



Azerbaijani Journal of Economics and Social Studies

Azərbaycanın İqtisadi və Sosial Araşdırmalar Jurnalı

www.azjess.com

Volume 3, Number 1/İl 3, Say 1, 2016

FROM ACCOMMODATION TO HOSTILITY AND EXPULSION: CHANGING PATTERNS OF NIGERIA'S REACTION TO GHANAIAN MIGRANT WORKERS, 1970-1983.

Johnson Olaosebikan AREMU (Ph.D)¹.

Stephen Olayiwola SOETAN (Ph.D)²

Abstract

A critical review of relevant literature, corroborated by oral information, reveals that three major themes may best explain the trend of Nigeria's reaction to Ghanaian aliens between 1970 and 1983. These are accommodation, hostility and expulsion. Interrogating these themes, this paper examines the various factors that instigated the trooping of Ghanaian migrants in their droves to Nigeria during the period of study. It further examines the factors that prompted Nigeria to accommodate such a large influx of alien population during the period. The paper is further committed to an in-depth analysis of the genesis of hostility in Nigeria-Ghana relations beginning from the tail end of 1981 to late 1982 and; the eventual expulsion of Ghanaian migrant workers by the Nigerian Government in January 1983. The study employed the historical method of research and analysis. Data was generated through library research, oral interviews and participant observation method. Data obtained was critically analysed using a qualitative technique. It is expected that this paper will broaden our understanding of the volatile nature of relations between the two former British dependencies in contemporary times.

Key Words: Nigeria, Ghana, Migrant workers, Expulsion, Aliens

Introduction

One major event that has had about the most negative effect on Nigeria-Ghana relations in recent time was the expulsion of illegal aliens from Nigeria in 1983. It would be recalled that Nigeria welcomed a substantial number of Ghanaians from the early 1970s up till around 1980. The period coincided with the oil boom era in the country. Nigeria's open-heartedness to these foreigners was further reinforced by the

¹ Department of History and International Studies, Ekiti State University, P.M.B. 5363, Ado- Ekiti, Nigeria. E-Mail: johnsonolaosebikan@gmail.com ☎+2348032477652

² Department of History and International Studies, Ekiti State University, P.M.B. 5363, Ado- Ekiti, Nigeria. E-Mail: layisoetan@gmail.com ☎+2348034299268

good interpersonal relations between Shehu Shagari of Nigeria and Hilla Limann of Ghana between 1979 and 1981; the duo being civilian presidents. Relations however, turned sour between the two countries due to Shagari's hatred for Jerry Rawlings, who seized power from Hilla Limann through a military coup in 1981. Accommodation soon turned to hostility and eventually led to the expulsion of the Ghanaian alien population from Nigeria in January 1983. This paper is thus committed to the examination of the themes of accommodation, hostility and expulsion in Nigeria-Ghana relations between 1970 and 1983.

The period of accommodation: 1970-1981

a. Tracing Ghanaian presence in Nigeria

Though international migration in West Africa predates the colonial era, Ghana was never part of it on a large scale until the early 1970's. Anarfi *et al* (2003) report that from the pre-colonial times up to the late 1960s, Ghana enjoyed relative economic prosperity, making it the destination of many migrants from neighbouring West African countries (Anarfi, 1982). International movement from Ghana then involved a relatively small number of people, most of whom were students and professionals who went to the United Kingdom and other English-speaking countries due to colonial links. For instance, immigration data indicate that in 1967 there were only about 100 Ghanaian immigrants in Canada. Some Ghanaian professionals also served in the public services of The Gambia, Botswana and Sierra Leone. Other Ghanaians, mostly from fishing communities, were known to have migrated across international boundaries to Benin and Ivory Coast. (Anarfi, Awusabo-Asare, et al., 2000; Owusu, 2000; Odotei, 2000). Large scale emigration of Ghanaians started after 1965. From that period Ghana experienced an economic crisis of an unprecedented magnitude that was manifest in balance of payments deficit, growing unemployment and social malaise (Anarfi, Awusabo-Asare, K. et al., 2000). The decline of the economy made Ghana unattractive to both foreigners and citizens. By the end of the decade, many Ghanaians had left their homes in search of jobs outside the country. Migration then became one of the basic survival strategies adopted by individuals and families to enable them to cope with difficult economic conditions. Their destination points included Uganda, Botswana, Nigeria and Zambia. (Anarfi, Awusabo-Asare, K. et al., 2000). As of December 1980, about 150,000 Ghanaians had registered with the Ghana High Commission in Lagos (Anarfi, 1982).

b. Why Ghanaians trooped to Nigeria

A number of push and pull factors may be employed to explain the huge presence of Ghanaians in Nigeria up till the mid-1980. One of the key push factors was the prevalence of political turbulence in Ghana since the late 1960's. This came in form of intolerance of opposition, human rights abuses, incessant changes in government and inept leadership. Right from the days of Kwame Nkrumah, the opposition had been under intense attack by the ruling parties. Oquaye (2004:81) reports how Nkrumah dealt ruthlessly with the Ga Steadfast Association, a faction of the Convention Peoples' Party in 1957 for offering a differing opinion on Nkrumah's housing and employment

programmes. According to him, a number of its members ended up in jail. Apart from that, the Regional Assemblies which had been established as a concession to the opposition were abolished; the unilateral power to make all political appointments was vested in the Prime Minister by the Constitution (Amendment) Act of 1959; this was reinforced by Article 55 of the 1960 constitution which provided that: "(a) The President could, whenever he considered it to be in the national interest, rule by legislative instrument (b) Any such law(s) made by the President may alter (whether expressly or by implication), any enactment other than the constitution" (Oquaye, 2004:81).

