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Demystifying colonialism and migration: An African perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the historical trajectory of colonialism in Africa and its role in early migration patterns. It challenges the common perception of migration as a recent response to social stress and desperation in underdeveloped communities. Instead, it delves into the impact of colonialism on emigration, encompassing both forced and commercialised migration, from these so-called "underdeveloped" regions. While colonialism has been extensively discussed, much of the literature originates from the colonisers themselves, often reducing their intentions to the exploitation of cheap human labour for war and commerce. Yet, the unintended consequences of these forces, which include the loss of culture, dignity, self-actualisation, respect, and other aspects of dehumanisation, have been underrepresented in academic research.

Introduction

Migration is as old as humans. In fact, humans became migratory upon evolution into humanhood. This realism was buttressed by McNeil (1984:1) when he suggested that:

> *"It is safe to assume that when our ancestors first became fully human, they were already migratory, moving about in pursuit of big game. The rapidity with which hunting bands occupied all the continents (except Antarctica) in about 50,000 years attests to this propensity. No dominant species had ever spread so far so fast before. Our ancestors broke through climatic and geographical barriers with comparative ease because the invention of clothes and housing allowed them to sustain a tropical microclimate next to their almost hairless skins, no matter what conditions prevailed in the environment at large".*

From the preceding paragraph, it is evident that migration is a natural phenomenon and an important component that shapes and reshapes the extant existence of humanity. As such, the movement of people from one geographical location to the other was as natural as the primate essence of human existence, essentially because no single location can provide all that is required for human existence (Schneider, 1987). During the early periods of human evolution, our ancestors migrated from one location to another to escape adverse diseases and ailments, which culminated in resettlement from Africa, which is the cradle of humankind, to every other part of the globe (Darwin 1871), especially the cooler geographical locations that do not consist of those deadly diseases. The escapades from deadly diseases and ailments led to two unintended consequences – population explosion and inadequate resources (Wilson, 1995).

First, the explosive growth of population that resulted from longevity necessitated the expansion of subsisting dwellings to accommodate new entrants into the communities, which ultimately precipitated emigration to more conducive empty locations as quests for resettlement grew (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016). It must be remembered that most of the so-called new dwellings were sometimes numerous kilometres away from their original abodes. This form of movement was natural with the early advents given their nomadic nature and supernatural coping mechanisms (Bhugra, 2004). Second, the available resources became too little to cater for the large population (Repetto & Holmes, 1983). As such, the relatively scarce resources enervated relocation in search of edible fruits and other crops that would aid subsistence. Again, this process led to a form of survivalist emigration in search of locations with plentiful farm

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produce, plants and food crops (Ubba Kodero, 2020). To sustain regular supply, early stages of farming were developed along with intense animal hunting. The jousting for existence and sustenance, as documented by various paleoanthropologists (including Darwin, 1871, and Dart, 1959), led to emigration to far distant territories. Upon settlement in the new locales, efforts were made to fortify territories with various defensive and deterrent plants and armaments to ward off intruders, which sometimes included deadly animals, and as a shield against aggression and wars (Fedorowich, 1992).

Given the limited farming capabilities, dwindling resources and continued population growth, it became necessary to develop capabilities not only to defend territories but also to forcefully acquire resources in possession of others (North & Thomas, 1977). The bourgeoning territorial defence, intrusion, abduction and coercion took a terrible turn during the Industrial Revolution that began in Britain in the 18th Century and grew like wildfire across Europe during that period (Fedorowich, 1992). Although the revolution was intended to rapidly deploy technology and automation in a way that catalyses growth and development with ease and comfort, the desperation to acquire requisite input resources (both human and material) brought about the good, the bad and the ugly in the most powerful nations at the time. There is no gainsaying that the Industrial Revolution helped to catapult most of the European economies to unprecedented levels of prosperity (the generosity that is still enjoyed by most of the countries today), its devastating effects on the countries and communities that fell victim to exploitation, brutalisation and exsanguination, linger from one generation to the other – perpetually (Freudenburg, 1992). Pragmatically, the escapade of the Industrial Revolution could be captioned as two sides of the same coin – travesties of the captor and the captive!

Further evidence buttresses the reality of the modern form of migration, especially from Africa, that began with an unscrupulous agitation for greatness by the Europeans, which necessitated the expansion into remote communities and countries, in search of hard labour slaves, sexual slaves, artefacts and natural endowments (Mishambi, 1977). Through this menace, an unaccounted number of Africans were transported across the Atlantic to Europe, beginning with São João Bautista.[1] In this same vein, the number of dead sometimes surpasses the number of survivors. The unchequered greed of territorial expansion into highly resourced underdeveloped territories ultimately metamorphosised into the World Wars that resulted (Cheek, 2023), worsened by impudent larceny of resources, and wringing of culture and artefacts by the powerful nations, especially Portugal and Spain in the early 15th century, and closely followed by Britain.

