cultural life by introducing new customs and traditions, fostering creativity, and enhancing problem-solving through diversity. However, concerns about the erosion of national identity and social cohesion are valid. Increased diversity can initially reduce social trust and cohesion, but over time, it can lead to a more vibrant community. Policy solutions to enhance the positive impacts and mitigate the negative effects include promoting inclusive integration policies that foster social cohesion and cultural exchange. This involves language acquisition programs, employment opportunities, and social networks for immigrants. Encouraging active citizenship and political engagement

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among immigrants can also help in creating a sense of belonging and reducing social tensions. Therefore, the identity and cohesion challenge can also be met.

In demographic terms, immigration helps address challenges related to aging populations by bringing in younger individuals, supporting the sustainability of welfare systems, and maintaining economic vitality, presenting a viable solution especially to the many wealthy countries that are facing declining natality rates. Concerns about increased crime rates and terrorism are prevalent in anti-immigration arguments, though empirical evidence often does not support these fears. Studies have shown that crime rates among immigrants are generally comparable to or even lower than those of native-born populations. Socio-economic factors, rather than immigrant status itself, play a significant role in influencing crime rates. Effective policy solutions to mitigate these security concerns include addressing economic disadvantage and social marginalization, which are more likely to drive crime.

The political impact of high levels of immigration can lead to increased support for populist and anti-immigration movements. Populist leaders often exploit cultural and economic anxieties, emphasizing themes of national identity and sovereignty. Therefore, the evidence suggests that it is not immigration that causes populism but that populism feeds on xenophobic perceptions. This cultural backlash can weaken social cohesion and increase polarization within the host society. Increased diversity may initially lower social trust and cohesion, leading to a reduction in social capital. Policy solutions to mitigate these challenges include fostering social cohesion through community-building initiatives, promoting inclusive integration policies, and addressing economic insecurities that fuel populist sentiments.

Therefore, as we have seen that most perspectives on the state's obligations towards its citizens would support immigration as long as it does not harm the state's ability to protect

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individual, collective, political and social rights, *the empirical evidence suggests that states lose more by closing borders than by opening them.*

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CHAPTER 4 – THE STATE FIDUCIARY DUTY TO OPEN ITS BORDERS AND MODEL LIMITATIONS

The conventional narrative in political philosophy about migration typically adopts a cautionary approach, emphasizing potential disadvantages for both origin and destination countries. Origin countries may experience "brain drain," where the emigration of skilled professionals depletes their economic and political capabilities, negatively impacting development and governance. In contrast, destination countries often express concerns about social cohesion and labor market disturbances due to the arrival of immigrants. This viewpoint generally portrays migration as a problematic issue, focusing on mitigating its adverse effects rather than exploring its potential advantages. Consequently, the argument for open borders is frequently based on human rights, underscoring the challenging socioeconomic and political conditions in migrants' home countries and appealing to cosmopolitan ideals of global justice.

However, the argument presented in this thesis proposes a fundamental shift in this narrative, suggesting immigration is a desirable outcome for host countries that states should proactively promote migration. It asserts that states have a moral duty to act in the best interest of their current and future citizens, which includes recognizing and harnessing the substantial net positive effects of migration. The argument was built on three key premises:

- Premise A: The state has a duty to act in the best interest of its citizens. This premise is explored through a review of the main concepts and arguments presented by political theory.
- Premise B: Migration can have a large net positive effect for the host countries. This was explored by empirical research that analyses the benefits and costs of migration.
- Premise C: Most of the negative effects of migration can be mitigated. This was explored by empirical research that analyses the policy strategies that might be used to manage the potential drawbacks of welcoming a significant flow of migrants.

As the state's duty to act in the best interest of its citizens forms the foundation of many political theories, this principle implies that governments must prioritize policies that enhance

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the welfare and prosperity of their populace, as well as protecting their rights. When considering immigration, this duty can be interpreted to support open borders if it can be demonstrated that such policies serve the long-term interests of citizens by contributing to economic growth, cultural enrichment, and demographic sustainability and does not violate or threaten the protection of their liberties. Open borders, therefore, are not merely a humanitarian ideal but a pragmatic policy that aligns with the state's foundational obligations.

As shown in the previous chapter, empirical studies support the notion that migrants contribute significantly to economic growth, innovation, and demographic stability in host countries. By filling labor shortages, driving entrepreneurship, and contributing to cultural diversity, migrants enhance the overall prosperity and dynamism of their new societies. This means that *migration is not merely a concern based on ideals of global justice and human rights but a strategic advantage for host countries*.

This reframing implies that rather than viewing migration as a challenge to be managed, states should see it as an opportunity to be embraced. By adopting policies that actively encourage and facilitate immigration, states can better fulfill their duties for their own citizens. This approach necessitates addressing and mitigating potential negative effects, such as social integration and labor market competition, through comprehensive and inclusive policies.