Nkrumah was also accused of detaining political opponents without trial. For instance Baafour Akoto and others were detained under the Preventive Detention Act of 1958 and the court declared its lack of jurisdiction to entertain the case when consulted for litigation by J.B Danquah in 1960. Other sets of Amendments to the Constitution in 1964 even empowered the President to dismiss any High Court Judge at his own personal discretion (Ibid). Such was the dismal civil rights record of the Nkrumah regime which was one of the reasons why the military and police combined to sack his government through a coup on 24 February, 1966. A worst set of inhuman treatment was witnessed under the various military regimes in Ghana when the government ruled by decrees.¹ Apart from these human rights abuses, Ghana also witnessed a general climate of political instability due to the incessant changes in government between 1957 and 1982. Then, Ghana was ruled by six leaders, both civilian and military.² This implied lack of continuity in governance, confused policy-decisions and the absence of established institutions for sustaining the national structure.

The resultant loss of faith and confidence in the leadership of Ghana not only instigated, but also aggravated the emigration of Ghanaians in search of political freedom and peace elsewhere. However, the immediate political event that triggered off the unprecedented outflow of Ghanaians was the assumption of power by Flight Lieut. Jerry Rawlings as Ghana's military ruler on 31 December 1981 who dislodged the civilian administration of Hilla Limann. Rawlings quickly imposed a reign of terror on Ghana. According to Errol T. Louis, editors of major Ghanaian newspapers were herded to an army barracks and told that "objectivity" and "neutrality" in reporting were relics of the past: "You are either for or against the revolution." Rawlings also declared a "holy war" against Ghana's few professionals- doctors, engineers, lawyers- calling them an exploiting class, and going as far as setting up an intricate administrative system to weed out those seeking government jobs. Fines were imposed arbitrarily, and citizens who refused to pay disappeared mysteriously, their charred bodies showing up shortly after. (Louis, 1983; Anarfi *et al*, 2003:10). It was not surprising therefore that Ghanaians fled their own country's repression in search of better conditions in Nigeria.

Another push factor that aided the emigration of Ghanaians between the 1970's and early 1980's were the economic predicaments that faced Ghana then. This chain of challenges came in different forms. One of them was the inefficiency of government economic structure. As at 1965 for instance, almost all the forty-seven state corporations established by the Nkrumah's government were already running at a loss (Oquaye, 2004:83). This came at a time when revenue from cocoa and gold dwindled

and created serious budget deficits for government. This was followed by high rate of unemployment beginning from the late 1960's. According to Adomako-Sarfoh (1974:139); there were about 600,000 registered unemployed citizens in 1969. Dr. Kofi Busia's administration even compounded the problem of unemployment with his arbitrary dismissal of about five hundred and sixty-eight civil servants under the Transitional Provisions of the 1969 Constitution (Oquaye, 2004:85; Oliver and Crowder, 1981:270; Instituto del Tercer Mando. 1997:270).

To worsen the economic situation of Ghana, Kofi Busia and John Akuffo devalued the Ghanaian currency in 1971 and 1978 respectively, causing rampant inflation, increased cost of living, a deterioration of the standard of living of average Ghanaians and static wage. (Oquaye, 2004:85; Oliver and Crowder, 1981:234, 270; Brydon, 1985:568). Orubuloye (1983:5) reports that henceforth, Ghana witnessed a sluggish economic growth, foreign exchange deficits and food scarcity. Colonel Acheampong rightly captures the socio-economic vicissitudes of Ghana as at 1982 when he stated that:

The people were exposed to the dangers of destruction through massive hunger and pain as the government deliberately embarked on a programme that removed the bread from the mouths of the people through arbitrary dismissals and policies which widened the circle of poverty (quoted in Oquaye, 2004:87).

The post-independent political instability and the rapidly deteriorating economic situation of Ghana fuelled massive waves of emigration out of Ghana between 1970's and early 1980's in search of food for their stomach as a matter of necessity; and also for peace out of political turbulence and insecurity.

As Ghanaians fled their homes due to economic and political discomforts, two important factors pulled them to Nigeria. The first was the rising economic profile of Nigeria occasioned largely by the huge oil revenue that accrued to the country between 1973 and 1980 (Mayall, 1976:228). The oil-led expansion of infrastructural development, education and allied sectors, created a huge demand for labour of varying skills which could not be met by local supply. This quickly gave Nigeria the image of a country "flowing with milk and honey" (Okolo, 1984:431).

Subsequently in the late 1970's, Nigeria became West Africa's "Eldorado" and attracted migrant workers from Ghana and other neighbouring West African countries such as Togo, Benin Republic, Chad, and Cameroon who came in their droves in search of "the golden fleece" (Antwi-Bosiakoh, 2012:14; *Times International*, 1981:11; *West Africa*, 1983:245; Adepoju, 1988:8; Adepoju, A. 2005: 31&32). The demonstration effect of the initial stream of Ghanaian immigrants who visited home, and the exaggerated reports of affluence in Nigeria; triggered- off an outflow from Ghana, which was difficult to contain or reverse.

The second factor that pulled Ghanaians to Nigeria was the positive coincidence of the 1980 ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of persons. While Nigeria's economic buoyancy was being fueled by the huge earnings from the oil sector, the coming into force of the Protocol coincided with a period of economic recession in most countries of the sub-region, including Ghana. The vacillating economic situation as well

as the deteriorating condition of work and poor wages in Ghana set many Ghanaians on the move to Nigeria, which had then become the region's economic haven. Professional and skilled Ghanaian immigrants were recruited as teachers in secondary schools in Lagos and across the South Western Nigeria to fill vacancies created by the introduction of the free education scheme in 1979 in the Unity Party of Nigeria's (UPN) controlled states. Others were employed as doctors in hospitals and health centres across the country as well as in the oil industry.

By December 1982, Nigeria was already filled with immigrants from neighbouring West African States mostly from Ghana. Though no accurate statistics exists on the number of immigrants in the country, available estimates put the number at between two and three millions with an estimated average number of Ghanaians who migrated to Nigeria put at 300 per day (*West Africa*, January, 1983:245; Anarfi *et al* ,2003:10; Oquaye, 2004:87). Records of the Ghana High Commission in Nigeria also showed that about 150,000 Ghanaians had registered with it as at December 1980. This was apart from non-registered Ghanaian migrants spread across the cities, towns, villages and hamlets of Nigeria doing one menial job or the other. The Ghanaian migrants related well with their Nigerian hosts and nearly forgot their previous tragic past experiences back in Ghana.

