

## **IRREGULAR MIGRATIONS AND HUMAN SECURITY IN POST-COLONIAL AFRICA: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper interrogates the relationship between irregular migration and human security in Africa. Migration is a component of human behavioural pattern precipitated by certain endogenous and exogenous factors. Though it is a phenomenon that has existed in the past, present-day post-colonial Africa is saddled with a motley of challenges. The study employs secondary research and the constructivism and theory of geopolitics. It is the positions of this paper that migration is a product of both pull and push factors. In the final analysis the paper recommends among other things the need for good governance in Africa so as to reduce the rate of irregular migrations which exposes migrants to all sorts of security challenges.*

**Key words:** Border, Crime, Geopolitics, Human security, Migrant and Migration.

### **Introduction**

Migration is a phenomenon inherent to human history and human development. In the current process of globalization, human insecurity, lack of development, economic insecurity, along with natural disasters, armed conflicts and violence, are increasing forced migration around the world. Migration is commonplace in the world today. Within the milieu of growing and intensive economic, political and socio-cultural interdependence among state and non-state actors, mass intra and inter border and continental movements of people have been on the ascendancy. Global estimates indicate that 3 percent of the world's population are migrants (United Nations, 2006).

Spatial mobility of human population involving a change of place of usual residence between well-defined geographical entities is an important process for population redistribution within and across countries. Migration is either voluntary, that is, when people decide on their own volition when and how to move and where to settle, or involuntary; a situation where people are forced by circumstances such as natural disasters, depletion of resources, political persecution, armed conflicts, etc, to settle somewhere else. Both voluntary and involuntary migration can occur either internally or internationally. In effect, migrants all over the world are seeking what all human beings

desire: better standards of living, a safe environment and freedom from want and fear (UNFPA, 2005).

Indeed, West African migrants within the region have always thought of the region as an economic unit within which people, trade in goods and services moved without restriction (Addo, 1975). Guggenheim and Cernea (2016) argue that anthropologists identify push and pull factors as the forces behind voluntary and forced migration. Push factors force people out of their traditional localities and are responsible for forced displacement and the refugee crisis. Pull factors attract people to migrate from their place of abode to a new area. A saturated labour market, demographic shifts, unemployment, poverty, extractive political and economic institutions and political crises are identified push factors (Guggenheim, Scott and Cernea, Michael (1993).

Regardless of the factors that precipitate migration in Africa it is important to look at the nature of migration and the conditions of migrants in Africa in terms of their security, human rights and well-being. There are series of reports and investigations indicating the dehumanizing conditions of migrants across Africa. Issues of human rights violations, slavery, torture, human trafficking, sexual exploitations, organ harvesting, detentions, discriminations, prejudices, hatred etc are some conditions that African migrants are grappling with.

Developments in recent times have placed human migration in the public sphere gaining more global attention and extensive media coverage especially due to populist political movements in western countries. The media in many countries in Europe and Africa are hitherto filled with images of migrants fleeing violent conflicts in Africa and some losing their lives during their journey through the Sahara desert and Mediterranean Sea (Chouliaraki, Georgious and Zoborowski , 2015). Many are trafficked to West, North and Central African countries, and to Europe and the Middle East – especially to Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Niger, Libya, Italy, Greece, Spain and Saudi Arabia, among others – for forced labour. Most of the trafficked women in Europe are believed to be from Edo State, with Italy being the most frequent destination for trafficked persons from Nigeria (IOM, 2015).

It is based on the foregoing that this paper intends to investigate the relationship between migration and human security in Africa with a view to identifying the remote and immediate precipitators of migration, identifying with relevant examples how migrants are exposed to insecurity either on transit or in host countries.

### **Conceptualising Security and Human Security**

Security is an ambiguous term that defies a universal definition. This is because it is possible to apply the term to a range of ideas that operate at many levels of analysis, and because judgments of relative levels of security vary from the objective to the subjective (Wing, 2000). According to Encarta Dictionary security is the feeling or state of being secured. In the view of Gallie, the term ‘security’ has become, to use words, an ‘essentially contested concept’ in that, there are no assumptions of agreement as to its meaning and that this lack of agreement constitutes a widely recognised ground for philosophical inquiry (Gallie, 1995:167).

To shed light on the lack of consensus on the meaning of security, Wolfer (1962) points out the importance of perceptions within the meaning of security: . . .security, in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked (Rothschild, 1995).