Given the precedence, this research answers the call for a better understanding of the historical evolution of migration in Africa. We specifically seek answers to:

> "How has human migration evolved over time, and what are the driving forces behind various waves of African migration throughout history?"

This study explores the historical evolution of human migration, tracing its roots from early human movement due to survival needs to the complex patterns influenced by colonialism, economic shifts, and environmental challenges. We examine the intrinsic drive of humans to migrate, emphasising how migration shaped the very foundations of societies across continents. From early migrations out of Africa to escape disease and environmental hardships, to the impact of migration in other regions worldwide, this study sheds light on how this phenomenon transcended specific groups and became a universal human experience (Aregbeshola, 2010).

With the inclusion of historical data, this research extends its scope to understand how population growth, resource scarcity, and territorial expansion fueled migration further. Our study investigates the fortification of communities, with evolving defence mechanisms to protect resources and people from external threats, as well as the profound influence of the Industrial Revolution. This period not only accelerated migration but also introduced new layers of complexity, as powerful nations sought human and material resources, leading to exploitation and widespread suffering for colonised regions. Additionally, we incorporate a data-driven approach to explore how colonial legacies, economic development, political stability, and climate change have shaped African migration patterns over time.

Using a model that incorporates these variables, we aim to measure how each factor has impacted migration, allowing us to discern the enduring influences of colonialism and other socioeconomic drivers on migration trends in Africa. For instance, we explore net migration data alongside indicators such as GDP per capita, political violence, and climate variability to understand the nuanced relationships between these factors and migration. The study also takes a stratified sampling approach, analysing migration within five African regions (West, South, East, North, and Central Africa), each represented by a country with distinct colonial histories that influenced migration dynamics. In Nigeria, for example, colonial exploitation fostered internal displacement as British policies forced individuals to work on plantations and railways. South Africa's history, marked by apartheid, forced removals, and restrictive migration laws, offers insight into how institutionalised racial segregation shaped internal migration patterns. Similarly, Kenya's colonial-era land dispossession led to forced migrations, while Algeria's experience under French rule contributed to both internal and cross-border migration, particularly during the independence struggle. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Belgian colonial policies of forced labour created lasting migration impacts, driven by both economic exploitation and ongoing post-colonial conflicts.

The novelty of this research is two (2) folds:

i. This study presents a comprehensive historically and empirically grounded exploration of human migration, highlighting the natural evolution of migration as well as its consequences throughout history. It uncovers the interconnectedness between migration, population growth, resource scarcity, and the search for better living conditions.
ii. The study also provides a unique perspective on how the Industrial Revolution, which brought prosperity to some nations, led to the exploitation and suffering of others. Additionally, the research emphasises the long-lasting impact of migration, exploitation, and cultural exsanguination, shedding light on the enduring consequences of historical events on contemporary societies.

After providing an introduction to the study, the subsequent section of this paper delves into several key aspects of migration. These include an examination of early forms of forced migration that predate the Industrial Revolution, and an exploration of the effects of the Industrial Revolution, which were further intensified by the World Wars. Subsequently, we investigate the contemporary strategies employed in modern slavery, which employ various enticements to encourage emigration from and within Africa. These enticements may range from sports, technology, and knowledge-driven emigration, to casual labour facilitated by wars and destabilisation.

Slavery as the Mastermind of emigration

As indicated in the preceding paragraphs, the early regimes of slavery began with the Romanus Pontifex proclamation of the Roman Catholic church sometime in 1455 (Saunders, 1982). This proclamation divided the entire world into two parts. The part that included strong human merchandise with the potential to carry out hard labour, such as

[1] The Portuguese slave ship filled with captors from Africa sometime around 1619. This ship contained every category of human loot, including men, women, children, and mostly dead bodies. The human cargo was highjacked by the British pirates and they were dislodged at the Point Comfort port.

construction, mining and other related activities, mainly West Africans, was awarded exclusively to Portugal (Saunders, 1982), while Spain was awarded the exclusive rights to colonise the New World except for Native Americans[2] that were absolved from slavery because they were categorised as Portuguese's human commodities (Cañizares-Esguerra, 2004). The prosperity of Portugal and Spain, as well as their economic and military dominance, enticed other European countries, such as the Netherlands, France, Denmark and England to join in the invasion, capturing, and subjugation into perpetual slavery of human merchandise from Africa (Garrison, 2007). The United States of America became a prime benefactor of the slave trade not only through forced migration[3] but also through exploitation and prowling of minerals and artefacts (Meyers et al., 1997). Although, the early stages of forced migration from Africa were dominated by the transportation of human beings, irrespective of age, gender, or vulnerability; the rich natural resources, such as gold, cowries, fertile soils and other precious resources and valuable articles were prime fatalities of the plundering (Castles, 2006; Colson, 2003; Crisp, 2010).