The period of hostility: January, 1982-January, 1983

With the military overthrow of Limann's regime through a coup d'état led by Flt. Lt. Jerry Rawlings on 31 December, 1981, the peaceful relations that had hitherto existed between the two countries became reversed. The Nigerian Government condemned the deposition of Limann and became hostile to the new Ghanaian government. Olajide Aluko suggests two main reasons that could have accounted for Nigeria's hostility to Ghana in 1982. One, the Shagari government was against Limann's overthrow since both had some ideological affinity, especially the fact that they were both civilian administrations. Indeed, Shagari could read in-between the lines that the coup in Ghana had a propensity for band wagon effect on Nigeria, stimulating the overthrow of his own government too. Hence for personal and logistic reasons, Shagari's government was never at peace with Rawlings' government in Ghana till 31 December 1983 when he (Shagari) was toppled in a military coup in Nigeria. Secondly, the Rawlings government instituted a quasi-Soviet system of government that was anathema to the Nigerian government's capitalist leanings (*The Satellite*, 1982:2; Aluko, 1990:430). It was therefore not surprising that Nigeria-Ghana relations became so tense early in 1982 that the Rawlings government accused Nigeria of making preparations to invade Ghana in order to restore the deposed Limann back to power (Ibid).

That the personal animosity between Shehu Shagari and Jerry Rawlings instigated such a violent diplomatic rupture in Nigeria-Ghana relations affirms the view of Edinger (1963:403-404) that the variations in the characters of individuals in the leadership hierarchies of countries at any given point in time could have negative or positive impact on the foreign policy directions of such states. It is in view of this that one may be able to explain a number of hostile measures and bitter diplomatic

exchanges that took place between Nigeria and Ghana from January 1982 to January, 1983.

One of such bitter events was the suspension of the shipment and sale of crude oil to Ghana for four months probably to destabilize Rawlings' administration and stir up public sentiments against him in Ghana. It should be noted then that Ghana depended on Nigeria for about 90 percent of its petroleum needs (Owusu, 1994). Another hostile event was the harassment of Nigerian nationals resident in Ghana by the Ghanaian authorities (*Daily Star*, 1982; Aluko, 1990:430). Earlier in January 1982, the Nigerian High Commission in Accra, Ghana, was closed down following threats by Ghanaians to set the building ablaze because of the alleged invasion of Ghana by Nigeria (Awofeso, 1982). Similarly, between July and November 1982, about one hundred and thirty-five Ghanaians accused of involvement in criminal activities and those without visible means of livelihood and valid documents were deported by the Nigerian government (Aluko, 1990:430). Rawlings protested the deportation vehemently and described it as an unfriendly act as well as an "act of ingratitude" to the Ghanaian citizens' contribution to the growth of Nigeria (Ibid. 431). This response infuriated Shagari of Nigeria. Perhaps it was this fury that instigated the promulgation of the expulsion order of January, 1983. It is therefore pertinent to take a look at the 1983 expulsion order and attempt a critical appraisal of the factors that actually informed the Order.

The period of expulsion: January 1983

On 17 January 1983, Alhaji Ali Baba, the then Nigerian Federal Minister of Internal Affairs, ordered all unskilled foreigners residing and working illegally to leave the country by 31 January 1983 while the skilled aliens were allowed to stay up to 28 February 1983. The Minister added that from 31 January, 1983, defaulting aliens would be repatriated and their names put on a 'stop list' to ensure that they did not return to Nigeria. It was further announced that registration of legal aliens would begin on 14 February at the immigration headquarters in all 19 states and Abuja (*West Africa (London)*, 24 January, 1983: 233; Federal Government of Nigeria, 17 January, 1983). The Minister also warned that "all companies found out to be illegally employing aliens will be severely dealt with under the immigration laws" (Federal Government of Nigeria: Official Gazette Extraordinary, Supplement, No. 40, Vol. 50, 1963; *West Africa*, 31 January 1983). Citizens of Cameroon and Chad, who had come to Nigeria before 1963, were however excluded from the expulsion order 'irrespective of what they do' (Ali Baba, 1983). This exemption was based on bilateral agreements earlier signed with the affected countries. In 1964, Nigeria entered into bilateral agreements with Cameroon and Chad, exempting their visiting citizens from visa requirements. Though these privileges were suspended during the civil war, the Yakubu Gowon's government reactivated the agreements in June 1971 in the spirit of 'African brotherhood' (*Africa Research Bulletin (Exeter)*, 1971:2130). Many Ghanaians left as soon as they heard the announcement including those who were 'legally' resident. They feared reprisals from local people if they stayed back in Nigeria (Brydon, 1985:572; Afolayan, 1988:20).

Though the estimated number of affected aliens had been put at between 2 and 3 million by observers, the Nigerian Minister of Internal Affairs announced that the

overall estimate of illegal aliens who left the country as at the end of February 1983 was 1.3 million (*Daily Telegraph* (London), 2 February, 1983; McCaskie, 1984: 409-410; Owusu, 1994). This, according to him, was made up of 700,000 Ghanaians, 150, 000 Chadians, 18, 000 Beninese, and 5,000 Togolese (*New Nigerian*, 16 February 1983: i.). Without any prejudice to the controversies surrounding the accurateness of these figures, they none-the-less show an unprecedented mass movement of people from just one country in the West African Region within a short period of time. Earlier alien expulsions in West Africa were no match. This probably explains the hue and cry over the Nigerian exercise and the ensuing stampede and hardships associated with the compliance to the order (*African Research Bulletin*. 1983. January and February).

a. Reasons for the Expulsion Order

A number of reasons may be advanced for the expulsion of illegal aliens by Nigeria in 1983. These included: ensuring the integrity of Nigerian immigration laws; the world economic recession which resulted in the reduction of foreign exchange earnings to Nigeria since early 1982; the involvement of some foreign nationals in violent religious disturbances in Nigeria; involvement of some Ghanaians in some crimes, including armed robbery in Nigeria; as well as the need to create more job opportunities for Nigerians in an age characterized by high rate of unemployment (*National Concord*, Lagos. 1983. 5 January). Some elaboration on each of these reasons is very essential at this juncture.