It is in this regards that Booth describes the pressures to update the concept of security a coming from two sources:

First, the problems with the traditionally narrow military focus of security have become increasingly apparent. It is only necessary here to mention the greater awareness of the pressures of the security dilemma, the growing appreciation of security independence, the widespread recognition that the arms race has produced higher levels of destructive power but not a commensurate growth of security, and the realisation of the heavy burden on economics of extravagant defence spending. The second set of pressures comes from the strengthening claim of other issue areas for inclusion on the security agenda. The daily threat to the lives and well-being of most people and most nations is different from that suggested by the traditional military perspective (Booth, 1991:318).

The works of Lippmann on security provide a useful definition of the application of security to the nation state. A nation has security when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interests to avoid war and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by war (Lippmann, 1943). His view is in tandem with the realist view of security. Central to the realist concept of security is national interest, which is the traditional intrinsic goal of national security. In the opinion of Wolfers (1952) he posited that:

The realist approach to national security contains an internal logic that suits the nature of the international system, which is anarchic, competitive and dangerous. Despite this logic, national security is difficult to measure, and it can be an 'ambiguous symbol' that is subject to varying interpretations depending on the perceptions of the viewer (Wolfers, 1952:147).

In 1994, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) published a Human Development Report that defined human security. Since then, there have been several renditions and elaborations of the concept. Human security broadly refers to an individual's freedom from fear (threats such as physical and direct violence), from want (meaning unemployment, poverty, sickness), and from indignity (exclusion, exploitation, and discrimination) (Tadjbakhsh 2014: 44). Unlike cosmopolitanism and traditional humanitarianism, human security thinking appropriately takes into account all the dimensions that mark our identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, legal status, and class. For Frédéric Mayor, former UNESCO Director General, human security coincides with the "protection" and "defence of human dignity" in all circumstances.

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

Theories are important instruments in social science researches and investigations. They serve as signpost for every research. For the purpose of this paper, the theory of

constructivism and Geopolitics will be employed. During the Cold War security was, as an essential topic of the study of international politics, largely focused on political-military issues and the use of force. It is particularly evident in the realist approach that considers the state as its main referent. This traditional understanding of security has become inadequate in securing the sovereignty of the state since it reduces the complex concept of security to a mere “synonym for power”. Consequently, the supremacy of realism and its security perspective have been questioned by scholars.

The state remains the fundamental purveyor of security. Yet it often fails to fulfil its security obligations... That is why attention must now shift from the security of the state to the security of the people—to human security (Commission on Human Security, 2003). The constructivist and critical approaches came to the fore in the late 1980s. In this respect, Critical Security Studies, an academic discipline within security studies which rejects mainstream approaches to security, particularly took an enormous step forward, predominantly emphasizing human security over state security. According to the critical security scholars, global threats such as environmental degradation, economic recessions and population growth cannot be dealt in traditional ways (Browning, and McDonald, 2011).

Constructivism points out that social facts are human creations, and that the social structure is manifested by not only the material structure, but also by the international community. The social structure has three components: shared knowledge, material resources and practices (Wendt, 1995: 73). Tadjbakhsh (2007) considers that human security can thus be read as an attempt to reconstruct the interpretation of the roots of insecurity, underdevelopment, and poverty. These same themes have also been examined by constructivism (Tadjbakhsh, 2007: 88–89). In the 1990s, realism and liberalism were criticized for their overemphasis on material concerns and for failing to take into account subjective, psychological, and human elements. Constructivism attempts to challenge established world views which have been set in place by material concerns (Wendt, 1992; 1999). Constructivism and human security have much in common, and human security can be seen as an application of the tenets of constructivism. Constructivism reinterprets traditional material, state-centric society; similarly, human security reinterprets traditional theories of military force and national security. This theory is relevant to this study in different ways. Most states in Africa still centre security on power rather than paying attention to basic human needs. Migrants are victims of several human security threats because there is less emphasis on human security.

Friedrich Ratzel, Halford Mackinder, Rudolf Kjellen, and Karl Haushofer are the major proponents of the theory of geopolitics. German geographer Friedrich Ratzel, whose—*Politische Geographie* (1897) and paper *Laws on the Spatial Growth of States* (1896) laid the concrete foundations for geopolitik. Ratzel developed the organic theory of the state, which treated the state as a form of biological organism—territory being its body and alleged that states behaved and lived in accordance with biological laws.