Given the extent of wealth created through the forced migration process by the coloniser countries, it became practicable to improve production processes from manual to mechanised through the innovation and adoption of machines and technology that were sometimes powered by laborious strength and muscles (Martin, 2001; Mattelart, 2019). This ideology gave birth to the Industrial Revolution that lasted between 1760 and 1840, mainly in Europe (Mattelart, 2019). Although, the idea was to reduce human intervention in the production process, human force and strength were still required to ignite heavy machines, carry out huge construction works, and fill the gaps created by machines in the factory system (Masiero & von Deden, 2022). Evidence abounds on the important roles played by African slaves in the development and re-deployment of automation in Europe. Moreover, the eminence of labour-intensive edifying construction, ranging from religious chapels to public buildings, bridges and amusement centres, which are proceeds of the abduction and exploitation of Africans and their wealth, sparkles in various city centres across Europe. Although, the Industrial Revolution was seen as a relish for the slave trade, the periods after the revolution changed the face of the slave trade, especially the exploitation of African communities (Crisp, 2010). Of particular reference was the World War I.

The intensity of pride and arrogance that accompanied the prosperity that emanated from the looting jaunt, created unmanageable rivalry among the pillagers (Everill, 2011). The socioeconomic and political rivalry between the Allies and the Central Powers became unmanageable and the First World War (also known as the Great War) broke out on July 28, 1914 (Gill, 1992). The war furthered the need for human merchandise, especially from Africa, to serve logistical and tactical war purposes – without the 'privilege' to carry or bear heavy arms. Since the War was notable for human catastrophe, especially the death of military and war-serving personnel, its effects as a boost for forced migration,[4] especially from Africa, were noteworthy (Crisp, 2010).

The fact that the larger part of Africa was colonised by the European scrappers at the time of the War, it became imperative that Africans were bonafide appendages to the war they did not create (Iqbal, 2007). The intensity of colonialism penetrated deep into the fibres of African societies and forced previous buddies into hostility along colonisation divides. Even the neutral grounds on the continent, such as Ethiopia, Liberia and Darfur, were dragged into the jingoistic faultlines by colonial powers (Castles, 2006). Apart from the destruction of social fibres within communities, the colonisers forced more than a million Africans across the continent, including men, women and even children, to enlist as warriors rather than as soldiers.[5] Most of the warriors died in the War and the few survivors were either maimed or permanently incapacitated (Crisp, 2010). The black Americans' experience was different. The United States immersed itself in the war in 1917 and took sides with the allied nations (Bartels, 2014). To enrol sufficient boots for the war, Congress enacted the Selective Service Act on May 10, 1917, which compelled the active male population to enrol for military assignment. The process afforded the black population the opportunity to not only enlist about 400,000 men but to also encourage their peers to serve in various divisions of the US army to fight the European War.[6] In both the United States and Europe, the War changed the face of migration as it paved the way for, and enhanced nationalist activities among African elites (Bartels, 2014).

The Second World War was particularly different in both its enhancement of migration and redefinition of the current trend of migration. The war was notable for its effects on internal displacement and massive intercontinental mobilisation of slaves from Africa, essentially by the European colonies (Lucassen et al., 2010). In the other part of the world, the Sino-Japanese War created internal displacement within China, and the defeat of Spain by France created a refugee crisis in which more than 300,000 Spaniards took refuge in France, while thousands took refuge in Mexico and the Soviet Union.[7] From the African perspective, mobilisation took an extended form of the World War I experience. For instance, more Africans than those recruited in the First World War were forced to emigrate to Europe in support of their colonial masters and they served as either war combatants or operational and strategic personnel (Cramer & Richards, 2011). Although evidence suggests that the creation of African combat units within the imperial armies during the Second World War might have contributed negatively to the armed struggle that was inflicted on Africa shortly after political independence,[8] the focus in this article is restricted to the role of WW II on migration.

History of colonialism in Africa

Colonialism in Africa, a period spanning roughly from the early 17th century to the late 19th century, profoundly shaped the continent's political, economic, and social landscapes. This era began with the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, where European powers such as Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, and Spain partitioned Africa into colonies, drawing arbitrary borders that ignored existing ethnic, cultural, and political boundaries (De Leon, 1886).

