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Chapter

Comparison of African Migration to Europe and European Migration in the Last Two Centuries

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Abstract

The current migration of Africans to Europe and North America evokes trepidation and fear among citizens of European countries and their counter parts in the Americas. Despite clear lack of objectivity the migration discourses, continue to frame and condition migration policy responses and governance. What Landau calls “moral panic” at the foundation of this discourse. While it is true, a sizable number of Africans are fleeing political persecution and violence in their home countries, a big proportion is perceived to be looking for economic opportunities (greener pastures) to better their lives and that of their kin. The dominant narratives of failed states and debilitating poverty as the drivers of migration ignore the possibilities that it could be similar economic and social transformations that caused European migration to Africa and other parts of the World in the 19th Century. Here in we argue that a simplistic conclusion about poverty as the main driver of African migration does not reflect the complete reality, that socio-economic transformation and not poverty per se are the main drivers of African emigration not dissimilar to what Europe went through in the 19th Century.

Keywords: migration, Africans, Europe, transformations, policies

1. Introduction

1.1 Conceptualizing migration

While there is a general consensus that migration involves movement and crossing of borders there is no agreement on the time frame which marks the end of migration. For this reason, migration is conceptualized from different lenses depending on the dominant interests. International Organization for Migration (IOM) contends that migration refers to the movement of a person or people from their place of usual residence whether within a country or across international borders, either temporarily or permanently for various reasons. This definition of course opens many avenues for contentious debates. It assumes that we agree on what international borders are and whether they can be readily identified which is not often the case. The other doubtful assertion is the place of usual residence. In our transnational existence it has become debatable to what one would define as usual residence. Again when we examine

reasons for migration, some people would object that some reasons and not ground for migration ([1], ([2], p. 4), [3], ([4], p. 167)).

Migration can be conceptualized and analyzed from different perspective. First it seen as a human mobility that transcends some forms of boundaries whether such boundaries are political, administrative or even ethnic. We can choose to look at migration from the causes and drivers of migration in which case there will be economic and labour migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, expatriates and others. From a legal perspective we would have legal and illegal migrants. That is people whose movement is approved by the state and those whose movement is not accepted. In our present world there are so many cleavages when conceptualizing migration that we cannot fit all of them in any essay [5]. For our purposes here, we look at African-European migration nexus from both a historical perspective and as a function of past and present political economy of different states. Of necessity such a discussion will privilege the role of the state without ignoring salient issues of nationalism, race and religion.

2. Theorizing international migration

For better understanding of international migration generally and Africa migration to Europe we will refer to the world systems theory as espoused by [6] which views migrations as obvious consequences of agricultural economic globalization driven by capitalism and segmented labour market theory [7].

2.1 World systems theory

This theory is attributed to Wallerstein [6] and offers a macro level-analysis and explanation of international migration based on agricultural capitalism. Wallerstein viewed the globe as an economic system. His major concern is with the unequal political and economic distributions which results in stratified economic system. The world systems theory holds that the penetration of capitalist agricultural economy fundamentally transforms non-capitalist agricultural economies in several ways.

The system divides the world into core countries, semi-periphery countries and the periphery countries. Core countries are characterized by capital intensive production and the rest of the world focus on low capital and labour production and extraction of raw material. Because of the inequality in the global economic systems poor countries are trapped in their disadvantaged positions within unequal geopolitical structure which compounds their poverty. The forces of globalization have exacerbated underdevelopment within the countries in the periphery.

The penetration of capitalist economic relations into non capitalist societies creates a mobile population that is prone to migrate. Motivated by the need for higher profits and greater wealth, owners of capital in core countries venture into poorer nations in the periphery of the world economy in search of land, raw materials, labour, and consumer markets. During the mercantile and industrial capitalism colonial administrations aided these ventures.

The expansion of commercial agriculture requires land consolidation and different land tenure system which entails displacement of population. Agricultural production requires labour inputs such as fertilizers and pesticide, such a system displace people and transform established forms of subsistence forms of economic production and social relationships. Introduction of cash crops destroys social and economic

relations based on subsistence. Instead of reciprocity, collective labour and social trust, transactional relationship are established and social ties severed which results in uprooted population who are likely to move in search of wage employment because core countries encourage private capital to invest in these developing countries they seek to protect such capital through deploying of military forces resulting into proxy wars and displacement, these often triggers migration into different directions.

