



SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE SECURITY AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF MIGRATION AND REGIONAL CONFLICT IN WEST AFRICA

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(Received 3 October 2023, Revision Accepted 23 October 2023)

ABSTRACT

The study analyses the security and economic implications of migration and regional conflict in west Africa. Although this issue has rarely been tackled in official or academic fora, it mirrors the author's interest that in an age of globalization, migration and insecurity are two inextricably woven issues that have remained a major threat to the sovereignty of states in the West African region. This has dire consequences for the security and stability of the region at large. The paper observes that climate change and environmental factors, food crises, refugee flow, poverty, and unemployment, are major causes of migration. The paper employed a comprehensive desk review methods that depends on the analysis of secondary data sources. Finally, the paper concludes that the desire to improve one's material existence and achieve more secure and meaningful lives drives people to move and construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct their social relations. To tackle the problem of immigration the paper recommended that the root causes of immigration, such as poverty, violence, and lack of economic opportunities in the home countries should be addressed. This will require foreign aid, diplomatic efforts, and cooperation with international organizations to address issues of poverty, lack of economic opportunities that drive people to leave their home countries for greener pastures.

KEYWORDS: migration, regional conflict, security, economic and flow, Nigeria, Socio-economic, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Migration has been a collective experience for humans throughout history, and almost all societies have experienced it in varying degrees and forms, with some sending many immigrants abroad, some receiving or hosting, and still others being in transit along paths of migration (Abubakar, 2001; Ukwai & Okpa, 2017; Odinka & Iwuanyanwu, 2023).,Theophilus et al 2023

However, this fluid pattern of human existence has serious security implications on migration flows between Nigeria and its neighbouring West African states. Conflict escalations have been an enduring feature of human societies because of migrations (Korieh, 2008; Ladan, 2012; Okpa et al, 2022). The movement of people can lead to competition for resources and changes in power dynamics, which can lead to increased tension and conflict (Odinka et al, 2023).

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Furthermore, the pressure on resources can lead to an increase in xenophobia, racism, and discrimination towards migrants, which can also contribute to conflict escalation. In addition, the reality of migration also has an impact on the security of the states of origin and destination (Ukwayi et al, 2017; Okpa et al, 2020). As a result of the movement of people, states may experience a loss of population and human capital, which can negatively impact economic development and stability. Additionally, the influx of migrants into a state can put a strain on resources and social services, which can lead to increased tension between the migrants and the host population (Lawa, 2008; Ubong et al, 2022; Odinka et al, 2023).

In recent years, there has been a renewed focus on the significance of migration in the context of developing countries. This has led to a "revolution" in demographic studies, as scholars increasingly recognize the importance of migration in understanding the dynamics of human societies (Quashigah, 2017; Odinka et al, 2023). This is particularly true in the context of plural societies like those of Africa, where migration has long been a significant aspect of social and economic development. The study of migration in relation to conflict escalation is particularly relevant for African societies, where migration has often been driven by factors such as political instability, economic hardship, and environmental degradation (Stern, 1983; Ukwayi et al, 2017 and Theophilus et al 2021). The movement of people in these contexts can lead to increased competition for resources, changes in power dynamics, and tensions between different ethnic and religious groups. Additionally, the influx of migrants into a host society can put a strain on resources and social services, which can lead to increased tension between the migrants and the host population (Eyo et al, 2022). Despite the challenges, it is important to recognize that migration can also have positive effects on human society, such as the exchange of ideas, skills, and cultural influences (Takwa, 2004; Theophilus, Owa, & Ojie, 2021; Ogar et al, 2023). Therefore, it is essential to develop policies and strategies that take into account the complex dynamics of migration and its relationship to conflict escalation in African societies.

Since the mid-1980s, the causes, intensity, persistence, and consequences of human migration and conflict escalation in Africa have changed (Okpa et al, 2021; Ezeanya *et al*, 2023). The nature, character, and dimension of these phenomena, as well as the implications they pose for post-colonial African statehood, have made it imperative for scholars to find answers to the many questions they raise (Tedibkbsh, & Chenoy, 2007; Theophilus, Adams, & Abumbe, 2022; Theophilus *et al*, 2023; Odinka et al, 2023). Three specific questions that scholars have been trying to answer include:

(a) Characterization of the new waves of human migration and their relationship with social and political conflict escalation, as well as the resulting displacement of people. This involves understanding the factors that drive migration and how they contribute to conflict escalation and displacement.

(b) Empirically establishing the causal nexus between human migration and conflict escalation. This involves isolating and analyzing the variables that underlie these phenomena in the study area. This can be done by examining the linkages between migration and conflict escalation through various methods, such as statistical analysis and case studies.

(c) Understanding how the Nigerian state has been able to manage the crisis resulting from human migration, against the backdrop of the challenges posed by the fast-changing world of the twenty-first century. This involves analyzing the policies, strategies, and institutions that have been put in place to address the challenges of migration and conflict escalation and assessing their effectiveness in addressing these issues.

