

STOPPING AFRICAN MIGRATION INTO EUROPE: A POSSIBILITY OR A HOAX

Adekola ADEAGBO¹, Olumide OMODUNBI²

¹*Department of Culture and Social Sciences, University of Osnabrueck, Germany, Phone: +4917683082990, Email: aadeagbo@uni-osnabrueck.de*

²*Department of Political Sciences, Osun State University, Osogbo Phone: +2347034933360, Email: olumide.omodunbi@uniosun.edu.ng*

How to cite: ADEAGBO, A., & OMODUNBI, O. (2021). "Stopping African Migration into Europe: A Possibility or a Hoax." *Annals of Spiru Haret University. Economic Series*, 21(1), 167-177, doi: <https://doi.org/10.26458/2119>

Abstract

In August 2018, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel embarked on a trip to three African countries (Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal) to discuss economic ties and partnership with the main aim to limit, if not stop the over-whelming migration of citizens from Africa. The trip has raised some hopes as well as question towards what it seeks to achieve and this paper tries to investigate the prospects using historical and theoretical approaches to understand why people migrate and as well the hold of government on its people if at all such partnership will yield positive results. Using Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the social capital theory, this paper concludes that the journey through such partnership is a rough one if not a dead-end unless some structural changes are made in the process of governance in the aforementioned countries.

Keywords: Africa; migration; European partnership; government; social capital.

JEL Classification: J30, J15, J16



Issue 1/2021

Introduction

In August 2018, the German chancellor Angela Merkel took a bold step to visit three African countries namely Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal. The reason behind this so called world event was due to the alarming influx of migrants coming to the shores of Europe with the hope of having a better life among other reasons which are not limited to persecutions in their home countries and they wanting flee from war thorn areas e.g. Sudan, Syria etc. More so, the motivation for her visit was focused on these three countries where it is presumed that most economically defined immigrant originate from; and with the hope to partner with the governments of these countries to provide means through which the said problem could be nipped in the bud [Associated Press, 2018]. Although the issue of migration has not always been a major problem as it is today as many of the countries in most western developed states including the European Union have enjoyed the opportunities of having professionals and skilled worked who migrate to their countries and in turn use their skills to develop the host countries and their economies [Adepoju, 2017]. However, there is much interest giving to the topic today especially after the 2015 migration crisis, a world event explained by experts in migration studies as a calamity where over 1.2 million asylum seekers forcibly attempted to enter into Europe [Adepoju, 2017] The number continues to increase daily and drastically as different means both legal and illegal are been employed by individuals especially from Africa in order to actualise the goal of getting into Europe. [European Agenda on Migration, 2015] In 2015 alone out of an estimated 1.2 million, some 14,000 claimed to be from Nigeria excluding over 4,000 who died in the Sahara desert and fatalities on the sea, among other unaccounted intending asylum seekers. In 2016, 37,000 Nigerians arrived in Italy via the Mediterranean constituting about 31% at each time with a distant 11% of Eritreans. Even made difficult is the inclusion of war thorn Syria, Afghanistan and other Middle-Eastern countries in dying hope of survival [Adepoju, 2017; Carbone, 2017]. The burden on the European Union in managing the migration crisis can indeed be understood and these desperate times call for desperate measures in curbing this menace, especially when the consequences of not doing so could result to a breakdown of law and order in different societies across Europe.

Understanding of the situation and its implication to Europe resulted in the recent visit of the German chancellor to these countries (Nigeria, Senegal and Ghana) among other initiative and incentives to resolve and as well partner with African



Issue 1/2021

nations in solving the problems leading to a mass migration of their citizens and the overburdening of the Europeans borders (an overwhelming humanitarian crisis).

To this effect, this paper seeks to analyse the prospects of the visit by the German chancellor. It will attempt to answer the question “Would the impact of the meeting with the leaders of these three African nations and the promise of its partnership deter its citizens from crossing through the Mediterranean among other means to get into Europe?” The methodology to be used in answering this question will be a secondary method of data collection as well as the use of theory to analyse why people migrate and how much hope citizens of these countries have in their government to make living conditions better for them and in turn demotivate them from risking their lives on the sea among other means to get into Europe. The significance of this study cannot be over-emphasised especially in this crucial period where expectations are high and the world is watching as this particular problem will be tackled for a return to normalcy not only at the borders but also in the polity. Subsequent headings of this paper will focus on, firstly, a theoretical approach explaining why people migrate and even choose to risk their lives to do so. Finally, it will focus on a critical examination of the facts to see if the said partnership with these African nations would put an end or reduce the massive influx of migrants into Europe.

