

THE CRISIS OF ILLEGAL MIGRATION IN AFRICAN AND SECURITY CHALLENGES

DR. ODIKE, EBENZER LEVI

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, IGNATIUS AJURU

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE

Abstract

The paper examines the impact of illegal migration in Africa and the security challenges this unofficial migration has posed in the form of trans-national border crimes such as the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), terrorism, human trafficking, slave trade, drug smuggling and peddling, etc. These transnational border crimes were given impetus as a result of the drive by young people to seek better sources of livelihood in Europe, Middle East, etc, in response to poor governance which is common place in the African continent. The paper suggests that African governments through their leaders should provide the people with good governance by providing them with basic infrastructures that will better their lots. This the paper says can be achieved through popular policies of the various African governments as well as deep and entrenching democracy so that issues of political unrest which contributes to insecurity and dwindling economy as the reason while young people migrate illegally to the West and other places can be checked. Also, the need for collaboration by African leaders with other regional leaders and international organizations to stem the tide was strongly advocated.

Keywords: *illegal migration, security challenges, international organization, proliferation of small arms and light weapons.*

Introduction

The quest for a better living or greener pasture by young people as a way of survival has been the drive behind the movement of millions of Africans illegally to other parts of the world. This zeal to flee from unemployment, poor standard of living, bad governance, insecurity, lack of social security, etc, has been responsible for the mass exodus of Africa's population to the civilized parts of the world like America, Europe, Asia, etc, for improved livelihood especially as bread winners.

To these persons who seek for an alternative means of survival outside the shores of Africa, illegal migration is the surest way given the fact that it is not cost effective just as it is not time consuming. Unfortunately, for these irregular migrants, not many of them survive the hazards associated with traveling through illegal routes. Some in course of such journeys have drown in the oceans, especially the

Mediterranean Sea, others were equally not lucky as they died in the deserts en route to other countries of their choice for economic survival, while some others ended up in the modern slave market as slaves in North Africa. Most of the victims of this trade whose original dream were to get to the Western world with better prospects for them hail from the ECOWAS sub-region.

These modern slave markets are operated openly in Libya which is a transit point for migrants who intends to journey to Europe. The migration crisis in Africa with Libya as the hot spot deepened when the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on October 2011 raided Libya under Muammar Gaddafi's leadership. The ouster of Col. Gaddafi and his eventual assassination brought political instability and insecurity to this one time peaceful North African country. The insecurity as seen today in Libya is dangerously spilling

over to other African countries like Mali, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, etc.

In a bid to address the menace of illegal migration, Europe has its own tale to tell as it lost a credible part in Africa, as a result of the war which culminated into lack of good governance and institutional break down. The fall-out of the war was the emergence of criminal element syndicates, who engages in modern day slave trade despite its abolishment many years ago.

To put these illegalities and irregularities to check with the aim of bringing the practice to a halt, the European Union (EU) has proposed the establishment reception of centres in Libya for African migrants while their applications for migration into Europe are processed and approval given. Unarguably, this will be a remedy to the issues surrounding illegal migration in Africa and its attendant security challenges.

Statement of the Problem

Castles and Kosack regarded migration as resulting from the development of the international economic system. According to them, the richer European nations have exploited the poorer nations of the world like Africa, causing their underdevelopment. From the colonial times onward, the 'third world' has been used as a source of cheap, easily exploited labour and cheap raw materials. The colonies were not allowed to develop or in some cases even maintain industries that competed with those of their European masters. The poor in the 'third world' were then used as a reserve army of labour of successful capitalist nations during periods of economic prosperity and high employment.

Migration tends to increase the inequalities between richer and poorer

nations. Those who migrate are valuable resource: they are usually young and vigorous.

On the other hand, poor governance and monumental or institutionalised corruption by government officials in Africa gave rise to lack of basic infrastructures, harsh economic conditions, unemployment, lack of social security, near absence of security of lives and property, dehumanizing standard of living, etc, are some of the reasons why African in their droves indulges in irregular migration to the developed and western world.

It is also pertinent to note that richer nations compete with one another to try to attract the very skilled migrants who they believe will play a role in promoting economic growth, but less skilled migrants may even experience 'exclusion and discrimination'.