Overall, understanding the relationship between migration and conflict escalation in Africa is crucial for developing effective policies and strategies to address these issues, as well as for understanding the broader dynamics of human society. This paper aims to address the question of the relationship between migration and conflict escalation in West Africa, with a particular focus on Nigeria. It argues that the prevalence of migration and resultant conflict escalation are part of the broader manifestation of serious socio-economic and political contradictions facing the Nigerian state. The paper will conduct a historical examination of this link, in order to understand how migration and conflict escalation

have evolved over time and how they are interconnected. The paper aims to fill the gap in understanding these issues and it's not claiming to have the complete answers. The final product of this paper aims to provide practical solutions to address the security implications of migration and conflict escalation in Nigeria. It is expected to offer insights and recommendations that will help the Nigerian state to effectively manage the security challenges that arise from migration and escalating conflicts. The goal is to help the state to mitigate the negative impacts of migration and conflicts on the Nigerian society and to enhance the overall security and stability of the country.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

The data for this study are generated from:

- (a) Libraries where we obtained information on trans-human migration, books, magazines and journals, etc.
- (b) Archival materials, newspapers
- (c) White paper reports

The research design used for this study was primarily informed by the nature and scope of the study. In light of this, brief historical accounts were chosen as well as content analysis to help frame a more comprehensive understanding about the topic being explored. To this end, documented literature was relied on. Documented literature was widely seen as the major instrument of research, due to its ability to support or provide evidence needed for a particular field or study. Its credibility and reliability also allow it to stand alone if necessary, so it is often used as a reliable source of information. The thematic areas that guided the literature review include concept of migration, concept of conflict, concept of security, patterns of migration between Nigeria neighbours, migration trends and migrant characteristics in and out of Nigeria/within west Africa and ECOWAS policy responses to migration in west Africa. The preliminary article survey included over 256 articles in total, with data extracted from 59 published articles. These articles were sourced from the Google search engine, the Scopus database, and PubMed. Selected articles comprise both qualitative and quantitative published articles written in English.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The Concept of Migration

Migration is a complex issue that has both legal and political implications. In terms of international law, it raises questions about the rights and responsibilities of countries in relation to immigrants and refugees. In terms of international relations, it can impact peace and security by creating tension and conflict between countries. Migration can be driven by a variety of factors, including economic survival, political struggles, and the search for better living conditions. The factors that drive migration are often interconnected and can vary depending on the source and destination of the movement. This complexity makes it difficult to make generalized statements about migration (Ugumanim *et al*, 2014; Ndum *et al* 2012). Overall, migration is a multifaceted issue that requires a comprehensive approach to address the legal, political, and economic factors that influence it. This includes addressing the root causes of migration, such as poverty and lack of opportunity, as well as providing support and protection for migrants and refugees.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) Migration is the movement of individuals or groups from one place to another, most often across international borders. Migration can also occur within a single country or region as people look for better opportunities or greater safety and security. Depending on the circumstances around their journey, migrants may be classified in different ways by governments, including economic migrant, refugee, asylum seeker, and more (Okpa, 2022). Whether they migrate voluntarily or due to external factors such as poverty or conflict, migration remains an important driver of growth and development throughout history. In this study, the term "migration" refers to both legal and illegal forms of human migration and all its ramifications. In recent years, there has been growing interest among scholars from various disciplines in the role of migration in shaping identity. This has led to migration being seen not just as a powerful framework for understanding the formation of human society in Africa, but also as a useful paradigm for understanding conflicts at the regional, continental, and global levels.

By studying the link between migration and escalating conflicts, we can gain a deeper understanding of the forces and processes that drive migration and how they relate to conflicts that span across regional and continental boundaries. This can help us to better understand the complex relationship between migration and conflict.

The Concept of Conflicts

Okpe (2008) and Ubi (2013) noted that conflict is an inevitable aspect of human life and a basic fact of social interaction. Conflicts are a natural part of life and arise when individuals or groups pursue different goals and aspirations in a social environment. The view of Lewis A. Coser, sees conflict as

...a struggle over values or claims to status, power and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals. Conflicts can occur between individuals, between collectivities, or between individuals and collectivities. Human migration conflicts are perennial features of social life.

Conflict has the potential to become chaotic and uncontrollable, leading to violence. This inherent violence-generating propensity is what makes conflict a unique form of human migration relations. It can cause displacement, harm to individuals and communities, and disruption of social and economic systems. To prevent this, it is important to address the root causes of conflict and work towards peaceful resolution and reconciliation (Ukwayi *etal*, 2018; Okpa *etal*, 2018). This can be done through diplomatic efforts, conflict resolution mechanisms, and support for community-based initiatives that promote understanding and cooperation. Post-colonial African countries have experienced a variety of conflicts, and one area in which human migration has contributed to this is through the increase in internal, sectional, and other forms of conflicts in several countries. This has been particularly prevalent in the post-cold war era (Abdullahi, 2019; Eze, *etal*, 2022). The roots of these conflicts can be traced to structural defects inherited from colonial masters, and since their departure, conflicts of different types and magnitudes have occurred in many African countries. Some countries have experienced minor conflicts, while others have had to contend with large-scale conflicts, and in some cases, the

escalation of conflicts has led to full-blown wars (Ukwayi *etal*, 2018).