Why People Migrate: A Theoretical Approach

Overtime, many scholars have engaged the question “Why do people migrate?” [Carbone, 2017; Adepoju, 2017]. And when they do, they always conclude on many fundamental reasons bordering around the conditions present in the home countries of migrants affecting them negatively. Such conditions like war, persecution i.e. against gays, lesbians and the entire LGBTIQ community among other reasons that are not limited to economic conditions of their home countries. However, the focus of this paper is on economic migrants, the ones who seek greener pastures in developed countries and continents like Europe, America, etc. These individuals are with a strong motivation to live a better life outside their home countries. Theoretically, Maslow and Karl Marx have been over the years consistent in their analogies to explain human nature and to what extent their motivation towards life can be considered rational through the fulfilment of certain condition which sometimes cannot be compromised. Physiological, safety, associational, esteem and self-actualisation needs tend to be a very important aspect of life and the

Issue 1/2021

inability to access these needs tends to drive people to wanting to break free and find alternatives [Maslow, 1943].

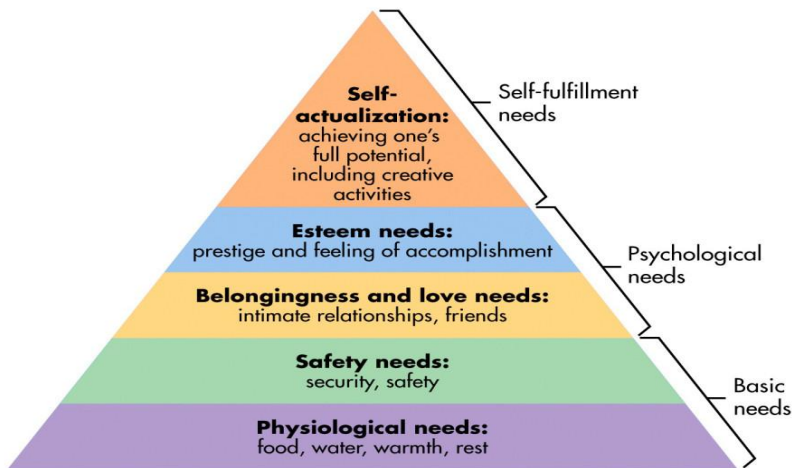


Fig. 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
Source: Wikipedia

Furthermore, it is in the opinion of this paper that such conditions of physiological needs and the inability to fulfil them is one of the most dominant reasons why people from 3rd world African countries migrate. To start with, the physiological needs according to Maslow in the three countries of focus are largely asymmetric. What this means is that there is a massive level of inequality among the population owing to unequal distribution of resources with benefits only to a few within the confines of the state. It is important to note that the inability to access basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter makes life in itself critical for man and as well reduces his level of survival and his motivation to life [Maslow, 1943]. Getting access to the physiological needs require employment which has continued to be a mystery in many African countries with only a few individuals getting reasonable employment. In Nigeria alone, over 500,000 people graduate from tertiary institution with more than half of them unemployed [Kazeem, 2016]. From the graphs below, the constant rise of unemployment rate from the year 2015 in Nigeria and Ghana shows the level of suffering which the people go through and as well Senegal with

fluctuations in figures but it still reflects a dominant number of unemployed citizens. More so, the non-availability of social benefits for these citizens makes things worse which contributes to the dependency ratio that mostly reflects on family members among friends at various community levels. It should be noted that the government barely plays any role regarding social benefits to unemployed citizens or even the less privileged. The government in other words can be said to be far away from the people.