The after-effect of illegal migration and its attendant security challenges is that Africa has remain underdeveloped over the years and if allowed to continue without any urgent intervention by all and sundry especially the ruling or political class and other critical elite and stakeholders, either collectively or as individual nations to salvage the continent from underdevelopment and poor infrastructure in every sector largely caused by bad governance and corruption, Africa may be worst for it as not just a chunk of the population of the continent may be looking for improved sources of livelihood elsewhere outside the shores of Africa, but some Africans are already seeing their home nations as failed States, and this could be responsible for the series of armed struggle as we witness today across the length and breadth of the African continent.

This has remained a worrisome trend in recent time and it is spreading like wild fire with citizens of the affected states helpless and at the mercy of these rebels who are always on rampage. To buttress this stance, is the assassination of President Idris Deby of Republic of Chad in a battle front on the 20th of April 2021.

To make matter worst, government in affected states like Nigeria, Mali, Chad etc, seem to have politicized the issue of security of lives and property of her citizenry or are bereft of intelligence or even do not have in the armoury of their defence, the needed military hardware to execute the war (even though they are asymmetric in nature) against the brazen destruction of lives and property by several militia groups who operates either as terrorist, bandits, kidnappers, armed robbers, drug traffickers, human traffickers etc. This no doubt, contributes in no small measure to issues of force migration.

Theoretical Framework

The work is hinged on Human Needs Theory

The main assumption of the Human Need Theory is that all humans have basic needs which they seek to fulfill and that the denial and frustration of these needs by other groups or individuals could affect them immediately or later, thereby leading to conflict (Rosati et al, 1990). This position which is similar to the Frustration-Aggression and Relative Deprivation Theory, identify these basic human needs as physical, physiological and spiritual needs. It believes that to provide access to one and deny access to another will amount to denial and could make people resort to violence in their effort or obtain these needs.

While Maslow in his “motivation and personality” identify these needs as psychological, safety, belongingness and love, esteem and self-actualization, Burton (1974:72) lists response, simulation, security, recognition, distributive justice, meaning, self-control and the need for role defence, and Edward Azar named security, distinctive identity, social recognition of identity and effective participation in the process that shape such identities (Azar 1994). Burton then identified a link between frustration which forces humans into acts of aggression and the need on the part of such individuals to satisfy their basic needs.

According to him:

“An individual cannot be taught to accept practices that destroy their identity and other goals that are attached to their need and because of this, they are forced to react against the factors, groups and institution that they see as been responsible for threatening such needs. Human needs for survival, protection, affection, understanding, participation, creativity and identity, as shared by all people, are irrepressible and they have components (needs for recognition, identity, security, autonomy, and bounding with others) that are not easy to give up. No matter how much a political or social system tries to frustrate or suppress these needs, it will either fail or cause far more damage on the long run”.

As solution to conflict arising from such theories, Gaya posited that

“The frustration of these needs hampers the actualization of potentials of groups and individuals, subsequently leading of conflict and to resolve a conflict situation or to even prevent it from occurring, the needs have to be met with appropriate satisfiers, those

things that were denied them in the first instance"

Conceptual Clarification

This refers to giving an understanding of the concepts that are related to the topic of this paper. The purpose is to ensure that there is no ambiguity whatsoever as it relates to the concepts. The following are the concepts associated to the paper: Crisis, illegal, migration, security challenges.

Crisis

This is a state of disorderliness in a given society. It is a period of time in a community, state, nation, etc, where there seems to be lack of proper coordination in human activities. A time when things get out of hand or out of the control of constituted authorities.

Illegal

This refers to the out of indulging in an act in an illegitimate or unapproved manner. It is the carrying out of actions that are against the laws of a particular society.

Migration

This is the movement of people across international boundaries. People don't just move beyond the borders of their home countries, or their places of residence, they do so for some reasons and some of such movements are propelled by fundamental economic and social changes that have helped to increase international migration.

Security

This is an all-encompassing condition in which individual citizens live in freedom, peace and safety, participate fully in the process of governance, enjoy the protection of fundamental rights, have access to resources and the basic

necessities of life, and inhabit an environment which is not detriment to their health and well-being.