The same logic applies to extraction of raw materials that requires industrial methods that rely on paid labour. This creates labour markets based on new conceptions of individualism, private gain and social change. Establishment of foreign owned factories triggers rural urban migration as it undermines locally produced goods. The displaced labour becomes mobile and likely to move in search of employment. The same process economic processes attract workers to migrate to developed economies. The migration of Europeans to other parts of the World can be partially explained by the transformation that took place when common lands were consolidated and privatized. The same case applies to the economic transformations in Africa and the subsequent deployment of global economic structure.

2.2 Segmented labour market theory

This theory was propounded by Michael Piore [7] who unlike the systems theory and neoclassical theorist sought to explain the pull rather than push factors of migration. He argues that international migration actual stems from the internal labour demands of modern industrial societies. While acknowledging that there may be push factors such as low wages and high unemployment in sending countries, Piore points out that migration is only possible because of pull factors such as the need for low wage workers in receiving countries which is attributed to four related reasons, including structural inflation, structural motivation, duality of labour and ethnic economic enclaves.

2.2.1 Structural inflation

It is argued that wages not only reflect condition of supply and demand but confers status and social prestige. There are perceptions of social qualities that exist in jobs that wages are attached. In different social and labour context people tend to believe that wages should reflect social status, meaning that a majority of people there is a correlation between occupational status and wages or salaries. As a result, wages paid by employers are not entirely free to respond to fluctuations in the supply of labour. A combination of domestic social expectations and formal institutions such as labour unions, civil societies, labour laws and job classifications ensure that pay corresponds to the social status that people perceive and expect. Belaid and Slany [8] have discussed structural transformations in Africa and migration [9].

Employers for example cannot simply raise wages in order to attract unskilled workers at the bottom of occupational hierarchy. This due to the fact that raising wages would upset socially defined relationships between status and remuneration. It therefore follows that increasing wages for those at the bottom of the employment ladder would also entail increasing wages proportionately for those above to maintain this relationship which is Piore [7] calls *structural inflation*. This is costly and disruptive for employers and often they are unwilling to do it. Cheaper alternative is therefore to import or accept migrant workers who may be willing to accept low wages.

2.2.2 Structural motivation

Structural motivation concept is related to structural inflation because of social construction of jobs and wages. People not only work to get income but also to achieve certain degree of social status. The unskilled jobs at the bottom of job hierarchies result into motivational problems because there is no social status to be accumulated or maintained. The fact that the motivation problem cannot be removed makes a structural issue because even mechanization which may eliminate the lowest and least desirable class of jobs simply creates another bottom class. This then compels employers to look for workers who are looking for jobs to get income rather than accumulate social status. Migrants who are mostly target earners meet employers' requirement for lower wages. Given the difference in living standards in developed and developing countries, low wages in developed countries are often significant income in home countries and make social and economic difference. Because migrant workers are not socially embedded in the host countries they are willing to take these low paying jobs. As members of their own communities back at home remittances sent carry honor and prestige [7]. This argument applies to African migrants as much as it applies to migrants from other developing countries to Western Europe, the Oil rich Gulf States and North America.

2.2.3 Duality of labour and capital

The duality of labour and capital is attributed to the fact that capital is a fixed factor of production that can be idled during lower demands but cannot be laid off which compels owners of capital to bear the cost of idleness [7, 10]. Labour on the other hand is a variable factor which can be laid off when demand declines. Workers are ultimately forced to bear the cost of their own idleness. In economic terms, this means that capital intensive methods of production are used to meet basic demands while labour intensive methods are used to meet fluctuating demands [11].