b. Ensuring the integrity of Nigerian immigration laws:

One of the major reasons cited by the Nigerian government for expelling illegal aliens in January 1983 was to ensure the integrity of the Nigerian immigration laws. This was as a result of the increasing number of aliens which posed a threat to the nation's security. The government claimed that the foreigners entered Nigeria illegally in violation of Nigerian immigration laws (Gravil, 1985: 524). Indeed, the breaking of the 1963 immigration law involving large-scale influx of aliens was unacceptable to President Shahu Shagari and Ali Baba, the Minister of Internal Affairs. Hence, the Minister declared that the 1983 order was not for the mass expulsion of all immigrants but only those who entered Nigeria illegally, with no valid travel documents or visas. Secondly, the expulsion order was limited only to illegal immigrants, with no skills, and without jobs. For those illegal immigrants who were gainfully employed, the Government permitted them to stay on, provided they regularize their stay by getting work permits within the next fourteen days. Thirdly, the expulsion order was not directed at any particular group of illegal immigrants. It affected all unskilled illegal immigrants, without any regard to their race, colour, nationality, or creed, and that it was fully consistent with international practice (Fafowora, 1983:392; Adepoju, 1984:432.). Commenting on the above submission of Ali Baba, Gravil (1985:528-529) notes that that was "an undeniable fact upon which the Nigerian- State appeared to stand four squares". He added that "flatly stated from a public rostrum for world consumption, this position seems beyond reproach". A similar view was expressed in the editorial of *Nigerian Herald Newspaper* of October 11, 1984.

Providing some clarifications on who was an illegal alien, the *Nigerian Herald* refers to any alien that was found to have contravened any of the conditions listed below as illegal and due for expulsion:

- i. accepting jobs without the permission of the Chief Federal Immigration Officer contrary to the provisions of the Nigerian immigration laws;
- ii. adopting the professions of begging or prostitutions, in contravention of Section 17 of Immigration Act, 1963;
- iii. overstaying in Nigeria without further extension beyond the period of 90 days and;
- iv. doing business or trade without the permission of the Chief Federal Immigration Officer (*Nigerian Herald Newspaper* : October 11, 1984).

It follows, therefore, that Community citizens who violate any of these rules fall under the category of illegal aliens, and may face criminal charges in a law court of competent jurisdiction. Where convicted, such illegal alien(s) may be liable to a fine or imprisonment or both (Immigration Act of 1963, section 47(1)). Once the court is satisfied that the Community citizens have been found guilty of violating Nigeria's immigration laws and sentenced them to imprisonment, it will make recommendation for their deportation (sections 47 (1), 20 (1) and 43). Second, the Minister of Internal Affairs may deport them when they have fallen under the category of prohibited immigrants (sections 18, 20(1) (Okolo, 1984:430). Third, any police or immigration officer may arrest, without warrant, any person suspected to have committed any offence against the immigration law, and after summary trial and conviction, the person may be deported to his home country (Chhangani, 1981: H-15).

Judging from the above, it may be right to assert that by issuing the expulsion order of 17 January, 1983, the Nigerian government acted in conformity with her Immigration Laws without offending the spirit of the ECOWAS Protocol on Freedom of Movement. This view was also corroborated by the then Secretary of Ghana's Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), Dr Obed Asamoah when he stated that "the global economic situation is such that no country will allow large numbers of foreign nationals living illegally on its economy" (*West Africa*, January, 1983:243). Similarly, a number of ECOWAS officials such as the then outgoing Chairman of the Authority, Mathieu Kerekou, Executive Secretary, Diaby-Quattara, and Deputy Secretary Jonas Nti, defended Nigeria's action, pointing out that since only the first phase of ECOWAS Protocol on free movement of persons had been implemented, Nigeria had the right to expel all violators of the rule (*New Nigerian*. 1983. 29 January and 19 February; *Sunday Times* (Lagos). 1983. 6 February).

But then, one may suggest that the Nigerian government should have exercised some elements of caution and humanness in enforcing its laws in the 1983 expulsion saga and thereby avoid unnecessary criticisms from members of the international community. Here, the submission of the *African Research Bulletin* becomes very germane that: "there is no doubt of course that Nigeria is legally entitled to throw out aliens whose presence is illegal. But it would have been perfectly possible for reasonable warning to have been given over a period, say of six months; those

foreigners without correct documentation could have been weeded out and made to leave in a decent, orderly way” (*African Research Bulletin*. 1983. February).

c. Involvement of some foreign nationals in violent religious disturbances in Nigeria between 1980 and 1982:

Another official justification for the expulsion of aliens was that aliens were responsible for the violent religious riots that occurred in some cities in Northern Nigeria between 1980 and 1982. It need be recalled that the unorthodox preachings of Alhaji Muhammed Marwa, a Cameroonian popularly known as Maitasine, had precipitated two major riots in Kano, first in December 1980, and secondly in July 1981. Some foreigners were alleged to have been involved in the violent disturbances that occurred in the city when the then Governor of the State, Alhaji Abubakar Rimi, directly challenged the revered traditional leader, the Emir of Kano, Alhaji Ado Bayero (Wright, 1982:105-113). The subsequent military siege of Kano added to the extensive damage; as many as 4,000 civilians, more than 100 policemen, and 35 army personnel were reportedly killed (*West Africa*, 23 November 1981: 2756). In October 1982, serious religious rioting began in Bulumkuttu, near Maiduguri in Borno State, and spread to Kaduna and Kano states after 16 followers of Maitasine had been arrested: hundreds of people were killed, including nine police officers, and a great deal of property was destroyed. In the end, the Federal Government deported 54 aliens - including 27 Chadians, 14 Nigeriens, 7 Cameroonians, and 3 Malians - for their involvement in the disturbances (*New Nigerian*, 28 January, 1983:1). Alhaji Ali Baba (1983: 17 January & 14 February) pointed accusing fingers at the aliens for these religious riots when he declared that: “the recent Kano, and Maiduguri ... religious disturbances when the whole nation witnessed, with dismay, wanton destruction of properties and lives were traceable to the lawless activities of aliens”. The desire to minimize security problems especially in the face of the likelihood of increased violence in the planned September/October 1983 general elections must have therefore largely informed his pointed declaration of 17 January, 1983 that “the Nigerian government cannot and will not fold its hands and allow such unwholesome developments to continually plague the nation” and hence the decision to require illegal aliens to leave the country within 14 days (*African Research Bulletin*. 1983, February).