Security is not only in terms of the internal security of the state, but also in terms of secure systems of food, health, money and trade (Tickner 1994:180).

Challenges

These are the demands or difficult tasks that test the ability of someone in a certain situation. It has to do with one's ability to stabilize or contain an emergent occurrence as a result of an action.

The crisis of illegal migration in Africa

Often times illegal migrants in Africa are encouraged by their friends who survived the perilous voyage across the Mediterranean Sea or the Sahara Desert to Europe en route Libya, a North African country.

According to a survey by the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other related matters (NAPTIP), in Nigeria, the major trafficking routes in Africa are Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, Niger. Other places are Chad, Burkina Faso and Mali. Africans indeed have been emigrating, despite the associated risk.

The total number of Africans living outside the continent cannot be easily determined, because of the irregular pattern of their movements. This is because a substantial number of people travel to Europe and other destinations without the requisite travel documents or papers. This happens both at home and in their host countries. Unfortunately to some of these migrants, they are usually greeted with dehumanizing treatments, a situation they have to tolerate or endure as a result of their inability to present their travel documents which permits them to live,

work and carry out other business endeavors in their host countries, while a good number of these irregular migrants are repatriated as soon as it is discovered that they gained entry into their host countries without the necessary or official documents. It is also pertinent to mention that the circumstances surrounding their departure from their home countries such as the use of unofficial or irregular routes which are warranted by lack of proper documentation and subjecting themselves for scrutiny by immigration officials at the official points of exist have made these migrants very vulnerable to criminal elements. Because these irregular migrants have no choice, they are made by these criminal gangs to engage in all sorts of contraband and illicit transactions, and because they indulge in illegalities, the authorities of their host countries ensure they bear the brunt of the law to deter others who may see illegal migration as a worthwhile venture. Punishments meted to these culprits as deterrent are in the form of repatriation, jail sentences, some of which are life sentence and even death penalty though base on the gravity of offence committed.

More dehumanizing is the fact that some of the migrants are trafficked around Africa especially to The Gambia, Libya, Cameroon, Niger, Benin, Ghana and Gabon for forced labour. Other places around the world where similar inhuman treatments are meted on illegal migrants are Europe and Middle East as witnessed in Spain, Saudi Arabia, Italy, Greece, etc. Equally, it is also believed that most of the female illegal migrants with Italy as their host country are of Nigeria extraction.

The political and economic instability that ensued following the overthrow and death of Gaddafi marked a

turning point in Libya. This regime change has some security implications because Gaddafi was able to maintain a level of security by suppressing the activities of the militias. However, after his demise, the militias went haywire by taking charge of the human trafficking centres in Gharyan and Zawiya, where slave trade is coordinated. There is also the perspective of 'Push and Pull Factors', which forces people out of their traditional localities and are responsible for forced displacement and the refugee crisis, while the pull factors attract people to migrate from their place of abode to a new area.

To stem the crisis of illegal migration in Africa, the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) convoked an emergency meeting on 7 December, 2017. The UNSC thereafter influenced the air lifting of the stranded migrants to their respective home countries, while investigation into the slave trade activities is still ongoing'

Illegal Migration as a Security Challenge

Obviously, the situation in Gharyan and Zawiya Libya as has been said in so many quarters is undoubtedly a humanitarian challenge. According to Beth Ferris, the prospect of large-scale migration as a result of the crisis in Libya is also perceived as a security issue in Europe. This perception has only heightened since her comments were published, as the significant waves of the Libyans and migrants working in Libya have now arrived in Lampedusa, Italy -some 2,000 on 27 March, 2011 alone-adding to over 15,000 people, mainly Tunisians, who have arrived since the beginning of the year. In response, the Italian Government temporarily suspended transporting migrants from Lampedusa to reception centres in Sicily and on the mainland, and the European

Union's border management agency Frontex, extended its support to Italy's Coastguard and border authorities.