Piore opines that this duality creates distinction among workers because those in the capital intensive primary sector get stable and skilled jobs, working with best technology and tools. Employers often consider such cadre of workers as part of capital because of their skill and knowledge. Furthermore, such workers tend to belong to labour unions or have contracts that compel employers to meet the cost of idleness. It is therefore expensive to lay them off. In the labour intensive sector, workers occupy unstable and unskilled jobs with low wages. These are the jobs that are often referred to as triple 'D' jobs (Dirty, Degrading and Dangerous). Such workers can be laid off any time with minimal or no cost at all. This results in a segmented labour market where you have native workers who are drawn to the capital intensive sector where there are better wages, secure terms of employment and social status. The secondary segment has low wages, unstable conditions and lack of mobility that do not attract native workers. Meet the short fall created in the secondary sector; employers often turn to migrant workers.

2.3 Ethnic enclave economies

Ethnic enclaves are economic zones created by pioneer migrants, which are often in the secondary sector of labour market. They are characterized low status jobs, low pay, instability and wretched working conditions. Such jobs are avoided by native workers but provide immigrants with much needed economic returns, education,

experience and entry into the labour market. Enclave economies are likely to grow if pioneer migrants have significant financial, social and cultural capital. If their businesses are successful they are likely to attract immigrants from their home countries who do not mind engaging in low paying jobs. In addition, it is observed that concentration of co-ethnics creates demand for specialized cultural products and ethnic migrants are often in a better position to provide such products and services.

Initially the duality of labour and capital, structural inflation and structural motivation was off-set by the employment of teenagers, women and newly arrived rural-urban migrants. This is because for a long time women were not viewed as primary bread winners so their social status was not based on the jobs they had but that of their families. However, this has changed and now many women are employed on their own rights. Teenagers took such jobs because they were considered temporary employment. They expected to get better jobs after finishing school or college. Moreover, teenagers derive their social status from their parents. Four interrelated factors have all but wiped away this supply of labour in developed countries. First urbanization has eliminated rural urban migration, decline in birth rates and the rise in female labour. This has significantly created demand for immigrant labour in developed countries.

These theories speak to some of the drivers of migration all though not single one can completely explain the complex phenomenon of migration. While world system theory is a macro explanation of economic transformation that takes place in the cause of expansion of capitalism, it fails to explain individual choices that people make when migrating. It also does not explain the pull factors of migration. Segmented labour market theory is quite strong on pull factors but is sketchy on push factors that enable migration. For these reasons, this chapter make use of both the theories to explain the different aspect of international migration.

3. Major migration epochs

When discussing current migration trends, commentators both in the academy and policy circles, present it as a new phenomenon that the need new and creative ways to manage. Yet migration is as old as human beings [12]. Humans have come to populate different parts of the world simply because of the ability to migrate from time to time and to adapt to new geographical and climatic conditions. While European migration to Africa during colonial period was different, historical accounts show that it was not new and that Europeans migrated to North Africa running away from poverty, overcrowding and conflicts. North Africa and the Maghreb offered sanctuary where they lived and traded for many years long before colonial capitalism [13].

The mercantile and colonial related migration of Europeans was however different. European migration to Africa and Africans forced migration to America and Europe from the 16th century was purely function of various forms of capitalism ranging from plantation/agrarian to post-industrial capitalism. Authors notably Douglas Massey [10], Castles et al. [14] have pointed out that modern history of international migration can be divided into four discernible periods including: The mercantile period (1500–1800); Industrial revolution period (1845–1924) Economic globalization (1800–1929), Post-industrial migration 1960s. An analysis of each of these periods supports the claims we make here that capitalism was and is still central to migration trends and the attempts at managing and governing international migration.

3.1 The mercantile period

This period lasted for about 300 years was characterized by out flows of migrants from Europe and Africa related to processes of colonization and economic growths under mercantile capitalism [15]. Mercantilism was based on the idea that a nation's prosperity and was best served by increasing by increasing export and reducing imports. The underlying assumption was that the global wealth is static and a nation's strength will be based on the ability to supply capital [16]. Because of the nationalistic nature of mercantilism nations frequently used military interventions to further their own interests. Given the long period of mercantile capitalism and development in maritime transport, Europeans managed to occupy large parts of Americas. Although accurate number does not exist, the outflows was significant enough to allow European to establish domination over large parts of the world. At this time, European migrants were composed of agrarian settlers, administrators, artisans and entrepreneurs who founded plantations as well as convicts sent to penal colonies [10].