The pattern of conflicts in some African countries has been changing due to the prevailing circumstances. In some states, the main cause of conflicts can be attributed to economic factors, while in others it is based on ethno-religious tendencies (Ukwayi *etal*, 2018). Africa has been dealing with both old and new conflicts in different parts of the continent. Several countries in recent years have experienced conflicts resulting in loss of lives, displacement of people, and damage to infrastructure (Eze, *etal*, 2022; Odinka *et al*, 2023). The affected countries include Rwanda, Angola, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan, and Cote d'Ivoire. The changing nature of conflicts around the world has had an impact on Africa, where conflicts are now more internal than between states (Manu, *et al*, 2014; Okpa *etal*, 2023). The sources of threats to peace have shifted from conflicts between states to internal conflicts. As a result, Africa is experiencing a large number of intra-state conflicts that have generated thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons. These individuals are often forced to leave their homes and live at the mercy of other countries and the international community. According to Jallow (2007), close to half of the world's population of refugees and internally displaced persons can be found in Africa. These conflicts have created a humanitarian crisis and have a significant impact on the economic and social development of the affected countries.

Conflict in Africa has had a major detrimental effect on the continent's development, with an estimated cost of approximately \$300 billion between 1990-2005. This amount is equivalent to the total international aid received during the same period. This highlights the potential for development that was lost due to conflict. Additionally, the report notes that this estimate only covers the periods of actual combat and does not include the indirect costs of war, such as inflation, debt, and high unemployment (Olaniyan, 2016; Ogar *et al*, 2023). The knock-on effects of conflicts have important developmental implications. For instance, income generated from natural resources may be directed towards private individuals instead of benefiting the entire

nation. Additionally, conflicts may cause more deaths as a result of their aftermath than from the actual fighting, especially among women and children. Moreover, conflicts cause evident physical and emotional consequences that lead to human migration.

The concept of security

The concept of security has undergone change in recent years, shifting from an exclusive focus on territorial security to a greater emphasis on people's security. This shift reflects a growing dissatisfaction with the idea of "statism," in which the interests of the state are the primary consideration in all matters (Nzeakor et al, 2022). The modern conception of security places a greater emphasis on improving the welfare of individuals, rather than just protecting the state. This shift in focus carries implications for the role of national and international institutions, which are now expected to prioritize the security of individual human beings (Okpa et al, 2021). The new approach prioritizes the security of individual human beings over the preservation of sovereign states, rejecting the Cold War perspective of states being the primary moral community in international society. Additionally, the concept of security has moved from being based on armaments to being based on sustainable human development. This highlights the importance of addressing the root causes of insecurity, such as poverty, inequality and lack of access to basic services, instead of just relying on military and security measures. The concept of security is multi-faceted and can be understood in different ways (Ukwayi et al, 2018). One perspective is human security, as defined by Third World scholars, which focuses on the security of individuals and their basic needs. Another perspective is state security, which focuses on the security of the state and its territorial integrity. Additionally, security can be analyzed in terms of the "security of the stomach," which refers to the security of access to food and other basic necessities (Okpa et al, 2018).

Another important aspect to consider is the relationship between security and migration. This can include the impact of security policies on migration, as well as how migration shapes security policymaking. This relationship is a significant topic in the on-going discussions about global peace and security. The study of security and migration can be analyzed from different

perspectives, and it's necessary to understand the context in which security is being discussed and the different ways in which it can be understood.

Migration trends and migrant characteristics in and out of Nigeria/within West Africa

The movement of Nigerians from their country has been a subject of disagreement, as different estimates of the number of people who have left vary significantly. The primary reason for this inconsistency is the absence of a comprehensive national policy on migration and a database of related information. Many individuals, policymakers, and the media tend to believe that the global number of Nigerians who have emigrated is between 10 to 20 million, while official sources suggest a substantially lower figure. The Network of Migration Research on Africa (NOMRA) analysed all available statistical information and determined that as of 2010, roughly three million Nigerians had migrated throughout Africa. The majority of these individuals, over 70%, were living in nearby nations like Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, as well as other West African nations like Togo, Ghana, and Mali. Of the 4 million Nigerian emigrants, around 650,000 were estimated to be living in OECD countries, including 15% who were considered to be illegal or irregular migrants. This highlights the need for a comprehensive national migration policy and data bank that can provide accurate information on the size and movements of Nigerian emigrants. With this information, policymakers can better understand the causes and effects of migration and develop policies that support the well-being of both emigrants and those who remain in Nigeria.