In the same vein, Switzerland and other neighbouring countries moved personnel and equipment on their borders to reinforce against the possibility of large-scale migration from North Africa. The securitization of migrants and migration is nothing new: German citizens resident in the UK were interned there during World War II on the grounds that they may have been fifth columnists, while Kurdish and Algerian diasporas were associated with terrorist attacks in Western Europe during the 1970s and 1980s. But the perception of migration as a threat to national security has certainly heightened in recent years, in part as the security agenda has become more prevalent across many aspects of policy and in part in response to the rapid rise in the number of international migration (214 million in 2010 according to International Organization for Migration) and especially of irregular or illegal migrants (estimates vary from 30-50 million worldwide).

Labeling any issue a security threat has significant implications in terms of the laws, norms, policies and procedures that becomes justified in response. In the migration context, for example, the label has been used to justify greater surveillance, detention, deportation and more restrictive policies. Such response in turn can import the migrants involved, for example, by denying asylum seekers access to safe countries, driving more migrants into arms of migrant's smugglers and human traffickers, and by contributing to a growing anti-immigrant tendency among the public, within the media, and in political debate in many countries. Given such consequences,

it is worth asking whether and if so when migration really does represent a threat to national security. Common responses to this question are that migration can be a vehicle for importing terrorists and criminals, or for spreading infectious diseases. These are dangerously misleading perceptions, but none the less widespread. First, there is very little evidence from any country in the world that there is a greater concentration of terrorists, potential terrorists, or criminals among migrant populations than among local populations. Similarly, only in very exceptional circumstances have migrants been found to be carrier of diseases that threaten to infect significant numbers of people. Second, imputing migrants with tainted intentions without substantiation risks further agonizing public attitudes towards them. Third, to focus only on these extremes' risks diverting attention from circumstances where migration can actually pose a threat to national security.

Irregular migration, for example, can legitimately be viewed as undermining the exercise of state sovereignty borders and is resident on its territory. It is worth observing that the majority of irregular migrants worldwide have not crossed a border without authorization, but rather remain or work without authorization. Still, failing to control and manage migration risks undermining public confidence in the integrity of government policy. The burgeoning migrant smuggling and human trafficking industries can pose a genuine threat to law and order, especially where they are related to organized crime and interest with the movement of illicit goods, including weapons and drugs. In this case, it is not the migrant, but those who take advantage of them, who are criminals.

The arrival of large number of migrants, especially from very different social or cultural backgrounds than the receiving communities can also pose serious challenges to social cohesion. This can have practical implications for states, for examples regarding the allocation of resources as well as more conceptual implications regarding models of integration and national identity. Migrants can compete with locals in the labour markets, especially during period of recession, and thus become magnets for resentment. Where significant numbers of people are settled in a restricted area for a long period of time, as is the case in some refugee and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps, they can have a detrimental effect on the local environment.

In other words, migration can be a threat to national security, but not usually for the reasons normally assumed. The threat is not systematic, but instead arises in particular circumstance. This could be where migration is irregular, occurs on a large scale, brings together groups of people with very different backgrounds or little previous contact, takes place during a period of recession, and so on.

Solution To Migration Crisis in Africa

African governments should as a matter of necessity brace up to the challenge of good governance by providing their nationals with the opportunities to improve upon their lives. As a matter of fact, the various governments in Africa should bring to an end the era of relying on dependence on foreign aid or some form of assistance from the developed economics or donor agencies. This is a disturbing trend given the fact that there is no end in sight to this practice as African governments often make policies within their

jurisdictions with the expectation of assistance from the developed economics or donor agencies. This kind of thinking can only be injurious to a society. Aid or assistance is no wrong, especially when the need arises from things like catastrophes and natural disasters. The pattern in Africa has however seen some African leaders neglecting their responsibilities to serve their people by failing to create environments that allow their people to thrive.

African nations should learn the rules that will enable them manage their budgets to enable them provide their people with the basic infrastructures that will make them have and live better live in their home countries. If this approach is adopted, Africans will have every reason to stay in their native countries without having to take all the risks of transversing either the Mediterranean Sea or the dreaded Sahara Desert in a quest to leave the shores of Africa as irregular migrants for improved sources of livelihood. If quality of life is guaranteed for young people in Africa, the zeal to flee to other parts of the world for greener pasture and the desire to secure consistent income as to sustain the families back home will no longer be attractive.