These entrepreneurs founded plantations which had profound impact of Africa's migration out of the Africa continent. This because the most important source of plantation labour was the forced migration of Africa slaves [17, 18] It is estimated that in excess of 10million African slaves were transported to different parts of Americas to provide labour.

The point to be made here is that economic and social transformation was driving the emigration of European. Changing land tenure and usufruct which caused the enclosure protests was part of the reason people were leaving. The disruptions caused by these transformations account for crop production failures and the concomitant search for new lands and economic opportunities by European peasants. For example, over 1 million Irish moved out of Ireland during the potato famine. Social relations and people relations with property were breeding a new class of people (land barons) while disenfranchising others. Of course this is characteristic of capital accumulation. However, for those who ventured outside Europe and founded plantations in the Americas, they were compelled to search for cheap labour that could only be provided by the crudest form of capitalism, the forced enslavement of Africans while disseminating native population.

3.2 The industrial revolution period

Massey [10] estimates that at the beginning of industrial revolution which overlapped with mercantile period (1846–1924) 48 million people moved out of Europe with Britain alone sending 41% of its population out followed by Norway at 36%, and Portugal 30%. Lucassen [19] estimates that about 60 million people left Europe during this period. It is noteworthy that among the European countries with highest economic growth sent 41% of its population. Emigration was therefore not necessarily a negative process. Industrialization changed modes of production, previous relationships that were structure around land owners and tenants and motivated young people to move to urban areas and to coal mines. People who could not adjust to the quickly transforming modes of production sought to replicate what they knew else. In part of East and Southern Africa, Europeans were actively encouraged to transfer their farming knowledge, thus a sizable number of European settlers occupied Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia.

3.3 First phase of economic globalization

The period from around 1800 to 1929, marked the first phase of economic globalization whose central features was the massive flows of capital, raw materials and goods between different continents including Europe, the Americas and Asia [10]. The incorporation of nations in this expanding global economy also created structures and motivation for large scale human movement. Although many European migrants did not come to Africa, but the very economic transformation caused them to emigrate to the America, Australia, Canada and Argentina.

Three events disrupted this European emigration. The First World War that continued up to 1920, followed by the great depression of 1929/30 and finally the outbreak of WWII. These events had profound effect on economic globalization and nationalism. For example the WWII split the world into two competing ideological and economic spheres.

3.4 Post industrial migration

This phase of international migration is different from the above three. Beginning in the 1960s Europeans no longer dominated international migration as reverse flows commenced with migrants coming from developing countries to industrialized countries of European, people were moving from less industrialized and less populated areas into industrialized and highly derange spaces ([10], p. 5) even though there were cases of people fleeing conflicts international migrants was dominated by migrants from rapidly developing countries including Mexico, China, Pakistan and the Philippines.

3.5 Second globalization phase

Currently the world has witnessed extensive flows of capital goods, raw materials and formats permitted by the end of the cold war and the integration of a significant segment of world population in the global market place, this is particularly true of china Russia and African countries: the later having been embroiled in cold war contests as satellite status. However as will be explained later globalization under pinned by capitalism and supported by deliberation had a structural effect on internal migration on very restrictive terms.

4. African migration, myths versus facts

As we mentioned at the beginning African migration is coached in myths, sensationalism which also serves to criminalize and degrade migration which in our argument is a very normal human process [12]. The first myth that characterizes the present African migration to Europe is that there is mass movement of Africans swamping Europe. In reality this is not the position. First; the global migration trend has not shown any considerable hike in the period 1990–2020 in global migration leave alone that of Africans. The population of migrants only increased from 2.9% to 3.6% as share of world population of 7 billion people. This translates to just about 270 million people while African population estimated at 1.2 billion. It is also estimated that only 3.0% of African population live outside their home countries compared to 8.5% of European population [20]. This is no way paints the picture of mass migration as claimed by the media and hysterical right wing politicians in Europe.