According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, geography is the—science of the Earth’s surface, which describes and analyzes the spatial variations in physical, biological, and human phenomena that occur on the surface of the globe and treats their interrelationships and their significant regional patterns, whose essential elements are: spatial analysis with

an emphasis on location, ecological analysis with an emphasis on people and their relationship with the environment, and regional analysis with an emphasis on region building. According to the Dictionary of Human Geography,

Political geography is the study of the effects of political actions on human geography, involving the spatial analysis of human phenomena. Traditionally political geography was concerned with the study of states—their groupings and global relations (geopolitics) and their morphological characteristics, i.e. their frontiers and boundaries. In the last twenty years increasing interest has been shown in smaller political divisions, i.e. those within states, involving an appreciation of the interaction between political processes and spatial organization, e.g. the nature and consequences of decision-making by urban government, the relationship between public policy and resource development, the geography of public finance and electoral geography (Dodds, 2000).

Relating the central idea of geopolitical theory to the migration and human security in Africa one will clearly see that migration itself is geographical in nature since it requires movements across borders and other trans-border activities of humans. The nature of Africa's geography has over the years encouraged migration of African either between African countries or using other African countries as routes to countries outside of Africa. For instance, Nigerians go through Niger down to Chad to access Libya and from Libya to Europe. The nature of such routes and the political conditions also constitute serious security threats to migrants even when on transit. Some commentators have described this as a dangerous journey of no return as many migrants have lost their lives, kidnapped and sold into slavery or sexually molested.

Chad and Niger, situated at the southern border of Libya, share a large stretch of desert with Libya, making any journey across the border a difficult and dangerous endeavour. Despite the harsh conditions, both countries experienced massive influxes of migrants fleeing Libya through these borders (IOM, 2012). Libya, by comparison, has been predominately a destination and transit country for regular and irregular migrants alike. While it was a major destination country in the 1990s, encouraging low-skilled and unskilled workers from sub-Saharan Africa to fill its need for manpower, it increasingly became a transit country in the 2000s. At the same time, large-scale deportations of irregular migrants were carried out throughout the 2000s, resulting in the removal of possibly hundreds of thousands of irregular migrants (CARIM, 2010).

### **Migration and Human Security in Africa**

Migration is an expression of the human aspiration for dignity, safety and a better future. It is part of the social fabric, part of our very make-up as a human family (Ki-moon, 2013). Migration is a truly global phenomenon, with movements both within nations and internationally across borders. The world has an estimated 244 million international migrants (UN DESA, 2016) and 763 million internal migrants (UN DESA, 2013) Migration is a common phenomenon associated with man. People migrate from one place to another for several reasons which have been described as the pull and push precipitators of

migration. Regardless these factors, it is pertinent to note that over the years, migrants in Africa and elsewhere have been victims of security threats manifested in different forms and dimensions.

Despite restrictive immigration policies (including border control and the expulsion of undocumented migrants), pervasive socio-economic asymmetries, poverty, unemployment, natural disasters, armed conflicts, and other international crises will continue to force millions of people to journey across national borders in search of better living conditions. History shows that migrant movements cannot be contained or repelled by building walls and expelling migrants (Leonir, 2016:4). Migration is partly driven by a quest for security, yet it brings new types and risks of insecurity. For migrants, especially international migrants are often outsiders in many ways: including in terms of administrative identity, cultural familiarity and political and cultural acceptance. In recent years a substantial volume of work has used a human security perspective to explore intra- and especially inter-national migration (Mushakoji, 2011).

Another aspect that is often lost in current debates about irregular migration is that it also has adverse consequences for migrants themselves. This is most obviously the case for the victims of trafficking, who are usually women or children, and are often exploited in domestic work or the sex industry. Such can be the level of abuse of their human rights, that some commentators have compared contemporary human trafficking with the slave trade (O'Neill Richard 2000; Ryf 2004). It is not just the process of moving in an irregular fashion that can jeopardise migrants, but also their irregular status. Irregular migrants often work in precarious and dangerous jobs; they are excluded from health, education and other social welfare provisions, and they can be subject to exploitation in the housing market (le Voy et al. 2004).

In the Opening Remarks of the Fourth International Forum on Migration and Peace, Leonir Mario Chiarello c.s. Executive Director Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN) posit that:

On the other hand, despite the definition of new legal frameworks and extensive institutional responses, so many migrants continue to suffer abuse, exploitation and violence. Migrants are an increasingly vulnerable group, subject to discrimination, xenophobia, and anti-migrant sentiments. They are victims of human rights abuses, especially via border control and deportation programs. This situation of such vulnerability and the negative perceptions of migration demands an ethical duty of governments and civil society organizations to implement comprehensive policies and responses to human and safe migration, which are respectful of the human dignity and rights of all migrants and their families, regardless of their migration status (Leonir, 2016:4).