d. Involvement of some aliens in some criminal activities in Nigeria:

Some Ghanaian residents in Nigeria were also alleged to be engaged in criminal and/or morally reprehensible activities. For instance, many Ghanaian immigrants had been cited as engaging in prostitution and street begging in different parts of the country, especially in the large urban centers (Afolayan, 1988:17). As a matter of fact, between July and November 1982, about one hundred and thirty-five Ghanaians accused of criminal activities and those without visible means of livelihood and valid documents were deported by the Nigerian government (Aluko, 1990:430; Ojo, 1987:41). However, perhaps the immediate cause of the large scale expulsion of illegal aliens by the Shehu Shagari’s administration was the violent robbery attack on the residence of the then Vice-President, Dr. Alex Ekwueme in January 1983 in which

some aliens were implicated. It was widely reported that a man carrying Ghanaian documents was killed while attempting to break into the home of the Vice-President, Alex Ekwueme, three weeks before the expulsion order (*The New York Times*, 3 February 1983: A12). In response to this crime, the Federal Government immediately ordered the Ministry of Internal Affairs to come up with measures on how to deal with what it called “the menace of the Ghanaians and other illegal aliens in Nigeria” (Ogwurumba, 1996:44). It was thereafter recommended that for security reasons, all illegal aliens must be expelled (Aluko, 1985: 541). Indeed, the Nigerian position on the issue was simply that the excessive number of immigrants was one of the causes of the country's social problems and that ECOWAS governments should understand Nigeria's predicament arising from its liberal immigration policy. It was added that those illegal aliens had not only stayed beyond the 90 days allowed by the ECOWAS Protocol without regularising their residence, but had also established businesses or trades contrary to the Nigerian immigration laws. A *Daily Times* editorial captures the situation then when it states that: “Over 80 % of their women have no decent and respectable means of livelihood thereby contaminating the moral fabric of the Nigerian society. Recent names of arrested armed robbers showed that over 50 % of them are aliens. And in the recent religious disturbances in Kano, Kaduna, and Maiduguri, very many of the fanatics were identified as illegal aliens. So, no doubt, illegal aliens do constitute a stumbling block to the realisation of the lofty ideas of our moral standards” (*Daily Times*, 20 January 1983: 3).

e. World Economic Recession:

Perhaps the most potent factor that led to the expulsion of illegal aliens from Nigeria in January 1983 was the general economic recession in Nigeria beginning from 1981. It should be recalled that Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings increased tremendously between 1973 and 1980 as a result of the crude-oil boom (Central Bank of Nigeria, 1983). It was this new-found oil wealth in Nigeria that really attracted a huge flow of Ghanaian and other migrants from neighbouring West African countries of Benin, Togo, Chad, Mali and Niger into Nigeria between mid-1973 and early 1980s. It is, however, paradoxical to observe that the same oil that brought Ghanaians into Nigeria also led to their expulsion in 1983. Largely due to the glut in the world oil market, oil producing countries experienced a collapse of oil prices which in turn meant a sharp decline in oil revenue for the government of Nigeria. Some of the reasons for the oil glut, as suggested by Olajide Aluko include: finding substitutes for oil by the industrial consumer countries and introduction of crude oil to the world market from the North Sea and Alaska (Aluko, 1990:42)

Given the fact that since the 1970's, oil has accounted for about 95% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings and about 84% of the revenue accruing to the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), the oil glut which began in the year 1981, wrecked a great havoc on the country's financial viability. Nigeria soon began to experience a chain of economic challenges that nearly rocked the country to its foundations. Such challenges included: rising food import bills, a mounting foreign debt, wage freeze, and devaluation of currency, sky-rocketing inflation and a general

deterioration of condition of living of the masses, among others (Ihonvbere, 1991:525). As a way out of these predicaments, government introduced some stringent economic policies such as restriction on the repatriation of income by alien workers, placing of embargo on staff recruitment, reduction of imports, lay-off of temporary staff and general staff retrenchment, and lastly, the expulsion of illegal aliens, mostly Ghanaians (Adepoju, 2005a :5).

Absorbing the demands of an unplanned alien influx into Nigeria had become unbearable in the face of an ailing economy. By implication therefore, the sudden harsh economic climate in Nigeria made foreign migrant workers not only less welcome, but also “a ready target for blame and remedial policy action” (Fafowora, 1983: 391). As expected, the generality of Nigerians and the news media supported the expulsion order. They had hoped that the departure of the aliens would open up more job opportunities for unemployed Nigerian youths (Aluko, 1990:430; *Times International*, 31 January, 1983:4; Dowty, 1986:172).

f. Growing frustration among Nigerian policy-makers on the failure of ECOWAS to adequately serve Nigeria's national interest:

Perhaps one of the major reasons why Nigeria led the formation of ECOWAS was to use the ‘Community’ as an expanded market for its industrial products with a view to becoming the industrial heart of West Africa. Realising that oil was a finite resource, government made an attempt to provide alternatives to oil dependency, through investments in industry but soon realised that the Nigerian market, although large in size, was still relatively too poor, and thus regional integration was needed in order to sustain large-scale industries (Ojo, Olatunde J.B. 1980: 577-78,584, 601-02). Unfortunately, Nigeria did not reap the expected economic benefits from the organization. For instance, during its first decade, ECOWAS failed to significantly expand intra-regional trade to the extent that even as at 1985, Nigeria's trade with the Community still constituted only 2.4 percent of its total exports (Ogunbadejo, 1987: A131; Nigeria, Federal Office of Statistics, 1983).