While there is an increase of migration by Africans, much of it is dominated by intra-Africa migration. It is recorded that since 2010 Intra African migration has increased by 43.6% compared to 26% of Africans migrating to Europe. The total number of African migrants by 2020 is estimated to be 40.6 million which is only 14.5% of the global migrants' population. Asia for example accounts for 41% of global migrant population while Europeans accounts for 22.5% much higher than African migrants [20].

Just like many European migrants in the earlier part of the 19th century who migrated for search of better economic prospects, most African moving to Europe are looking for better economic opportunities, they are not looking for welfare as is widely believed. The profile of those Africans reaching Europe attests to this reality. They are young people educated and skilled looking for jobs not handouts. It is estimated that 50% of such migrants from Africa are young educated women.

The perception that all African refugees and asylum seekers are headed to Europe is also not true. Only 27% of the world refugees arrive in Europe and Africans constitute only 7.2% of this figure. Most African migrants actually tend to remain in their regions; this is why Uganda Ethiopia, Kenya, and Sudan hosts almost 3.5 million refugees and asylum seekers from neighboring countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Somalia and Burundi [21].

4.1 Irregular verses regular migration

It is worth noting that unlike most European citizens believe, 80% of African migrant population to Europe use regular means. Even though diminishing regular migration channels drive some Africans to undertake dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea, most migrations from Africa to Europe remain regular and safe. Frontex, the European border agency recorded 40,000 irregular migrants from Africa in 2019–2020 but this contributed less than 10% of regular migration to Europe during the same period. This contradicts the perception that most Africans reaching Europe use only irregular means. This also implies that there are good reasons which permit African migrants to get visas and other migration documents from European governments.

4.2 Africans migrants as pests

It is widely perceived that African migrants are a burden to social services in their host countries such as health care and housing. Facts do not confirm this position, going back to our earlier explanation on segmented labour; African migrants provide critical labour to some of the important sector. European aging population and social perception above certain jobs create room for migrant labour. In many European countries for example African migrants constitute significant proportion of health care work force as well as in the service industry.

4.3 Migration as a zero-sum game

In popular discourse, migration of Africans to Europe is presented as a zero sum game where Africans stand to gain while Europeans have everything to lose. Emotive issues such socio-social welfare benefits, jobs, housing, education opportunities are fronted as those that Africans will gain from. But subjective matters such as race, identity and diversity and cultural preferences are never far away. However, reality

is not that linear. There are losses and gains on both sides. Given that many African migrants reaching Europe are young, educated and skilled, there is a problem of brain-drain in sending countries even if such people tend to send significant sums of money as remittances back home. Study of data from 50 African countries by Belaid and Slany [8] confirms that skilled labour contributes to the development of hosting and receiving countries.

The case of health care in Germany is illustrative of how receiving countries gain. In 2020 (13.7%) of all doctors in Germany were migrants with Africans accounting for (8%). African migrants are therefore not just a burden to social services but active contributors. What sending countries forgo in human resources is also replaced in terms of remittances. For example, in countries such as Cote-de Voire, Rwanda and South Africa, migrants contribute over 10% to the GDP, with Cote de Voire (19%) Rwanda (13%) and South Africa (10%). This underscores the point that given opportunities to migrate formally migrants can contribute even more towards the host country economy and that of the country of origin.

4.4 Economic status in Africa

Africa has a very young population which is not matched by employment opportunities and better economic prospects. The neo liberal global economic systems constrain economic growth in many African countries. Africa still remains producer of raw materials and it is no wonder the youth are following these raw, materials to participate in the processing in European capitals [22, 23].

It is estimated that around 60% of Africa's population is younger than 25 years of age, a scenario to that UNDESA projects is likely to contribute for above 30 years on the other hand European youth are declining by 24.7% which means European will require migrant labour to fill this gap [24].

5. European response

Because of the 'moral panic' about Africans migration to Europe, European governments have developed an array of responses including moral exclusion, externalization of European boundaries, sponsoring containment programmes including attempts to economic development countries that are perceived to major senders. However, there is no evidence that all these actions are bearing fruits.