The protocol that complements the United Nations Convention against transnational organized crime, aimed at preventing the smuggling of migrants through different means such as land, sea, and air, highlights that intra-regional migration within the West African sub-region accounts for nearly 90% of the overall migration. Furthermore, it emphasizes that this proportion is seven times greater than migration flows to Europe. Although the migration rates in West Africa are lower compared to the average in Sub-Saharan Africa, they are still notable, given the poverty, political instability, and demographic

pressures present in the region. Nigeria is a country of both emigrants and immigrants. For many years, Nigeria has been a host to immigrants from all over the world. It is believed that the majority of immigrants in Nigeria are from West Africa, with Ghanaians, Beninois, Nigeriens, Togolese, and Cameroonians being the largest communities. However, there is no recent statistical data available to confirm this as the last census conducted in Nigeria was in 2006 and the data is not publicly available. According

to the 1991 census, these groups were the largest immigrant communities in Nigeria, but it is important to note that migration patterns and demographics can change over time. This highlights the complexity of migration in Nigeria, as it is both a country of origin and a destination for migrants. It's important to understand that Nigeria has a history of being a host to immigrants, and the number of immigrants in Nigeria is significant, it is not just a country of emigrants. Policies that support the well-being of both immigrants and emigrants will be important for the development of Nigeria.

Table 1: Stock of Migrants in Africa, Top Ten Destinations in 2000, 2005 and 2010

Destination Country	2000	2005	2010
Cote d'Ivoire	2,336,000	2,371,000	2,406,700
Ghana	1,505,000	1,669,000	1,851,800
South Africa	1,022,000	1,106,000	1,862,900
Nigeria	751,000	971,000	1,127,700
Tanzania	893,000	792,000	659,200
Burkina Faso	573,000	773,000	1,043,000
Sudan	854,000	639,000	753,400
Libya	559,000	618,000	683,000
Ethiopia	662,000	555,000	548,000
DRC	717,000	539,000	444,700

Sources: IOM, 2008, UNDP, 2009; NOMRA 2010.

It is believed that many immigrants in Nigeria are from West Africa, with Ghanaians, Beninois, Nigeriens, Togolese, and Cameroonians being the largest communities. However, there is no recent statistical data available to confirm this. According to the 1991 census, these groups were the largest immigrant communities in Nigeria. Nigeria has a history of expelling and restricting the movement of West African citizens, particularly those without valid documents and without job skills. The expulsion of 1.5 million West Africans from Nigeria in 1983 and 700,000 more in 1985, as well as Nigeria's closure of its borders with neighbouring countries on several occasions, including in 2012 due to violent attacks from Boko Haram. These actions have been criticized for impeding the free movement of people and goods and negatively affecting economic and social development in the West African region. In recent years, Africa has seen a high proportion of international migration in the form of refugees. Despite the end of civil wars and organized repatriation efforts, many refugees

remain in asylum countries across West Africa, including Nigeria. For example, around 840,000 refugees from the Bakassi region in Cameroon were returned to Nigeria and resettled in culturally similar states, but a durable solution for these refugees is still being sought. International migration in West Africa is characterized by the increasing participation of women in commercial migration within the informal sector. This type of migration is considered less risky and less prone to crises compared to other forms of migration. This type of migration is dominated by women and plays a significant role in promoting intra-regional trade and serving as a lifeline for weak African states, particularly Benin, Niger, Togo, and Ghana. The feminization of migration in West Africa is a significant trend and has become a major survival strategy for many women facing poverty and high unemployment rates. This shift is leading to changes in traditional gender roles and affecting African family cultures, particularly in Nigeria where it is one of the most notable migration

patterns. Independent female migration is playing an important role in the lives of these women, who are seeking better economic opportunities and a better quality of life. This trend of feminization of migration is also seen in other African countries such as Ghana, Guinea, and Senegal where women are increasingly engaging in informal cross-border trade, domestic work, and other low-skilled migration. In West Africa, there is a trend towards commercial migration, where self-employed entrepreneurs are moving to different regions for business opportunities. This type of migration is becoming more prevalent than labour migration, particularly in the formal sector. This trend is now a dominant feature of migration patterns in the West African sub-region.

a. People may move between neighbouring countries to engage in trade, cultural exchange, or to access transborder natural resources due to shared geography and cultural similarities. This movement of people is known as migration for trade.

b. The impact of environmental and climate change can also drive migration, as people may