Apart from this, Nigeria did not gain the expected political benefit of asserting its regional leadership from the organization either. It should be recalled that Nigeria aspired to sub- regional political hegemony by developing closer ties with francophone West Africa, especially after the Côte d'Ivoire and Benin sided with the rebels during the Nigerian Civil War (Makinwa-Paulina, P. 1992:63-79). As the *Daily Times* (6 May, 1979) rightly observed, a West African integration scheme was expected to provide an institutional framework for Nigeria's leadership and help erode French political and economic influence. But as another correspondent in the *Daily Times* (20 February, 1981) claimed, ECOWAS existed “at the expense of Nigeria and yet one hardly finds a Nigerian in any responsible position in that organization.” Brown also asserts that despite the expenses of locating the Community's headquarters in Lagos (now Abuja), Nigeria was not profiting much from its participation in the organization. He therefore submits that many Nigerian citizens questioned their country's participation in the Community itself, supporting government's insinuations that the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons was either responsible for causing or exacerbating Nigeria's

severe economic, social and political problems (Brown, 1989:261,271). This probably affirmed the fear earlier expressed in 1978 that 'If the influx into Nigeria continues and it becomes clear that Nigeria is merely paying the ECOWAS piper without knowing what tune to call, this is likely to further weaken the already weak domestic support for the Community.' (*Daily Times*, 6 May, 1978: A125).

Ogunbadejo (1987) adds that the protocol on the free movement of people was the most politically provocative issue of all the key provisions of the ECOWAS treaty and its protocols in Nigeria's relations with the other member states (Ibid). No wonder, therefore, that as the economic crisis deepened, Onwuka(1981:192-206) suggests that (a) the Community should discourage excessive mobility of persons into attractive areas; and (b) that the Community should undertake a population study, and compensate countries of destination, such as Nigeria, for costs engendered by ECOWAS immigrants.

Impact of the expulsion

The first noticeable impact of the 1983 expulsion of illegal aliens from Nigeria was the demographic configuration of Ghana. By late January 1983, more than one million Ghanaians had packed up their loads and headed for the border (*The Daily Telegraph* (London), 2 February, 1983; *African Research Bulletin*, February 1983). This sudden influx of over a million Ghanaians into a food-and commodity-short Ghana was catastrophic indeed. The Ghanaian government, already under stress from the combined effects of long-term economic decline, poor harvests in 1982, due to shortage of rain, and a very severe harmattan, responded, in the first instance by forming a National Emergency Relief Committee to deal with the influx (Brydon, 1985:570). Even as at early January 1983, it was already anticipated that Ghana would have to appeal to the international community for food aid which she did eventually by sending an appeal to the United Nations for humanitarian assistance in February, 1983 (Ibid). A total amount of 188.9 million U.S dollars was thereafter approved in aids to Ghana in order to cope with the returnees' feeding, re-integration and employment (Ibid: 575).

Another impact of the 1983 expulsion from Nigeria was physical devastation and deaths of some of the deportees. The sudden, forced uprooting of an estimated two million foreign nationals from Nigeria within two weeks brought confusion, panic, chaos and tragedy. As the *Microsoft Encarta Library* (2009) reports, the expelled foreigners carried with them stories of hardship and display of xenophobia by both the Nigerian law enforcement agents and the Nigerian populace at large. Some were beaten and robbed while some underwent extortion by airport and border officials. Even the long trek became so devastating that some became ill (*West Africa*, 31 January, 1983:245; *Sunday Punch* (Lagos), 23 January, 1983).

The difficulties of travel further became aggravated with the border closure in Ghana, Benin Republic and Togo. It need be recalled that Ghana's borders were not opened until 30 January 1983, having been sealed on 21 September, 1982 in an effort to control cocoa and diamond smuggling and also to prevent the destabilization of the Jerry Rawlings' regime. Benin and Togo also closed their borders to prevent an influx of refugees that would have caused more economic hardships for their respective

countries. This precipitated a massive build-up of returnees in Benin and a subsequent backlog at the Nigeria-Benin border (*The New York Times*, 3, February, 1983:A12 ; Afolayan, 1988:19; Brown, 1989: 254; Brydon, 1985:571). Togolese authorities justified this move by arguing that since the land border with Ghana had been closed as a result of Ghana's quarrels with Togo over cocoa smuggling and alleged support of Ghanaian dissidents, they could not allow Ghanaians into Togo without a concrete assurance that they would be allowed to cross into Ghana (Ibid). Though the Benin-Togo-Ghana borders were eventually opened (after at least two weeks of the expulsion from Nigeria), many Ghanaians suffered severe hardship as a result of this delay. Ghana eventually set up transit camps to record the masses (*International Herald Tribune*, 6 February, 1983:1; *African Research Bulletin*, January, 1983). The exodus was a painful one as many of the refugees were beaten by starvation.

A number of deaths were also recorded during the strenuous exodus. While some lost their lives to road, rail and air accidents, others died of disease, hunger, exposure to harsh weather and exhaustion. Another set of death was recorded during a stampede to board the last ship out of Lagos before the deadline (Microsoft Encarta Library (CD) 2009). As a matter of fact, press coverage at that time indicated that travel by sea tended to be the most dangerous route. People drowned after falling from hawsers in attempts to board ships sent by Ghana to Nigeria. Many others were also reported to have drowned as their overladen fishing canoes failed to master the surf (*International Herald Tribune*, 6 February, 1983:1; Brydon, 1985:571-572).

But apart from the demographic impact and the devastations that trailed the 1983 expulsion from Nigeria, many Ghanaians also lost their money and properties. These came in diverse ways. For some employed by private firms, they could not receive their current and outstanding wages from their employers. This was largely due to the fact that most of the firms were themselves at the brink of bankruptcy when the expulsion order was announced. For some however, it was reported to be as a result of the callousness of the employers in question. In effect, Ghanaians who had gone to Nigeria to find work to ensure food for themselves and their families arrived back in Ghana with nothing at all. Those who had tried to carry goods with them either abandoned them en route as too heavy or cumbersome, or were forced to sell some of them to buy food or medicine. Those who left goods in Nigeria had little chance of ever reclaiming them (Brydon, 1985:572).