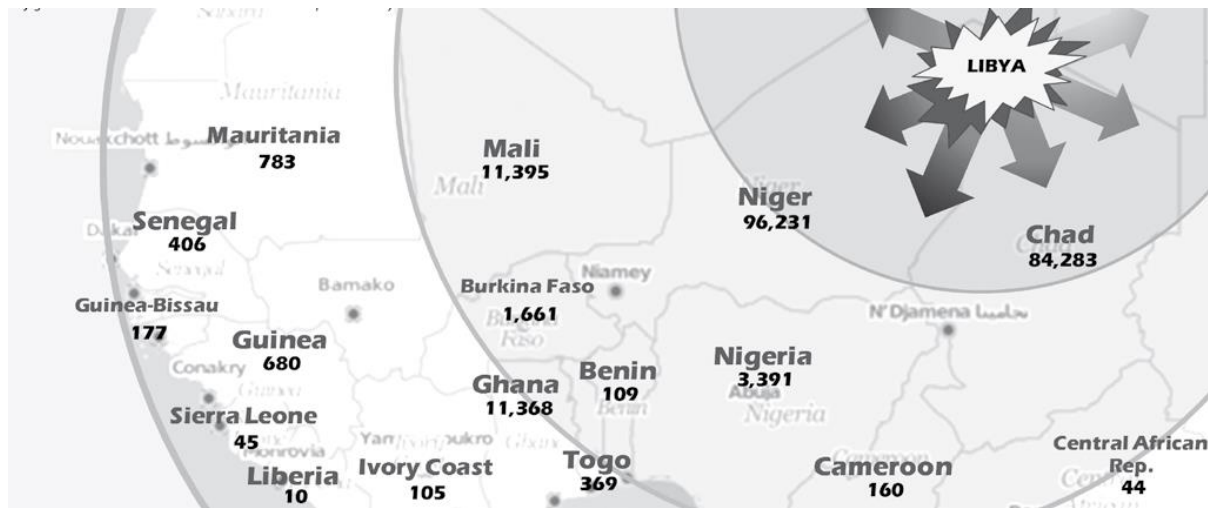
This event, and the situation that followed, are central to the alleged criminal activities going on in Libya. The political and economic instability that ensued following the regime change in Libya had significant security implications. Gaddafi and his regime had been able to maintain a level of security while also controlling the activities of militias. However, since his exit, authorities in Libya have not been able to control the activities of these

militias. It is these militias that control the human trafficking business in different parts of the country. Examples of trafficking centres exist in Gharyan and Zawiya, where many Nigerian returnees claim that they were detained, maltreated or sold for ransom (BBC, 2018).

Chad and Niger, situated at the southern border of Libya, share a large stretch of desert with Libya, making any journey across the border a difficult and dangerous endeavour. Despite the harsh conditions, both countries experienced massive influxes of migrants fleeing Libya through these borders. Through direct cross-border movement and repatriation by air, 180,500 Chadian and Nigerien nationals returned from Libya. In addition, close to 7,000 Third Country Nationals (TCNs) crossed the southern border of Libya to seek refuge in Chad or Niger before travelling onward to their country of origin. TCNs, mainly from other sub-Saharan African countries, joined truck convoys and were assisted in returning to their countries of origin by air or by land (IOM, 2012).

Around 51,000 Chadians and 800 TCNs crossed the southern border of Libya into Chad during the crisis. The first people fleeing Libya through the border were registered at the end of March 2011 – a month after the fighting began. The majority of the returnees arrived in trucks, often in deplorable conditions, after journeys that lasted 15-30 days in the deserts of southern Libya and northern Chad. IOM Chad has provided support to more than 31,000 Chadian returnees who were returned by air from Egypt, Tunisia and Libya (from the southern city of Sebha) (IOM, 2012).

Figure I: WEST AFRICAN RETURNÉES FROM LIBYA, AS OF 31 JANUARY 2012



Source: IOM Daily Statistical Report, 31 January 2012 Note: Figures include cross-border movements by air and land.

Sub-Saharan Africans are one of the largest groups of migrant workers affected by the Libya crisis, totalling approximately 212,000 returnees, of whom 130,600 returned by direct

border crossings from Libya into Chad and Niger and 81,000 with IOM assistance from neighbouring countries (IOM, 2012).

Most of these migrants are subjected to inhumane treatment, which they have to endure because of their inability to obtain official documents permitting them to live and do business in their host country, while many are repatriated once they are caught. The circumstances of their departure – such as using unofficial routes and without proper documentation – have made them vulnerable to criminal gangs. These gangs recruit them into all manner of illicit businesses, with long jail sentences as consequences when they get caught (Graham-Harrison, 2017).