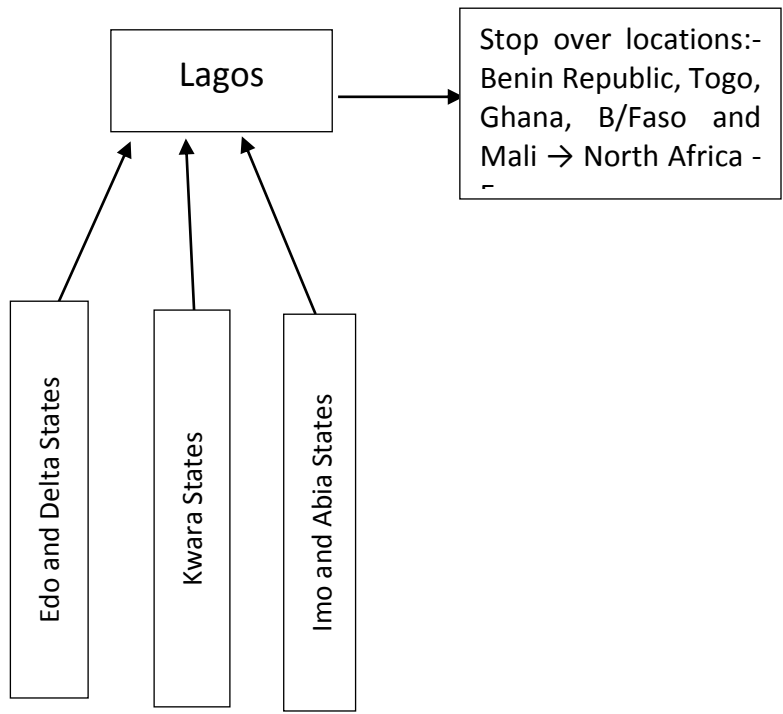
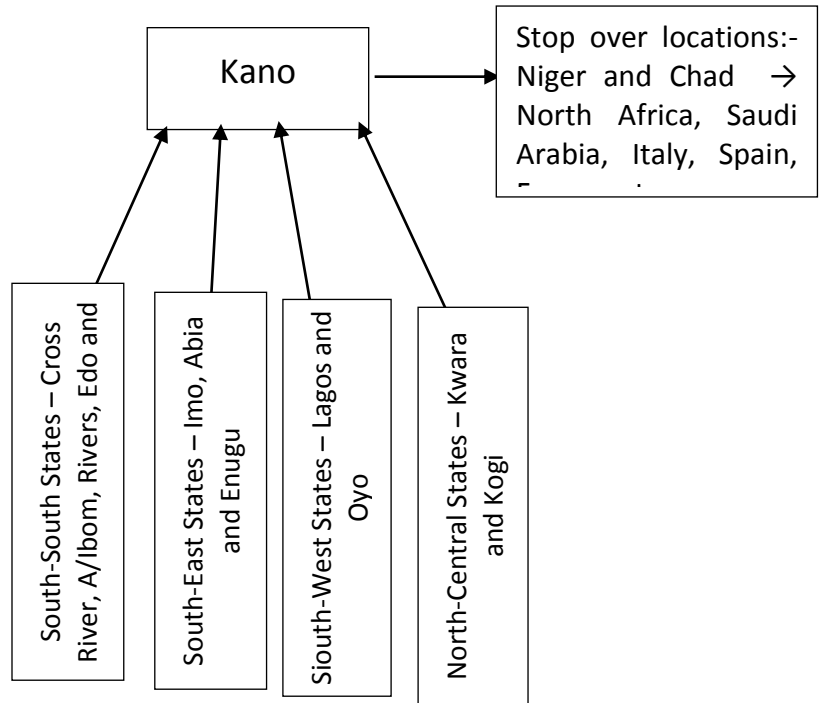
be forced to move from areas affected by natural disasters or environmental degradation.

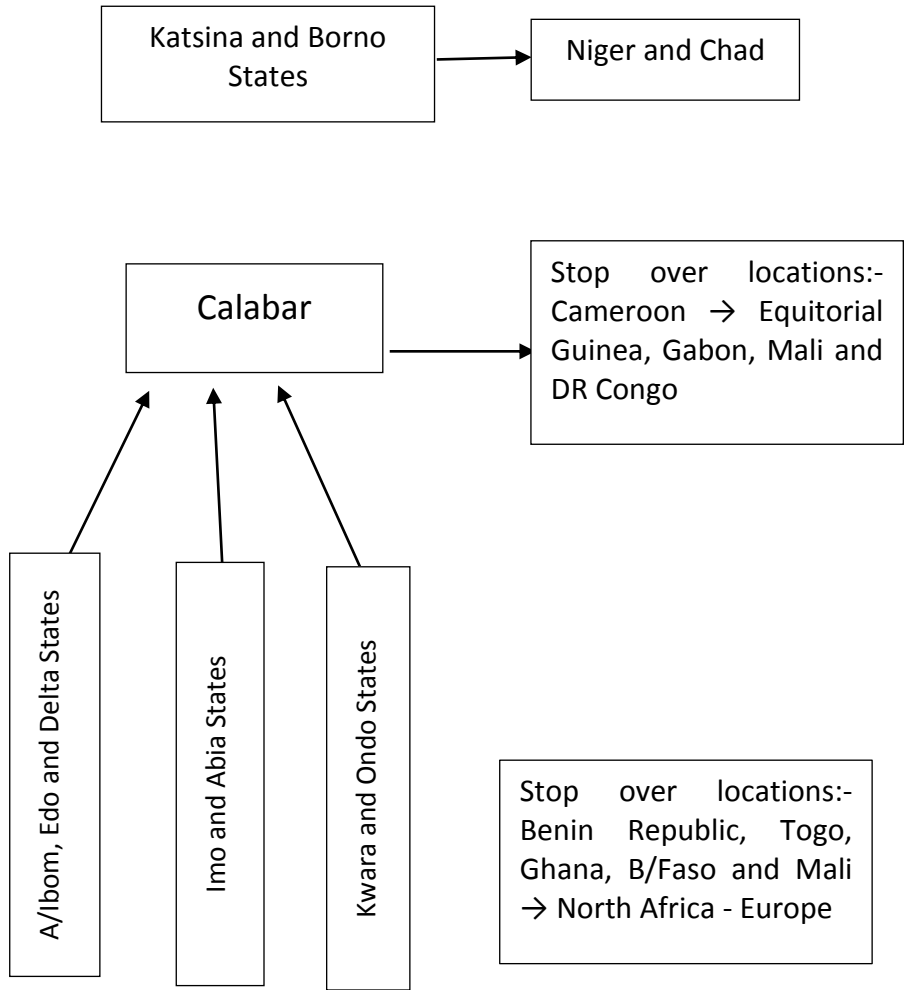
c. Migration for religious reasons, such as for religious education or the propagation of religious beliefs, is another factor that can drive migration within the region.