The 1983 expulsion also caused some social disruption. This came largely in the form of family separation. During their stay in the various urban and remote areas of Nigeria, Ghanaians successfully endeared to themselves a good number of Nigerians either for their hard work, diligence or out of pity. With time, some had girl-friends among Nigerian ladies resulting sometimes into informal marriages. Unfortunately, when the expulsion order came in mid-January 1983, almost all the Ghanaian men ran away, abandoning their wives and children (Interview with some indigenes of Eti-Oni in Atakumosa East Local Government Area, Osun State, Nigeria on 16 October, 2011). Perhaps, nobody may ever be able to locate them for life. Affected ladies had to remarry while some still bear the shame of marrying "strange foreigners" till date.

For some Ghanaian returnees' migrants, the journey was not yet over. After a grueling voyage back home, returnees discovered that they had arrived in cities "that had neither rooms nor jobs nor food for them" (Brydon, 1985:572). Two options were, however, available to them namely, either to go to their villages or re-migrate to other countries for survival. A majority of the returnees, largely to avoid shame, adopted the second option. As a result, most Ghanaians went to Cote d'Ivoire to the extent that by 1986, John Anarfi *et al* estimated that between 500,000 and 800,000 Ghanaians lived in Cote d'Ivoire (Anarfi *et al.* 2000:10). By the 1990's, Van Hear (1998:18) reports that Ghana had become one of the ten countries involved in producing a "new diaspora" with large numbers of Ghanaians moving to major cities such as London, Amsterdam and New York (Black and Tiemoko, 2003:13).

The 1983 expulsion of Ghanaians from Nigeria also instigated intense hostility towards Nigerians in Ghana. The Nigerian *Daily Times* of 27 March, 1983 reports that apart from the harassment of Nigerian housewives in market places, at least three trailers owned by Nigerians with which the aliens travelled back to Ghana were seized in Accra. About a dozen Nigerians who had gone to complain about the seizure of their vehicles were also detained in various prisons (*Daily Times*, 27 March, 1983:1).

The expulsion also had some negative impact on Nigerians. This was because many departments of state and prominent individual employers of labour were taken aback at the news that they were to lose some of their best civil servants or most loyal domestic staff. The case of Lagos State Government was spectacular in that she alone had not less than 2,600 illegal immigrants performing meritoriously as teachers in the State's under-staffed schools (*New Nigeria* (Nigeria), 25 January, 1983). Other states of the federation also shared similar faith. Their abrupt departure created a vacuum in many schools in the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) controlled states of Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo and Bendel in South-Western Nigeria.

Conclusion

This paper submits that the sojourn of Ghanaians in Nigeria between the 1970s and January 1983 may be explained in three phases of accommodation, hostility and expulsion. While Ghanaians were wholeheartedly welcomed by the Nigerian government and its peoples out of sympathy for the traumatised foreigners and in the spirit of good neighbourliness; inter-personal conflict between the leaders of both countries between 1981 and 1982 soiled the peaceful co-existence between the aliens and their host state, Nigeria. The Nigerian government soon became hostile to the alien community and this finally led to their expulsion from the country in mid-January 1983 with its attendant consequences.

1. These were: J.A. Ankrah (1966-1969); I.K. Acheampong (1972), Akuffo (1972 – 1978), and J.J. Rawlings (1979 April-September) and (1982 – 1983).
2. These were: Kwame Nkrumah (1957-1966); J.A. Ankrah (1966-1969); K.A. Busia (1969 – 1972); I.K. Acheampong (1972 – 1978); John Akuffo (1978-1979); J.J. Rawlings (1981-82).

REFERENCES

- Adepoju, A. (1988). "Labour migration and employment of ECOWAS nationals in Nigeria" in T. Fashoyin, T. (ed) *Labour and Development in Nigeria*: Lagos: Landmark Publications Ltd.
- Adepoju, A. (1984). "Illegals and Expulsion in Africa: The Nigerian Experience". *International Migration Review*, Vol. 18, No. 3, (Autumn).
- Adepoju, A. (2005). "Patterns of Migration in West Africa" in Manuh, T. (ed.), *At Home in the World? International Migration and Development in Contemporary Ghana and West Africa* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers/Institute of African Studies, University of Legon/United Nations Development Programme, Accra, 2005).
- Adepoju, A. (2005a). "Migration in West Africa", a paper prepared for the Policy Analysis and Research Programme of the Global Commission on International Migration.
- Adomako-Sarfoh, J. (1974). "The Effects of the Expulsion of Migrant workers on Ghana's Economy with particular reference to the Cocoa Industry", in Amin, S.(ed.), *Modern Migrations in Western Africa*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Afolayan, A.A. (1988). "Immigration and Expulsion of ECOWAS Aliens in Nigeria, *International Migration Review*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Spring).
- African Research Bulletin*. (1983). January and February.
- Africa Research Bulletin* (Exeter). (1971). 15 July.
- Alhaji Ali Baba, Minister of Internal Affairs, 'On Aliens Residing in Nigeria...', published in three documents dated 17 and 25 January and 14 February 1983.
- Aluko,O. (1985). 'The Expulsion of Illegal Aliens from Nigeria: a study in Nigeria's decision-making', *African Affairs*, 84, 337, October.
- Aluko,O. (1990). "The Expulsion of Illegal Aliens from Nigeria: A Study in Nigeria's Decision-Making", in Olusanya,G.O and Akindele,R.A, (eds.), *The structure and processes of Foreign Policy Making and Implementation in Nigeria, 1960-1990*. Lagos:NIIA.
- Anarfi, J.K, Kwankye, S., Ofosu-Mensah, A and Tiemoko, R. (2003). "Migration From and to Ghana: A Background Paper". *Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty*, December.
- Anarfi, J.K. (1982). *International Labour Migration in West Africa: A Case Study of the Ghanaian Migrants in Lagos, Nigeria*. Accra: Regional Institute for Population Studies; Legon: University of Ghana.
- Anarfi, J.K., Awusabo-Asare, K., and Nsowah-Nuamah, N.N.N. (2000). *Push and Pull Factors of International Migration: Country Report-Ghana*. Luxembourg: Euro Stat Working Papers: 3/2000/E/No.10.
- Antwi-Bosiakoh, T. (2012). "In Unity lies our Strength: Exploring the benefits and entitlements in Nigerian Migrant Associations in Accra, Ghana", *Global Journal of Human Social Science, Sociology, Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 12, Issue 9, June.
- Awofeso, A. (1982). "Our Embassy Shut", *Nigerian Tribune*, 30 January.
- Black, R. and Tiemoko, R. (2003). *International Migration, Remittances and Poverty: The Case of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire*. Sussex: Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex.
- Brown, M.L. (1989). "Nigeria and the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement and Residence", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 27(2).
- Brydon, L. (1985). "Ghanaian Responses to the Nigerian Expulsions of 1983", *African Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 337 (October).URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/722328>.
- Central Bank of Nigeria. (1983). *Annual Reports*.