5.1 Moral exclusion

European countries have adopted both soft and hard forms of exclusion. Moral exclusion is the most potent of all of them where African migrants. Moral exclusion starts by the development of exclusive moral economies which entails the 'production, distribution, circulation and use of moral sentiments, emotions and values and norms and obligations in the social space' ([25] in [26], p. 5).

Within the moral economy framework, rules of fairness condition the general conduct of people towards each other [26, 27]. On the basis of the prevailing moral economy there are those included and those excluded. In moral economy, moral inclusion those who are inside and are therefore deserving of just and fair treatment [27]. This then frames how those included should be treated and those excluded should fair.

Moral exclusion on the other hand connotes those who are outside the boundaries of fairness and considerate treatment. Those excluded from fair treatment are therefore outside everyday moral concerns and can be subjected to deprivation, exploitation, harassment and other inhuman and degrading treatment. When such treatments are meted to outsiders are seen as justified as normal and can either be ignored or tolerated [26]. African migrants in Europe largely belong to the people who are actively being excluded from the moral economy of inclusion. First, they are labeled as people fleeing poverty or failed states who only have their governments to blame and not seek sanctuary in Europe. Terms such as bogus asylum seekers, illegal migrants and economic migrants are used to justify exclusion. This is then fortified by actions such as denial of visas, refugee status or deportation which then completes the exclusion.

5.2 Epistemic exclusion

Related to the above moral exclusion there is an on-going epistemic exclusion of African migrants from. Epistemic framing of Africans in Europe has acquired exclusionary undertones both public domain and policy domains. According to Landau [4] there is epistemological reorientation which portrays African as migratory threat to European and African states sovereignty and control. While African states meekly accept this situation, their European counter parts has responded by adopting strategies that that disconnect Africans from global imagination while localizing their desires ([4], p. 170). Development in Africa has now assumed new meaning. Rather than development to be seen as a bettering people's lives it is now seen as deterrence to migration to Europe. Due to the desire by Europeans states to exclude Africans from global mobility, they are in effect excluding Africans from global membership and political freedoms. This has allowed European governments to externalize migration policies without facing any political backlash at home.

5.3 Deterrence development

Since there is widespread belief that it is poverty that is the root cause of Africans migration to Europe, the only way to halt the mass movement is to help African governments to reduce poverty. This can only be done by developing those poor African countries. So instead of Africans being attracted to Europe which is already developed, development should be taken to the potential African migrants are [4]. Landau opines that this deterrence development which includes now frames how the two continents relate [4]. Joint initiatives including cooperation agreements, new funding instruments and conditionalities are spearheaded and financed by European Union geared towards stopping Africans from going to Europe. The containment initiative has three parts. First is the direct conditionalities given to African governments if they collaborate in stopping irregular migration. The second part is the redefinition of what successful development is. Success of development is not measured in terms of GDP or per capita income but addressing the causes of migration to Europe. Thirdly assistance to African is now premised on stopping all mobility from the continent. This thinking is grossly misplaced. Countries that contribute the highest number of African migrants such as Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana South Africa are relatively developed. Indeed, Nigeria and South Africa are the two biggest economy in the continent while Kenya and Ghana are considered low middle income countries. These countries also top the continent in terms of education and skills training.

6. Conclusion

Past migration accounts demonstrate how migration is largely linked to economic and social transformations in both sending and receiving countries. While European economies are developed and able to meet most of the basic needs of her citizens, the aging population has to be complemented by migrant labour but this could create both racial and cultural composition of European countries. Although international migration will remain emotive for the foreseeable future, this piece contends that it will likely continue given the propensity of human beings to move for economic reasons or for leisure or simply to run away from life threatening circumstances. Migration theories have attempted to explain the pull and push factors the frame migration, yet we still do not really understand the complexities and consideration that go into migration decision making. Finally, we have tried to demonstrate here that African migration to Europe is not unique or new. The reasons that drove millions out of Europe are being experienced by African countries. The response by European countries may stem migration in the short run but in the long run it will not stop population movement.


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