There is also the need by Africa government to strengthen democracy in the continent to avert the pockets of political interest that are usually witnessed in Africa. This is because political upheaval threatens the security of a place and known to be responsible for forced migration.

Interestingly, the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has been endorsed by 55 African States which comprises about 1.2 billion people with a combined GDP of an estimated US\$ 3.4 trillion. This coming on board will create a wider market by way of free movement in

the context of the trade agreement entered into and this will stimulate cross-border mobility that will definitely boost economic growth in Africa, whilst allowing all nations in the agreement to maintain its sovereignty. The protocols of AfCFTA if strictly adhered to by African leaders, it will in no small measure assist in curbing the menace of illegal migration by the people in the region. It is equally important that all critical stake holders in Africa in line with the AfCFTA protocols will not distort the free visa arrangement which will aid free movement for AfCFTA to be sustained. In doing this, caution must be applied so as to enable the authorities to police high-risk prospective migrants or travelers.

The Libyan government should as a matter of emergency accept the proposal by the European Union to set up reception centers in Libya for African migrants while their asylum application is considered. If this agreement is entered into, it will no doubt reduce the multiplicity of several splinter militia groups participating in the slave trade business. This however will discourage the ugly trend.

The joint regional summit on the Libyan migrant crisis which made laudable progress should be revisited, but must admit the negative roles played by different actors. All the parties to the crisis must accept responsibility for the situation so that Africa and the world in general can move forward. There should be cooperation and collaboration with other regional bodies like the European Union, etc, and the international community to control illegal migration and end acts of criminality against migrants.

Recommendations

The crisis of illegal migration in Africa have had a toll on the security of the

continent, and this have been discussed many times in different fora with suggestions and observation made profusely. In the light of this, the following are the recommendations of this paper on how the problem of crisis of illegal migration in Africa and its attendant security challenges can be solved.

1. The creation of a common migration policy by African governments through the African Union on the migration crisis.
2. There should be increased and enhanced collaboration between the African Union (AU), European Union (EU), International Organization of migration (IOM) and United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) to create a common policy for dealing with migration.
3. African Union and global partners must break the smuggler networks that is currently and grossly exploiting young people.
4. A focus on creation of training and employment opportunities for young people within the African continent.
5. Creation of repatriation systems by African government to assist nationals caught up in crises in foreign lands. This would include working effectively with the IOM and UNHCR. Rehabilitation of returning migrants who have gone through the harrowing or deal of trying to cross the Sahara Desert or the Mediterranean Sea only to be held in detention centers and mistreated.

6. Empowerment of refugees by giving them financial resources and business training to be able to create their own businesses and return back home with some dignity.
7. Massive investment in Africa across various sectors that create employment and related opportunities.

CONCLUSION

The ouster of or end of the 42- year reign of Mummar Gaddafi as the President of Libya and his death orchestrated by allied forces created a major crisis in Libya in particular and Africa in general. Before Gaddafi's overthrow and assassination, he controlled the human trafficking networks, which now operates without any form of opposition or restrictions. The country is now fertile and a breeding ground for a succession of trans-national organized criminal activities, which includes both human and arms trafficking. Without doubt, this has had an adverse effect on the whole of the African region.

Obviously, the number of Africans who travel to Europe and other destinations through Libya and other North African countries for better conditions of living outside the shores of Africa as a result of poor governance and insecurity is on the increase. Consequent upon this unfortunate trend, it becomes pertinent to call on African governments and leaders to look inward and begin to create opportunities for our young people to utilize their youthful energy in Africa for the benefit of Africans so that the long-awaited economic revolution seen in the developed economies will be replicated in Africa.

In achieving this, there should be an establishment of reception centres at the hotspots or affected areas for the benefit of

the receiving countries and Africans as well. This is because trafficking gives rise to other organized crimes such as drug smuggling, arms proliferation and even terrorism. Therefore, there is a crying need to nip these transnational border crimes in the bud by engaging in multilateral diplomacy by all stakeholders to avoid its spread to other parts of the region.

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