### Mediterranean Developments

TOTAL ARRIVALS BY SEA AND DEATHS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN 2019-2018					
	1 JANUARY – 23 OCTOBER 2019		1 -23 OCTOBER 2019	1 JANUARY – 23 OCTOBER 2018	
Country of Arrival	Arrivals	Deaths	Arrivals	Arrivals	Deaths
Italy	9.432	692	1.799	21.935	1.267
Malta	2.911	(Central Med. Route)	158	989	(Central Med. Route)
Greece	45.105	70	6.525	26.679	155
Cyprus	5.494** (as of 30/09)	(Eastern Med. Route)	0	729	(Eastern Med. Route)
Spain	20.036	318 (Western Med. Route)	1.445	47.433	549 (Western Med. Route)
<b>Estimated Total</b>	<b>82.978</b>	<b>1.080</b>	<b>9.927</b>	<b>97.765</b>	<b>1.971</b>
Data on deaths of migrants compiled by IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre.					
All numbers are minimum estimates. Arrivals based on data from respective governments and IOM field offices.					
** This figure includes the number of all migrants' arrivals registered in Cyprus					

The table above shows the rate of migrant's arrival to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea and deaths recorded on the Sea in an attempt by migrants to get to Europe.

The situation in South Africa also clearly shows the plights of migrants and how these constitute human security challenge in Africa. The outbreak of xenophobic violence in South Africa in May 2008, left sixty-two dead, seven hundred injured and over one hundred thousand displaced. The targets of the violence were mainly foreigners from other African countries, although South Africans made up one-third of the dead.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, 33% of South Africans in a national survey, as cited in Kinge and Tiobo (2016), see migrants in the country as job-snatchers, 21% see migrants as criminals, and



about 33% would not want migrants and refugees to enjoy the same right to legal protection, police protection, and access to social services as citizens. These attacks remain sporadic and are sometimes very violent as in 2007, 2008 and 2014 when they peaked, costing several human lives and properties.<sup>39</sup>For example, in the 2007 xenophobic attacks on Somalis in the Eastern Cape, over three dozen lives were lost and, in Zandspruit, over 100 informal Zimbabwean dwellings were burnt down (Solomon and Kosaka, 2013).

The high rate of death recorded in the Mediterranean Sea is another classic and typical case of human security that migrants are grappling with. Migrants use the sea as a medium to cross to Europe since the sea is a major border between Africa and Europe. The number of migrants who died crossing the Mediterranean Sea surpassed 3,000 for the fourth year in a row, despite an overall drop in the number of refugees making the journey. The International Organization for Migration has called the Mediterranean "by far the world's deadliest border," as more than 33,000 migrants have died at sea trying to enter Europe since 2000. More than 3,100 migrants died making the trip in 2017, but the IOM notes the number of fatalities is likely higher due to the number of boats that sink without rescue crews knowing. Last year, more than 5,000 people died along the sea route (IOM, 2017).

### **Conclusion and the Way Forward**

Migration is an integral component of human existence and activity. It is common place for humans and animals to move from one geographical location to another. Movements of migrants across national borders are precipitated by their desire to promote their economic, socio-cultural or political interest as the case may be. Migrants whether irregular or regular contribute to the economies of their country of origin through remittances to their families as well as to the economies of the host countries by tax remittances. Illegal migrants also form the bulk of cheap labours for the host countries as well as they contribute to the skilled and unskilled work force of the transit or host countries. These are some of the prospects that originating and host countries of migrants begin to appreciate. There are different categories of migrants; some migrants are regular/legal while some are irregular migrants. The regular migrants are people who migrate from one location to another having fulfilled the necessary travel requirements. Irregular migrants on the other hand usually do not have the necessary requirements to travel hence they pass through illegal routes to get to their destinations. Whether regular or irregular, migrants in Africa are exposed to series of security challenges either on transit or in host countries.

It is based on this that this paper puts forward the following recommendations: (a) The African continent need to address the internal contradictions in Africa that constitutes to the push factors for migration especially irregular migrations (b) There is need for an international policing and collaboration among countries bordering the Mediterranean to forestall the increasing rates of irregular migrants on the sea (c) States in Africa need to put in place agencies to increase sensitisations on the risk and dangers of irregular migration especially through land routes (d) Good governance in Africa can help to address or minimise the rate of migration in and out of the continent (e) Originating and host countries of migrants whether illegal/irregular should begin to focus on maximising the prospects of migration

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