d. Migration for economic reasons, including trafficking flows both within and outside the region, can also play a significant role in driving migration in West Africa. People may be motivated to move in search of better economic opportunities or to escape poverty, and unfortunately, some may fall victim to trafficking and exploitation.

The factors you have listed, such as poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment, can contribute to a weakened societal structure and limited resources for border monitoring and enforcement. This can make it more difficult for law enforcement agencies to effectively monitor, report, and intercept illegal activity at the borders. Additionally, a weakened extended family support network can also make it harder for individuals to access resources and support, potentially increasing the likelihood of them turning to illegal activities.

- Common routes for trafficking of children and women for child domestic service, labour and sexual exploitation are: -





Ladan (2012)

Table 2: Statistics of Persons of Concern: - As At January, 2011

LOCATION	IDPS	RETURNEES	REFUGEES (incl LI)	CAUSES OF DISPLACEMENT
Akwa Ibom	200,000	50,000 (Bakassi)	-	Boundary conflicts Returnees/ICJ
Cross River	115,000	325,000 (Bakassi)	-	Boundary Conflicts and ICJ
Bayelsa	-	18,000 (Bakassi)	-	ICJ
Ebonyi	80,000	-	-	Boundary Conflicts
Bauchi	45,000	-	-	Spill over from Plateau crisis 2001-2010
Kebbi	70,296	-	-	Floods and international boundary conflict
Jigawa	200,000	-	-	Floods, 2006 & 2010
Plateau	250,000	-	-	Religious and Ethnic Conflicts
Taraba	25,000	10,401	-	Ongoing programme for IDPs. Returnees successfully integrated
Benue	48,000	-	4,654	Tribal conflicts and Cameroonian Refugees
Gombe	15,000	-	-	Spill over from Plateau Conflicts
Ogun	-	-	4,500	Locally integrating refugees, Residual caseload and other nationalities
Edo	250,000	8,000 (Bakassi)	-	IDPs from Niger Delta and ICJ cases
Borno	5,000	-	1,021	Book Haram cases and Chadian Refugees
Sokoto	35,000	-	-	Floods victims

NOTE:
Katsina, Jigawa, Oyo, Lagos, Ogun and Kogi States IDPs affected by flood disaster are in the process of being assessed.

Source: National Commission for Refugees, Abuja, January 2011

ECOWAS POLICY RESPONSES TO MIGRATION IN WEST AFRICA

Regional integration, as outlined in the ECOWAS Treaty of 1975, is driven by the need to optimize resource allocation and exploitation within the region. The treaty recognizes the importance of intra-regional trade and migration and aims to remove obstacles to the free movement of people, services, and capital between member states. The treaty aims to achieve this goal through a gradual process and has been instrumental in fostering greater economic cooperation and integration within the region. The ECOWAS Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment, which was signed in 1979, aims to promote regional integration within the ECOWAS community. The protocol guarantees the right of citizens of member states to enter, reside, and establish

themselves in the territory of other member states. It defines community citizens as citizens of any member state and requires member states to exempt them from holding visitor's visas and residence permits, allowing them to work and undertake commercial and industrial activities within their territories. The protocol is an important step towards removing barriers to free movement and promoting greater cooperation within the region. The Revised ECOWAS Treaty reaffirms the importance of free movement and establishes the right of entry, residence, and establishment for community citizens. Member states are required to recognize these rights and adopt measures to ensure their effective implementation, promoting greater integration and cooperation within the region. In 2006, the ECOWAS summit requested the ECOWAS Commission to create a common

regional stance on migration, specifically on intra-regional migration and movement to Europe. The Secretariat responded by setting up a task force on migration, which later became the Department of Free Movement of Persons, with the aim of increasing integration and collaboration within the region to address migration in all its aspects. ECOWAS member states endorsed the ECOWAS Common Approach on Migration at their 33rd Ordinary Session in Burkina Faso in 2008. This approach emphasizes the importance of free movement of people within ECOWAS for integration and recognizes the positive impact of regular migration to other parts of the world. It also aims to combat irregular migration and human trafficking, especially of women and children, through encouraging dialogues between ECOWAS host communities and transit countries. The approach seeks to balance the benefits of free movement with addressing the negative impacts of migration. ECOWAS member states have obligations to remove any barriers to free movement of people and goods. This includes ensuring the validity and security of ECOWAS travel documents, raising awareness about migration rights, harmonizing labour laws, and preventing harassment during travel. These actions are necessary to fully implement free movement of people, services, and capital, and to create a more integrated and efficient regional market.