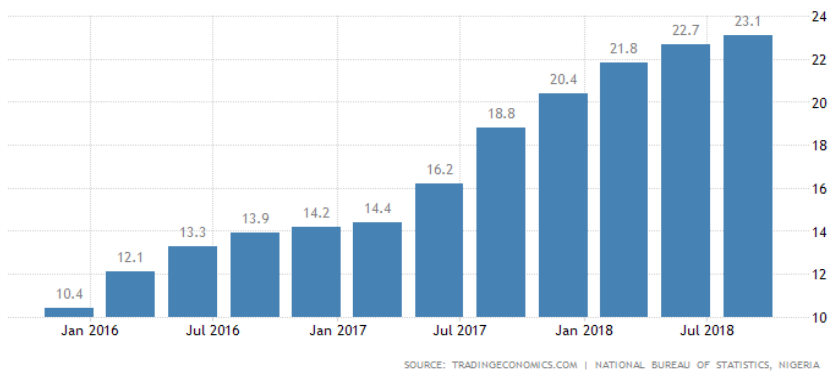


Fig. 2. Unemployment Rate Nigeria

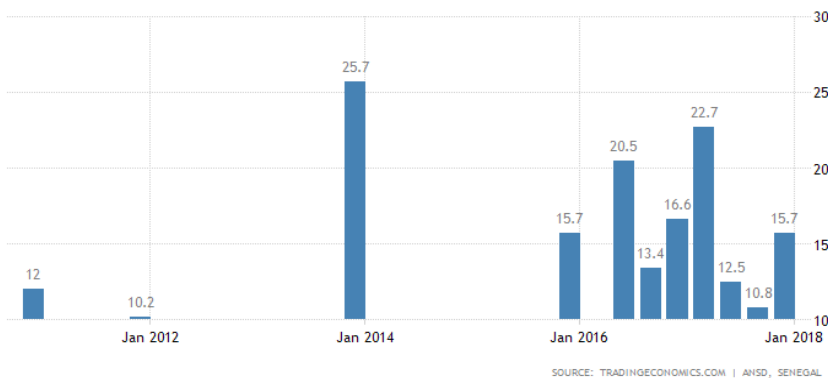


Fig. 3. Unemployment Rate Senegal

Issue 1/2021

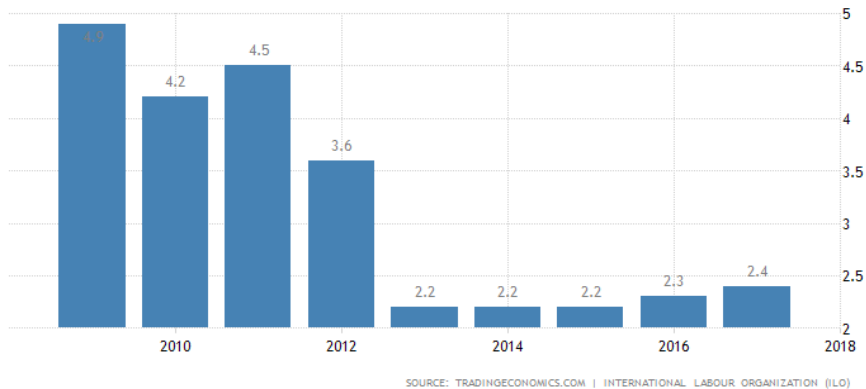


Fig. 4. Unemployment Rate Ghana

Consequently, the Nigerian example shows an economy that is redundant and does not have the capacity to engage the youths who constitute more than 42 per cent of the population [CIA world factbook, 2018]. Furthermore, the dependency ratio in Nigeria stays at a high rate of 88.2 and the youth dependency rate at 83 [CIA world factbook, 2018]. What these numbers imply is that the poverty rate coupled with the level of dependency further endangers the population which pushes them to that stage of wanting to break free with the option of migration which many of the youths choose. Karl Marx argued that “it is not social well-being of man that determines his consciousness but his material well-being that determines his consciousness”. He went further to say that man by nature is an economic being and can only survive in that environment that promotes his material well-being [Marx *et al.*, 1974]. Therefore, it becomes solely natural for frustrated youths who can no longer deal with the horrors of hunger and starvation, as well as unemployment and the inability to provide for their families and loved ones to find ways to break free from poverty and underdevelopment which they see from migrating to other countries. The horrors from the unbearable conditions they face back home serves as a motivation to strive for greener pastures in foreign countries. This paper argues that the lack of fundamental physiological needs remains a dominant reason that drives most economic migrants away as the failure to have these basic needs such as food, cloth and shelter causes a breakdown of law and order, restricts the



Issue 1/2021

sense of belonging and love, reduces esteem and limits the realities of self-actualisation according to Maslow's theory of needs.