Some implications of this model include the impact that open borders in wealthy countries could create in developing nations. For example, in countries with lower levels of socioeconomic development, open borders can lead to a significant outflow of skilled labor, which can undermine local economic and social structures (Brock, 2009). This migration pattern can exacerbate existing developmental challenges, as the departure of educated and skilled individuals reduces the human capital necessary for development and innovation. Based

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on a communitarian and nationalist perspectives, this impact is not a central matter of ethical discussion in the host countries, as the state's main obligation is towards its own citizens.

It is, however, of utmost importance for the origin countries, which might be then justified in restricting emigration based on this premise of the state fiduciary duty in case of brain drain. The moral permissibility of a state restricting emigration is debatable, as we must weigh the individual's right to freedom of movement against the potential harm to the state and its citizens. The right to emigrate is widely recognized as a fundamental human right, enshrined in international law. As Oberman (2013) points out, restrictions on brain drain grounds involves coercing individuals to labor for others' benefit, necessitating a justification that respects their rights, interests, and freedoms rather than treating them as mere tools for development.

Moreover, it is important to highlight the potential negative consequences for the state itself in restricting emigration, as this is the core of the fiduciary duty argument. Instead of solving the underlying issues that cause brain drain, such as inadequate economic opportunities, poor working conditions, or political instability, restrictions may fix some issues in the short-term (such as the supply of healthcare workers) but do nothing to address these problems in a structural way. Furthermore, empirical studies suggest that emigrants often contribute to their home countries through remittances, investments, and the transfer of knowledge and skills. By maintaining open borders, countries could then engage in a free market-like system, in which they are incentivized to offer the best living and working conditions to maintain its citizens and to attract immigrants, which would potentially raise the quality of life across countries. Creating incentives for highly-skilled professionals to stay is an alternative that both respects their right to movement and can help the country reap the benefits of their labor.

Another important point is the right of the state to choose the option of closed borders, even if it is a suboptimal choice. If one analysis thorough the lens of state autonomy and

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sovereignty, then the state has the right to make its own decisions, even if those decisions lead to suboptimal outcomes. This view parallels individual autonomy in moral philosophy, where individuals are seen as having the right to make choices about their own lives, even if those choices are not the best. From a utilitarian perspective, state policies should aim to produce the greatest good for the greatest number, and knowingly choosing worse outcomes would be a failure of ethical governance. From the point of Rawlsian justice, policies that result in worse outcomes for citizens, especially the most vulnerable, would be inconsistent with the principles that ensure fair equality of opportunity.

How do we reconcile then the state's right to exclude, even if they do not have a justifiable moral reason? As there is a parallel with individual autonomy, Stuart Mill's harm principle might be useful here: individuals should be free to act as they wish, *as long as their actions do not cause harm to others*. The states right to restrict immigrants then are contingent on their choices not violating the rights and well-being of others; in other words, state sovereignty becomes unlawful when a state engages in actions that violate international law, human rights, or fundamental principles of justice recognized by the international community. In practical terms, this would mean that no state has a right to close its borders to an immigrant whose human rights have not been assured, which means most of the world's population. Paradoxically, states would then have the right to exclude only well-off immigrants from wealthy, liberal and democratic nations, which is the opposite of the current state of immigration policies.

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In conclusion, *advocating for open borders based on the state's duty to act in the best interest of its citizens is both a pragmatic and ethical stance*. The substantial net positive effects of migration, combined with the ability to mitigate potential negative impacts through well-designed policies, make a compelling case for more open immigration policies. This approach not only fulfills the state's foundational obligations but also meets the main arguments posed

by communitarian authors and also meets the desired outcome of open borders set out by cosmopolitan authors.

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CONCLUSION

This thesis begins by challenging the traditional discourse in political philosophy, which often views migration as a problematic phenomenon that primarily needs mitigation. Instead, it argues that migration should be seen as a net positive outcome for host countries. This perspective is built on the premises that the state has a duty to act in the best interests of its citizens, migration can have significant positive effects for host countries, and most negative effects of migration can be effectively mitigated. Through a review of political theory and empirical data, the thesis demonstrates that migration contributes to economic growth, innovation, and demographic stability, thereby fulfilling the state's fiduciary duty to enhance the welfare of its citizens.

Moreover, the thesis highlights the moral and pragmatic imperatives for states to adopt open border policies. By facilitating the entry of migrants, states can address labor shortages, drive entrepreneurship, and enrich cultural diversity. The empirical evidence shows that immigrants often complement native workers, particularly in sectors like healthcare and agriculture, and contribute more in taxes than they consume in public services. The potential negative impacts, such as job displacement and wage suppression for low-skilled workers, can be managed through targeted policies like job training programs and wage subsidies. This approach ensures that the benefits of migration are maximized while minimizing any adverse effects, aligning with the state's responsibility to protect and promote the well-being of its populace.

In conclusion, advocating for open borders is not only a matter of global justice and humanitarian concern but also a strategic policy choice that benefits the host country's economic and social landscape. The thesis underscores that the state’s duty to act in the best interests of its citizens includes recognizing the substantial advantages of migration. By embracing

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comprehensive and inclusive immigration policies, states can better fulfill their foundational obligations, foster social justice, and contribute to a more equitable global order. This reframing of migration as a positive and desirable outcome challenges conventional narratives and poses new questions in the theoretical and practical debates of global migration.

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