In order to advance a managed regular migration, ECOWAS member states have adopted a Common Approach that incorporates the formation of pilot centers to provide potential migrants with guidance on employment opportunities in destinations abroad. Such centers should be created in cooperation with the diplomatic representatives of those countries. Additionally, Pilot host, orientation, support and reinsertion centers must be established for returning migrants. These centers would provide information and support for potential migrants, including job opportunities abroad, as well as assistance for returning migrants, including reintegration programs, to ensure a smooth transition back to their home country.

This approach aims to promote regular migration, and to ensure that it is managed in a way that benefits both the migrants and the countries they are moving to and from. The concern about students leaving their home countries to study abroad and not returning has been addressed by proposing measures to make it easier for them to return. This includes strengthening solidarity between the students and their home countries. The goal is to encourage them to return and use their education and skills to contribute to their home country's development. To effectively manage migration flows within and outside the ECOWAS region, it is essential to understand the factors that drive emigration, as well as the socio-economic conditions in different areas within the region. This information can be used to develop targeted investment policies and to create profiles of migrants.

To manage irregular migration and the trafficking of women and children, several steps can be taken. It is essential to inform and educate potential migrants about the dangers of irregular migration and smugglers. Additionally, ECOWAS member states must work together to control clandestine migration, eliminate human trafficking groups, disseminate information, cooperate in law enforcement efforts and assist host countries in facilitating migrants returning home. It is also important to ensure that the principle of returning migrants with dignity and respect for their human rights is upheld. This can include providing logistics and funding for voluntary returns, as well as implementing measures to facilitate the reintegration of irregular migrants upon their return to their home countries. Overall, managing migration flows within the ECOWAS region requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach that addresses the underlying drivers of migration, while also taking steps to protect the rights and well-being of migrants. The Common Approach aims to enhance migration management by improving the training of immigration officials, supplying modern travel documents and screening equipment, and establishing a shared digital database for immigration departments to combat irregular immigration effectively.

MIGRATION, INSECURITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Migration and insecurity are closely linked in the ECOWAS sub-region. The causes of migration in West Africa are complex and include climate change, environmental factors, food crisis, refugee flows, poverty, and unemployment. These factors are particularly evident in the Sahel region, where extreme weather conditions and drought have led to low crop yields and food insecurity. As a result, many people are forced to migrate in search of work and a means of livelihood. Akinterinwa's study highlights the impact of food crises in Niger, which has led to thousands of Nigerians migrating to five Northern Nigerian states in search of labour, but also contributing to food insecurity in those areas. This migration not only affects the individuals and families who are forced to leave their homes, but also has significant security implications for the host countries and the region as a whole. The large influx of migrants can put strain on resources and infrastructure, leading to social and economic tension. Additionally, the presence of migrants can be exploited by extremist groups to recruit or target them, or to incite anti-migrant sentiment among host communities. Therefore, addressing the root causes of migration and providing sustainable solutions to food and water insecurity is crucial to addressing the nexus between migration and insecurity in the ECOWAS sub-region.

According to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) report, around 12 million individuals living in the Sahel region of Nigeria are in danger of experiencing hunger as a result of desertification and drought. These ecological stressors have compelled the pastoralists to move their traditional migratory paths towards the south, in order to find better grazing land and animal feed. As a consequence, there have been conflicts between the herdsmen and farmers in the areas they are moving to, including the southern part of Niger and neighbouring nations. This conflict is mainly between the Fulani herdsmen and the farmers they encounter on their journey.

Desertification is a major problem in many regions of Nigeria, and it has been made worse by human activities such as overgrazing, deforestation, and poor land management practices. Droughts also exacerbate the problem,

making it difficult for farmers and pastoralists to sustain their livelihoods. The situation has become dire, with many people at risk of hunger and displacement. The Nigerian government, along with aid organizations, must take immediate action to address this crisis and provide aid and support to those affected. Additionally, sustainable land management practices and policies must be implemented to prevent further desertification and reduce the risk of future conflicts. The crisis of underemployment and youth unemployment is a major political and security dilemma in West Africa, as young people desperate for a livelihood are often recruited into criminal and terrorist networks. In Sierra Leone, for example, over 50% of young people lack proper work, making them vulnerable to recruitment by criminal and terrorist organizations. The situation is similar in Northern Nigeria, where many youths have come under the influence of terrorist and criminal organizations and have taken up arms in exchange for money. Boko Haram has used the opportunity to recruit young men and establish connections with other extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb. Mali and Sudan have been used as training locations for the group. The literature has documented the cross-border recruitment of young people as mercenaries in armed conflicts.