The colonial period was marked by the systematic exploitation of Africa's natural resources (Kalu & Falola, 2019). Colonisers extracted vast amounts of minerals, including gold, diamonds, and copper, and established large-scale agricultural plantations growing cash crops such as coffee, cocoa, and rubber (Austin, 2008). This extraction was facilitated by the construction of infrastructure, primarily railways and ports, designed to transport resources from the interior to coastal areas for export to Europe (Moyo et al., 2019). While this infrastructure development did contribute to some modernisation, it was fundamentally geared towards benefiting the colonial powers rather than the local

[2] Mary Elliott and Jazmine Hughes, August 19, 2019. Four Hundred years after enslaved Africans were first brought to Virginia, most Americans still don't know the full story of slavery. The New York Times Magazine; the 1619 Project.

[3] This form of forced migration is equivalent to modern day human trafficking – if not worse than it.

[4] Olaudah Equiano referred to this form of forced migration as Middle Passage., according to the New York Times Magazine of August 19, 2019.

[5] African recruits were forbidden to carry any form of armament, according to Michael Crowther, 1985. General History of Africa, Volume VII, HEINEMANN- CALIFORNIA – UNESCO Publishing.

[6] The World war I was fondly regarded as a European War that drafted many other continents, especially Africa, acquiescently into the war.

[7] Gatrell, Peter. 2000.

[8] Mazrui, Ali. Africa and the legacy of the Second World War: Political, economic and cultural aspects.

populations.

Colonial rule significantly disrupted traditional African governance structures (Akena, 2019). Indigenous political systems were often supplanted by colonial administrations, which imposed foreign legal and administrative frameworks (Merry et al., 1991). The colonial powers employed various strategies to maintain control, including indirect rule (utilising local leaders as intermediaries) and direct rule (establishing European administrators). The social fabric of African societies was also altered. European educational systems were introduced, which, while expanding literacy, also promoted European cultural norms and values (Yamada, 2019). Furthermore, the introduction of Christianity by European missionaries often clashed with and sought to replace indigenous religions.

Resistance and independence movements

African resistance to colonial rule was widespread, ranging from passive resistance and civil disobedience to armed uprisings (Bratton & van de Walle, 1992). Over time, these resistance efforts coalesced into organised independence movements. The process of decolonisation gained momentum after World War II, influenced by global shifts towards self-determination and human rights (Bratton & van de Walle, 1992). By the 1960 s, most African countries had achieved independence, although the legacy of colonialism continued to impact the continent.

Colonialism and migration

Colonialism has had a lasting impact on migration patterns in Africa, both during the colonial period and in the post-independence era. During the colonial period, forced migration was a common practice. Africans were often displaced from their lands to make way for European settlers or large-scale agricultural and mining projects. Moreover, colonial economies relied heavily on coerced labor. Millions of Africans were subjected to various forms of forced labor, including indentured servitude and conscription into colonial armies. Colonial administrations also promoted labor migration to meet the demands of their economic projects. For example, workers from British colonies like Malawi, Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia), and Zambia (formerly Northern Rhodesia) were recruited to work in South Africa's mining industry (Money, 2019). These labor migrations disrupted traditional societies and established migration networks that persisted long after the end of colonial rule.

Colonialism spurred significant rural–urban migration as colonial powers developed urban centers to serve as administrative and economic hubs (Bakewell et al., 2011). Cities such as Lagos, Nairobi, and Johannesburg grew rapidly as Africans migrated in search of employment opportunities in colonial administration, trade, and industry. This urbanisation trend continued post-independence, with former colonial cities often remaining the primary economic centers of their respective countries.

The arbitrary borders drawn by colonial powers often split ethnic groups and established new, artificial nation-states (Fall, 2010). This redrawing of boundaries led to significant cross-border migration, as people moved to join relatives or find economic opportunities across newly established borders. The partitioning also sowed the seeds for future conflicts, as ethnic groups divided by borders sometimes found themselves in opposition within different colonial territories.

The legacy of colonialism has continued to influence migration patterns in post-independence Africa. The economic structures established during colonial rule left many African economies dependent on primary commodity exports with limited industrialisation (Taylor, 2016). This economic dependency contributed to poverty and underdevelopment, driving migration as people sought better opportunities abroad. Additionally, political instability and conflict, often rooted in colonial-era divisions, have been significant drivers of migration (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016). Civil wars, ethnic violence, and political repression have led to large-scale displacement within countries and across borders (Lichtenheld, 2020). For instance, conflicts in Rwanda, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have resulted in millions of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Brain drain and diaspora communities

One of the significant contemporary migration trends linked to colonialism is the phenomenon of brain drain. The educational systems and opportunities created during the colonial period were often limited, leading many educated Africans to seek better opportunities abroad (Yamada, 2019). This trend has continued, with many African professionals migrating to Europe, North America, and other regions in search of higher salaries and better working conditions. Diaspora communities have also emerged as a result of colonial legacies (Safran, 1991). Countries like the United Kingdom, France, and Portugal, which were former colonial powers, have substantial African diaspora populations. These communities often maintain strong ties with their countries of origin, contributing to remittances, investment, and cultural exchange (Adekunle et al., 2022a).