African Migration, European Cooperation, Social Contract, Democracy and Social Capital

While economic reasons largely dominate why most young Africans migrate through the deserts among other means all the way through to Europe, the role of their government cannot be over emphasised. This paper believes strongly that the role of third world governments especially in impunity and corruption has further limited the chances of development and economic progression. To this effect and to its knowledge to the populace, they have apparently no hope or trust whatsoever in the functionality of the economic system, hence their search for greener pastures outside the shores of Africa. Furthermore, in the absence of trust in the system, the hope of a said partnership to stop migrants from considering the alternative of migrating to Europe and western countries is a hoax unless some deficiencies are remedied. The justifications of this "claim" are in the following arguments.

From the foundation of society, social capital has been a part of societal formation. The idea of individuals submitting their rights to the state to safeguard their lives, rights and properties or for the creation of moral and civic obligation is in and of itself done with the trust that the principles through which such agreements were made will be upheld [Hobbes, 1904; Locke, 1960; Rousseau, 1968]. This idea however, is the basic foundation of the modern state under democratic principles being led by the dictates of the constitution [Nyamaka, 2011].

Democracy with all of its institutions, systems and values cannot function properly without the generalised trust as a core ingredient [Putnam, 1993, 2000]. Therefore, it is safe to say that the formation of the modern state is built on the foundation of social contract, which gives birth to democracy that cannot function without social capital. The connections between the three variables are the root foundation of modern politics, and its dynamism is spread all over the world with accounts of the different waves of democracy [Huntington, 2016].

Francis Fukuyama (2000) defined social capital as an instantiated informal norm that promotes co-operation between individuals. He argued further that in the economic sphere it reduces transaction costs, and in the political sphere, it promotes the kind of associational life which is necessary for the success of government and modern democracy. Furthermore, social capital comes into existence as a result of shared values and culture, which basically formulates the rational trust that exists among



Issue 1/2021

groups and individuals in the society. However, the understanding of trust in political contest is not limited to individuals alone particularly politicians, but also extends to institutions of government, which basically is the foundation of democracy in itself [Newton, 2008]. Newton argues further that distrust in politicians is not in any way a threat to democracy, but deep-seated lack of confidence in the system ultimately ruins any kind of social capital existing which could end up being a dilemma for democracy. A fundamental truth to why the said partnership is not visible.

Do People Know They Cannot Trust the System?

With the continuous rate of impunity and corruption in the system, the extravagant lifestyles of politicians, nepotism and its effect of having a very few individuals connected to those at the helm of power having unlimited access to employment, wealth and social benefits which is consequently inaccessible to other members of society, the dying or dysfunctional democracy and the rule of law with zero dividends and the continuous suffering of the people, of course they know they cannot trust the system. Nigeria alone has been said to be one of the most corrupt nations in the world topping the chart of the most corrupt nations in the world for years now.

Furthermore, with billions and billions of dollars stolen from the common wealth and saved in foreign accounts overseas which is also used in buying assets as well, the social capital in Nigeria is indeed in a deplorable state. People do not trust the government and its system. This is not only limited to Nigeria alone but shared among countries in the third-world

Prospects of a Partnership

With grounded understanding of the status-quo as explained in this paper, the presentation of economic realities and understanding the mind-set of a migrant or a would be migrant, the prospects of a partnership has little or no effect on the decision to stay or move away from the home country. This is so because the activities of the said government that should and as well be the fore runner of the said agreement is the reason for the hostile environment leading to desire for greener pasture. More so, the lost hope of better days to come in the home country as a result of corruption, unemployment, nepotism as well as other social vices hindering economic prosperity will continue to exist so long the idea of governance in these countries remain the same. Not to talk of the support European countries such as Switzerland give to corrupt politicians helping them to keep stolen public funds in secret accounts etc.



Issue 1/2021

YEAR	RANKING
1999	98 out of 99
2000	90 out of 90
2001	90 out of 91
2002	101 out of 102
2003	132 out of 133
2004	144 out of 146
2005	152 out of 158
2006	142 out of 163
2007	147 out of 179
2008	121 out of 150
2009	130 out of 150
2010	134 out of 178
2011	143 out of 182
2012	139 out of 174
2013	144 out of 175
2014	136 out of 174
2015	136 out of 167
2016	136 out of 176
2017	148 out of 180

Source: Corruption Perception Index (1999-2017). Retrieved from Transparency International



Issue 1/2021

These among other issues have taken away the concept of social capital through which citizens put some level of trust on the activities of government. However it can be said without fear or favour that the citizens in these nations do not trust their government with any temptation or opportunity to leave the shore of Ghana, Nigeria or Senegal for a place in Europe, they will take it without thinking twice. To the average person, the government is not to be trusted and they are group of person seeking their own gain. The decision to however seek greener pastures in Europe is mainly one that is taken in order to redeem their self-worth and dignity as well as being able to take care of their family as well as to attain the height of self-actualisation. It is the opinion of this paper that Europe and the western world is on its own in solving the crisis and only when the attitude of African leaders can change towards governance that their legitimacy through social capital can further be entrusted. And until then, the idea of a said partnership remains a hoax.