The proliferation of small arms and trafficking, drug trafficking, illegal checkpoints, and other forms of criminal activity pose a threat to the domestic and regional security in the arc of territory extending from Guinea-Bissau to Cote d'Ivoire. These insecurities not only affect the domestic internal affairs of each nation but also the entire sub-region. The governments of West Africa, along with international partners, must take immediate action to address the root causes of youth unemployment and underemployment, such as economic inequality and lack of educational and job opportunities. This would help to reduce the vulnerability of young people to recruitment by criminal and terrorist organizations, and ultimately improve the overall security situation in the region. Insecurity and security are important factors in the migration process, as crises and conflicts often serve as push factors that compel people to seek safety and security elsewhere. The relationship between migration and security is complex and

multifaceted, and it impacts both destination and origin countries in different ways. One of the main concerns related to the migration-security nexus is the issue of international terrorism and foreign radicalization. There is a belief that illegal immigrants are at a higher risk of being radicalized by terrorists, which is a rising security issue for both the countries where the immigrants are going and the countries they come from. This is a serious issue that needs to be addressed by governments and international organizations to ensure the safety and security of all those involved in the migration process. In summary, the nexus between migration and security is a complex issue that has security implications for both destination and origin countries. It is important for governments and international organizations to work together to address this issue and ensure that the rights and security of all those involved in the migration process are protected.

Migration flows between Nigeria and other West African states can have both positive and negative security implications depending on the motives behind the migration. Before migration, the security implications may include issues such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunities in the country of origin. During migration, there may be dangers such as human trafficking, exploitation, and abuse. After migration, there may be issues such as integration into the host country, discrimination, and potential for radicalization. Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, governments have taken measures to prevent the exportation of criminal-minded individuals to their countries by suspecting every intending migrant as a potential terrorist. This has led to increased scrutiny and investigation of migrants, as well as the introduction of biometric travel and smart card systems, such as thumbprints, to verify the identity of travellers. In Asia, countries such as Japan, China, Hong Kong, and Singapore have implemented these types of systems as a means of ensuring security. In general, although migration can have advantages for the economy and society, it is crucial to take into account the security consequences and implement necessary actions to reduce any possible hazards.

The European Council has adopted a policy of total war against illegal migration, requiring all member states to implement a common

identification process for visas. On the other hand, African leaders have not focused on migration flows directly, instead focusing on international terrorism which can be linked to migration. Historically and economically speaking, West African states have cross-border ethical systems and economic ties that makes borders porous, and immigration checks nearly irrelevant for many reasons. Nigeria, along with other West African countries, is currently facing a major challenge of security due to unchecked and unmonitored immigration. This can lead to an increase in crime, terrorism, and other security issues. Nigeria's strategic location makes it attractive to people from neighbouring countries. To solve this problem, a comprehensive approach is needed that addresses the underlying causes of migration, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunities, as well as implementing effective border control and immigration measures. This will help manage migration flows in a way that promotes security and stability in the region.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The complex relationship between migration and regional conflicts in West Africa has far-reaching implications, impacting both security and the economy at various levels. The movement of people across borders has worsened existing tensions and created an environment conducive to conflict. Displaced populations in refugee camps and informal settlements strain the stability of fragile states, leading to security gaps and lawlessness. This, in turn, provides fertile ground for the radicalization and recruitment efforts of extremist groups, further destabilising the West African region. Competition for limited resources, triggered by migration and regional conflicts, increases tensions among communities and can escalate into full-blown conflicts. The allocation of resources to conflict management and humanitarian aid hinders the government's ability to invest in essential infrastructure, healthcare, and education. The destruction of economic infrastructure during conflicts disrupts supply chains and stalls economic growth. Migration can lead to a brain drain, depriving home countries of skilled expertise. However, it can also result in remittances that significantly contribute to the economy, fostering economic development and reducing poverty.

To address these challenges effectively, a comprehensive approach is required, emphasising conflict prevention, peacebuilding, good governance, and the development of robust and inclusive institutions. Implementing legal frameworks and policies that facilitate safe migration, promote skill development, and encourage entrepreneurship can help alleviate economic burdens and enhance prosperity. The paper also recommends the development of fundamental infrastructure such as roads, schools, hospitals, and access to clean water which can generate job opportunities and enhance living conditions, thus reducing the push factors for emigration. Encouraging entrepreneurship by supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and startups can stimulate local economies, offering alternative livelihoods to potential migrants. Furthermore, government of various states should encourage economic integration and regional trade cooperation to create a larger and more stable market, potentially leading to increased job opportunities. Harmonizing policies related to immigration, trade, and investment within the region can help reduce barriers and encourage movement within West Africa region.

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