Neocolonialism, where former colonial powers continue to exert economic influence over their former colonies, also affects migration patterns. Through mechanisms like trade agreements, foreign direct investment, and development aid, former colonial powers often maintain significant control over African economies (Adekunle et al., 2022b). This economic dominance can perpetuate underdevelopment and inequality, pushing people to migrate in search of better opportunities. The history of colonialism in Africa has had profound and lasting impacts on migration patterns. Forced migration, labor movements, and the creation of artificial borders during the colonial period established migration networks that persist to this day (Sanjek, 2003). Post-independence, the economic legacies of colonialism, political instability, and conflicts continue to drive migration both within and outside Africa. Understanding these historical contexts is crucial for addressing contemporary migration issues and developing policies that promote sustainable development and stability in the region.

The impact of the Washington Consensus on migration trends in developing economies

The surge in migration tendencies observed in many developing economies can be traced back to the implementation of Structural Adjustment policies in the early 1980 s, commonly associated with the Washington Consensus (Khoudour-Castéras & David Khoudour-Castéras, 2010). This set of economic reforms, advocated by international financial institutions, aimed at liberalising and stabilising the economies of developing nations. However, the consequences of these policies, including liberalisation, exchange rate deregulation, and reduced public spending on key sectors, have significantly influenced socioeconomic conditions, leading to increased migration from the global south to the north.

The Washington Consensus, a set of tenets promoted by institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, emphasised free-market principles and fiscal discipline (Williamson, 2004). Structural Adjustment policies, derived from the Washington Consensus, were imposed on developing economies, requiring them to undertake economic reforms to qualify for financial assistance (Williamson, 2009). These policies, promoted by institutions like the IMF and World Bank, often prioritised market liberalisation and fiscal austerity over investments in social welfare and public services (Williamson, 1993). This approach contributed to the weakening of state institutions in many developing countries, exacerbating poverty and inequality.

As a result of these policies, there has been a significant migration flow from the Global South to the Global North (Khoudour-Castéras & David Khoudour-Castéras, 2010). Economic hardships, exacerbated by structural adjustment measures, have driven individuals and families to seek opportunities in wealthier countries where they perceive better prospects for employment, education, and quality of life (Tirman, 2005).

Furthermore, high unemployment rates, particularly among youth populations, can fuel migration as individuals seek livelihood opportunities elsewhere (Gore, 2000). Similarly, rapid population growth in many African countries can put a strain on resources and infrastructure, prompting migration as a coping mechanism (Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002).

Drawing credence from the literature, Khoudour-Castéras and David Khoudour-Castéras (2010); Meulbroek (2022); Naím (2000); and Tirman (2005) have documented the link between economic policies, governance structures, and migration patterns. They analysed how neoliberal reforms, including those associated with the Washington Consensus, have influenced migration flows by shaping economic conditions and livelihood opportunities in sending countries.

Washington Consensus or Washington Confusion? effects on socioeconomic development

The phenomenon of migration from the Global South to the Global North is deeply rooted in the historical context of economic policies and their impact on socioeconomic development (Larry Leistritz & Murdock, 2019). In this review, we explore how neoliberal reforms, particularly those associated with the Washington Consensus and Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), have shaped migration trends by influencing governance structures, poverty dynamics, and opportunities for socioeconomic advancement in developing countries.

Liberalisation, a key tenet of the Washington Consensus, aimed to open up markets to global competition. However, this often resulted in increased vulnerability for local industries in developing countries. As foreign goods flooded the market, domestic industries struggled to compete, leading to job losses and economic displacement. The consequent decline in employment opportunities, particularly in sectors unable to match the efficiency and scale of foreign counterparts, contributed to economic hardships for many individuals and families (Marangos, 2023). This economic insecurity, in turn, served as a push factor for migration, as individuals sought better prospects in countries with stronger economies.