Conclusion

The failure of governments in African has continued to affect the social-economic status of its citizens. The implication has resulted to a loss of control on the citizens' mind-set towards life generally leading to a complete breakdown of social capital and legitimacy. The government cannot control its people and the people as well do not have any interest in listening to the government. A divided people in divided nations. While the status-quo remains the same, whatever partnership envisaged by Europe cannot hold as the government itself has no hold over its people. It is the people's decision to migrate and the strong will to do so cannot be brought down by the weak will of government towards good governance.

References

- [1] Adepoju, A. (2017). "Nigeria Leaving Africa's Giant." In Giovanni Carbone (Ed.), *Out of Africa, Why People Migrate* (pp. 119-139). Italy: Ledizioni Ledi Publishing.
- [2] Associated Press (2018, August 29). "Merkel Arrives in West Africa for Visit Focusing on Business, Migrants." Article retrieved from <https://www.voanews.com/a/merkel-arrives-for-west-africa-visit-focussing-on-business-migrants/4549721>.
- [3] Carbone, G. (2017). "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Why Africans Migrate." In Giovanni Carbone (Ed.), *Out of Africa, why people Migrate* (pp. 119-139). Italy: Ledizioni Ledi.
- [4] CIA Factbook, (2018). "Nigerian Demographic Reports." Retrieved from https://www.indexmundi.com/nigeria/demographics_profile.html.



Issue 1/2021

- [5] Corruption Perception Index (1999-2017) Available at http://www.transparency.org.news/feature/corruption_perception_index
- [6] Fukuyama, F. (2000). "Social capital and Civil Society." *IMF Working paper*, 74(1-19). Available at SSRN <https://ssrn.com/abstract=879582>.
- [7] Green, A. (2017, May 29). "Germany's Marshall Plan with Africa." Article Retrieved from <https://www.devex.com.news/germany-s-marshall-plan-with-africa-90152>.
- [8] Hobbes, T., & Walker, J. (1904). *Leviathan, or the Matter, Form and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastically and Civility*. Cambridge: University Press.
- [9] Huntington, S.P. (2016). "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" *Political Science Quarterly*, 131(2), 237-266.
- [10] Kazeem, Y. (2016, January 27). "About Half of the University Graduates in Nigeria Cannot Find Jobs." Article retrieved from <https://qz.com/africa/603967/about-half-of-the-university-graduates-in-Nigeria-cannot-find-jobs/>
- [11] Marx, K., Engels, F. & Arthur, C.J. (1974). *The German Ideology*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- [12] Maslow, A. (1943). "A Theory of Human Motivation." *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370-396.
- [13] Newton, K. (2008). "Trust and Politics." In Castiglione, J.W. Van Deth & G. Wolleb (Eds.), *The Hand Book of Social Capital*, 22(4), 241-263. Oxford, New-York: Oxford University Press.
- [14] Nyakama, D.M. (2011). "Social Contract Theory of John Locke (1632-1704) in the Contemporary World." Retrieved from <https://works.bepress.com/dmnyamaka/5/>
- [15] Rousseau, J. (1968). *The Social Contract*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- [16] Social Capital (2010). "Civil Society and Development." *Third World Quarterly*, 22(1), 7-20.
- [17] Putnam, R.A. (2000). *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New-York: Simon & Schuster.
- [18] Putnam, R.D., Leonard, R., & Nanetti, R. (1993). *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions Modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- [19] Unemployment rate in Ghana. (n.d). Statistics retrieved from <https://tradingeconomics.com/ghana/unemployment-rate>
- [20] Unemployment rate in Nigeria. (n.d). Statistics retrieved from <https://tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/unemployment-rate>
- [21] Unemployment rate in Senegal. (n.d). Statistics retrieved from <https://tradingeconomics.com/senegal/unemployment-rate>