- Chhangani, R.C. (1981). 'ECOWAS and the Immigration Control'. *Times International*, 26 January.
- Daily Star*. (1982). "Editorial Comment", February.
- Daily Telegraph* (London). (1983). 2 February.
- Daily Times*. (1978). 6 May.
- Daily Times*. (1979). 6 May.
- Daily Times*. (1981). 20 February.
- Daily Times*, (1983). 20 January.
- Daily Times*, (1983). 27 March.
- Dowty, A. (1986). "Emigration and Expulsion in the Third World", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.8, No.1, (January).
- Edinger, L. (1963). "Military Leaders and Foreign Policy Making", *American Political Science Review*, 3-404.
- Fafowora, O.O. (1983). "On the Expulsion of Illegal Migrants from Nigeria". *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (June).
- Federal Government of Nigeria. (1983). "Address of Alhaji Ali Baba, Minister of Internal Affairs On Aliens Residing in Nigeria and The Registration of ECOWAS, Chad and Cameroun citizens on 17 January". Lagos: Government Printer.
- Federal Government of Nigeria. (1963). Official Gazette Extraordinary, Supplement, No. 40, Vol. 50, 14 June.
- Gravil, R. (1985). "The Nigerian Aliens Expulsion Order of 1983". *African Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 337 (October). Available online @ <http://www.jstor.org/stable/722326>.
- Ihonybere. S.O. (1991). "Nigeria as Africa's Great Power: Constraints and prospects for the 1990's", *International Journal*, Vol.46, No.3, Regional Powers (Summer).
- Instituto del Tercer Mando. (1997). *The World Guide 1997/98*. Hong-Kong.
- International Herald Tribune*. (1983). 6 February.
- Louis, E.T. (1983). "West African Tragedy", *Politics*, Tuesday, 8 February.
- Makinwa-Paulina, P. (1992). "The West African Migration System", in Kritz, Mary M. et al *International Migration Systems*.
- Mayall, J. (1976). "Oil and Nigerian Foreign Policy", *African Affairs*, Vol.76, No. 300 (July).
- McCaskie, T.C. (1984). "Recent History of Ghana" in *Europa Publications Limited, Africa South of the Sahara*, (1984-85).
- National Concord*, Lagos. (1983). 5 January.
- New Nigerian*. (1983). 16 February.
- New Nigerian*. (1983). 29 January and 19 February.
- New Nigerian*. (1983). 28 January.
- New Nigerian*. (1983). 25 January.
- Nigeria, Federal Office of Statistics, (1983).
- Nigerian Herald Newspaper*. (1984). 11 October.
- Odotei, I. (2000). *Sea Power, Money Power. Ghanaian Migrant Fishermen and Women in the Republic of Benin*. Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon.
- Ogunbadejo, Oye. (1987). "Nigeria and the Economic Community of West African States". In Legum. C. (ed.), *Africa Contemporary Record: Annual Survey and Documents* 19, 1986-87. New York: Africana Publishing Company.
- Ogwurumba, A.T. (1996). "A Critical Analysis of Nigeria's West Africa Policy Under the Babangida Regime", Unpublished M.Sc. Thesis, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.
- Ojo, O. (1987). "The Military and Nigerian Foreign Policy" in Ojo, O. and Sanda, B.

- (eds.), *The Impact of Military Rule on Nigeria's Administration*. Ile-Ife: O.A.U Press.
- Ojo, Olatunde J.B. 1980. "Nigeria and the Formation of ECOWAS," *International Organization* 34 (4), Autumn.
- Okolo, J.E. (1984). "Free Movement of Persons in ECOWAS and Nigeria's Expulsion of Illegal Aliens". *The World Today*. Vol. 40, No. 10 (October.).
- Oliver, R. and M. Crowder, M. (1981). (eds.), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Africa*. Cambridge/London: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Onwuka, R. (1981). "The ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons: A Threat to Nigerian Security," *African Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 323.
- Oquaye, M. (2004). *Politics in Ghana, 1982-1992: Rawlings, Revolution and the Populist Democracy*. Accra: Tornado Publications
- Orubuloye, I.O. (1983). "Recent Immigration of West African Citizens into Nigeria: Preliminary Findings". Paper presented at the *National Seminar on Nigeria's Population Dynamics*, Zaria.
- Owusu, M. (1994). "Nigeria". *A Country Study: Ghana*. Library of Congress Federal Research Division.
- Owusu, J.K. (2000). 'The Role of Ghanaian Immigrant Associations in Toronto, Canada'. *International Migration Review* 34.
- Sunday Punch* (Lagos). (1983). 23 January.
- Sunday Times* (Lagos). (1983). 6 February.
- The Satellite*. (1982). 4 April.
- The New York Times*. (1983). 3 February.
- Times International*. (1981). 18 May.
- Times International*. (1983). 31 January.
- Van-Hear, N. (1998). *New Diasporas: The Mass Exodus, Dispersal and Regrouping of Migrant Communities*. London: UCL Press.
- West Africa*. (1981). 23 November.
- West Africa*. (1983). 31 January.
- West Africa*. (1983). 24 January.
- Wright, S. (1982). "Nigeria: a mid-term assessment", *The World Today*. London. March.