Exchange rate deregulation, another aspect of neoliberal reforms, further compounded economic instability in developing countries. Currency devaluation and fluctuation under SAPs created uncertainty for businesses and individuals, undermining investment and eroding purchasing power (Shin, 2021). The resulting volatility in prices and incomes exacerbated poverty and inequality, driving people to seek refuge in more stable economic environments abroad. Austerity measures, often prescribed as part of Structural Adjustment Programs, aimed to reduce public spending and fiscal deficits. However, the impact of these measures on social services such as health and education was profound (Tirman, 2005). Cuts to public expenditure weakened healthcare systems and educational institutions, limiting access to essential services and opportunities for socioeconomic mobility. As marginalised communities faced dwindling prospects for a better future within their own countries, migration emerged as a viable strategy for improving livelihoods and accessing higher-quality education and healthcare abroad.

The literature on the relationship between neoliberal economic policies and migration patterns provides compelling evidence of the linkages between governance structures, poverty dynamics, and migration trends. Naím (2000); Shin (2021); Tirman (2005); and Williamson (1993) have documented how the implementation of neoliberal reforms, driven by institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, has reshaped economic landscapes and influenced migration decision-making processes in developing countries. By prioritising market liberalisation and fiscal austerity over investments in social welfare and public services, these policies have perpetuated cycles of poverty and inequality, driving individuals and families to seek opportunities for socioeconomic advancement beyond their national borders.

Neoliberal reforms, Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), and migration patterns in the global South

The trend of migration from the Global South to the Global North is not merely a contemporary phenomenon but rather deeply rooted in historical economic policies and their profound impact on socioeconomic development. In this review, we delve into the literature to elucidate the intricate relationship between neoliberal reforms, particularly those epitomised by the Washington Consensus and Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), and the consequential migration patterns observed today.

The erosion of local industries and the prioritisation of export-oriented policies under the Washington Consensus have had far-reaching implications for employment opportunities in developing countries (Öniş & Şenses, 2005). As domestic industries struggled to compete with foreign counterparts, job prospects dwindled, exacerbating economic hardships for many individuals. The resultant decline in employment opportunities served as a significant push factor for migration, compelling individuals to seek livelihoods in more economically stable regions, often in the Global North where job prospects appeared more promising. Moreover, the economic instability engendered by neoliberal reforms has been linked to a rise in unemployment and crime rates, contributing to a pervasive sense of insecurity in affected regions (Gebrewold, 2016). This environment of instability further fuels migration tendencies as individuals seek refuge from economic and physical threats in more secure environments abroad. Furthermore, the deterioration of public infrastructure due to austerity measures has had profound implications for the overall quality of life in developing countries. Reduced investment in essential services such as healthcare and education has left communities underserved and disillusioned (Tirman, 2005). Inadequate infrastructure and poor access to basic amenities serve as additional push factors for migration, as individuals aspire for improved living conditions elsewhere.

The migration patterns observed today reflect the consequences of the Washington Consensus policies, with a notable trend of individuals from developing economies seeking opportunities in more economically stable regions, particularly in the Global North. Economic hardships, limited employment opportunities, insecurity, and inadequate public infrastructure collectively serve as push factors propelling individuals to migrate in search of better prospects and improved livelihoods. The surge in migration tendencies in developing economies is intricately linked to the repercussions of the Washington Consensus and its associated Structural Adjustment policies. Liberalisation, exchange rate deregulation, and reduced public spending have collectively created an environment that encourages outward migration (Ubba Kodero, 2020). Addressing these root causes is imperative for crafting effective policies that promote sustainable development and mitigate migration pressures in affected regions. Robust academic discussions on these issues can contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding migration trends in developing economies, paving the way for informed policy interventions and sustainable solutions.

Contemporary issues of migration

Political and journalistic opinions on the en masse migration of Africans to Europe have gained vehement traction over the past decades. The populist far-rightists have risen to prominence in recent elections in the West on immigration clampdown and other separatist ideologies by orchestrating mendacity and mythology about the ugliness of migration (Favell & Hansen, 2002). This negative sentiment has become globalised within and across the advanced economies: “Migration has become a

staple of the news in many countries, filled with images of desperate Africans fleeing an impoverished continent, poised to descend on the West".[9] In recent times, several Western political leaders have enacted and implemented antiimmigration policies that are specifically targeted at some set of people, especially African immigrants (Trauner & Deimel, 2013).

This may explain why adversaries of Brexit arrogated the unintended consequences and political fallouts from the infamous separation to unchequered xenophobia rather than economic pressure. Regularly, journalists trend on the number of African immigrants that attempt to grace the shores of advanced countries purely for economic reasons, and migrants are prime suspect for every itch of misfortune that befalls "Western civility":

> *"As the immigration crisis deepens, a mood of anarchy is descending across Europe. Our once well-ordered civilisation is sliding towards chaos in the face of the unprecedented, colossal influx of foreign arrivals. The signs of dislocation are all around us. Only yesterday the Eurostar service from Paris to London suffered massive delays because of a major security alert sparked by migrants climbing onto tracks and trains".*[10]

It must be pointed out that the glowing ambers of antiimmigration sentiment are not the sole province of Europe and the United States. Such ugliness has also raised its heads within the African continent itself, where South Africa is singled out as the most xenophobic country in Africa, and one of the worst globally (Trauner & Deimel, 2013). At large, migration sentiments have grown to an unprecedented level and the loath component of the adversity has beclouded the melancholic expedition that has resulted in the hydra-headed symphony of the maladies – social stress created by political failures and the search for better education and work experience (Vives, 2017).

Recent Realities

Arguably, there is a general feeling that Africans are trooping into the West in droves. This myth has sometimes been regarded as a mass exodus from the socioeconomic maladies that have become synonymous with the continent, especially within the Western political and civil ranks (Hatton & Williamson, 2002). The power of perception that dark colour foreigners are terrorists, and that are capable of inflicting debilitating menace on white people has become a household emblem. These generalised slants are interpreted and accepted as reality in the absence of scientific evidence.[11] Unfortunately, such acronymous pronouncements are hardly challenged by mainstream media openly in order not to draw the wrath of populist ideologists. However, statistical evidence fails to support the notion that mass migration truly reflects Africans' overseas adventure.

Stylised facts on the reality of contemporary migration

The truth about the contemporary form of migration resides in various rhetorical questions that create both amusement and trepidation, depending on the worldview of the evaluator. To start with, it is important to raise two questions. First, if dark-skinned people are egregious threats to white people, so ***why do we have a respectable number of white investors, corporate executives, menial miner workers, contractors, and even diplomats in war-torn African countries? Are these white visitors exempt from such threats or have they developed personal immunity against such dangerous aggression?*** On another note, both whites and blacks have lived together in various communities for centuries after the Wars. ***Have the blacks posed existential threats to their neighbours based on skin colour; or are there other underlying factors for the disenchantment between these racial groups?*** More bluntly, ***what is the rate of divorce, suicide or murder relating to intermarriage between whites and blacks?*** In a more practical sense, ***is there statistical evidence to suggest that black migrants suddenly become aggressive when they reach the Western shores? What do national statistics say about the racial profile and countries of origin of criminals in Western prisons?*** As nauseating as these questions may seem to racial apologists, statistical data in this regard are smelting to hardened hearts of nativists.

In the practical sense, statistics[12] suggest that global migration reached 280.6 million by mid-2020, which accounts for about 3.6 percent of the global population (IOM, 2022). This increase accounts for about 0.8 percent of global migration between 2000 and 2020. This said it is important to point out that the global trend of migration was higher as a percentage of the global population in 2010 (2.9 %) than in 2020 (2.5 %). Furthermore, as of 2021, the three largest flows of migrants were from Latin America to North America, followed by South Asia to Europe and from South Asia to Southwest Asia (IOM, 2022). The situation is different for African migrants. For instance, although migration data is fragmentary, fluid and often imprecise, it is estimated that African migrants are overwhelmingly located within the eight sub-regional economic communities in Africa: 80 percent in West Africa, 65 percent in Southern Africa, 50 percent in Central Africa and 47 percent in Eastern Africa (Dijk et al., 2001). The exception is Northern Africa, where about 90 percent of its emigrants move to other localities outside Africa. Among African migrants that emigrate out of the continent, evidence suggests that 11 million live across Europe, almost 5 million reside in the Middle East, and about three million are in North America. Almost all these intercontinental migrants, especially those who emigrate to Europe and North America, own valid passports, visas and personal upkeep allowances, because the overwhelming majority entered those countries by air travel (Suárez-Orozco, 2020). There is no denying the fact that an infinitesimal fraction of intercontinental migrants (illegal immigrants) would explore risky avenues to reach those distant countries (de Haas, 2008). Unfortunately, the adventure of such groups (either success or failure) would normally dominate the Western media and political discourse. In fact, those are the groups that dominate the immigration discourse across Western tabloids and political platforms.

This article's attention will be restricted to the main categorisation of modern-day migration, based on the purpose of migration that has been identified in the literature. In specific, modern-day migration has three main undertones – migration for the purpose of education, skills development and training; family reunion, and forced migration as a result of social stress. Each of these was discussed under the broader subheading in the paragraphs that follow – the good, the bad and the ugly.

The good

Quality education, skills development and personal development are some of the reasons why Africans migrate to other parts of the world (Thomas, 2008). One of the major reasons for migration from Africa can be categorised under education and skills development. Literature has documented the role of education as a push factor for emigration, suggesting that highly educated people are likely to emigrate if the home condition becomes too challenging[13] (Byerlee, 1974). Also, economic hardship sometimes precipitates a decline in educational standards

[9] Afro Barometer. 'Updata-ing' the narrative about African migration. 12 September 2019.

[10] McKinstry, Leo. EU meltdown over migrants. The Daily Express. September 4, 2015.

[11] Accurate and adequate statistical evidence are readily available but rarely cited by the politicians, and the press also fuel the inaccuracies.

[12] Data collected from the Migration Portal of International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

[13] .

(Lempers et al., 1989). In most instances, this has fuelled intra-continental migration within Africa, and it has also contributed to a few intercontinental migrations (Byerlee, 1974). This supposition is evident in the Horn of Africa where disenfranchisement to access education is often cited by migrating girls.[14]

Further evidence reveals that international mobility for African students exceeded those of students from other parts of the world – a situation that preceded the introduction of the Bologna process (Lempers et al., 1989). For instance, the number of African students studying abroad increased by more than 16 % between 2013 and 2015 when the figure reached 432,589.[15] Furthermore, France, the United Kingdom and Germany are among the top European Union member countries that host almost half of all African students that study abroad, and these countries compete among themselves to attract more students from Africa – not because they consider the students worthy of anything, but because these students fund a large part of the budgets of the higher institutions, and the fees they pay also provide avenues to fund bursaries and scholarships for European students, apart from cushioning administrative costs in the universities of receiving countries (Kauko & Medvedeva, 2016).

However, few studies have been done on the growing need to seek education abroad as a reason for migration. This notwithstanding, the relationship between education and access to better jobs, job opportunities and better livelihood is always strong and difficult to extricate (Bredtmann et al., 2019). Although migrants who seek to study abroad may envisage the possibility of improving their livelihood in the host country through education that is acquired in the more advanced economies, a few educational migrants relocate from the country of study to regain their existing jobs in the sending country (Makina, 2012). This line of thought is realistic because overseas studies largely enable people to gain employment with international organisations that operate in both the host and home countries, and it also improves their chances of landing better deals with their employers.

On the other hand, highly educated Africans are attracted by advanced economies to fill the gaps being created by the ageing population and to provide needed skills in scarce-skill areas in the economy (Kondakci et al., 2018). For instance, between 2010 and 2016, the United States attracted more than 110,000 immigrants from sub-Saharan African countries on diversity visas, while another 190, 000 have been absorbed through the permanent residence process earlier (Adepoju, 2011). Refugee figures and those fleeing wars and political unrest were quoted as 110,000. Further evidence suggests that immigrants from sub-Saharan African countries are by far, comparatively more educated than Americans. This explains why it would make sense to attract these highly skilled but cheap human merchandise through a reformed colonisation (or neo-colonialism) process. The same trend is evident in Europe where extremely talented Africans are lured into migration through various resettlement programmes that are erected on neo-colonial ideology. Unfortunately, these categories of migrants do not manage to feature in mainstream Western media, and it hardly gain notoriety in political discussions that centre on migration.

The bad

Statistics suggest that a good number of migrants relocate to seek economic opportunities. This is mainly due to various economic challenges in the sending country that have made it difficult, and sometimes impossible, to be gainfully employed or create any meaningful entrepreneurship activity.

The transatlantic slave trade (15th-19th centuries)

During the transatlantic slave trade, millions of Africans were forcibly migrated to the Americas as slaves (Eltis, 2001). This tragic period in history involved horrific conditions during the Middle Passage, where enslaved Africans endured overcrowded ships, disease, and brutality (N. K. Austin, 2000). Families were torn apart, cultures disrupted, and communities devastated. The consequences of this forced migration continue to impact African descendants in the Americas today, with lasting social and economic disparities (Pham, 2023).

Colonial exploitation (19th-20th centuries)

European colonial powers actively encouraged the migration of African labourers to work in plantations and mines, often under oppressive and exploitative conditions (Comaroff, 1998). The migrants faced harsh labour, discrimination, and a lack of basic rights. This period of migration contributed to a legacy of economic inequality and political instability in post-colonial Africa, and the ugliness of this melancholic legacy continues to hunt both the victims and the perpetrators (Stasiulis & Yuval-Davis, 2012).

Post-Independence exodus (20th century)

After African nations gained independence, there was a wave of migration, driven by political instability, conflict, and economic challenges (Jonas, 2012). Many people fled their home countries to seek refuge and better opportunities elsewhere. The process of migration often involves perilous journeys, human trafficking, and refugees living in squalid conditions (Netserreab Ghebremichael Andom, 2018). Some migrants faced xenophobia and discrimination in their host countries, making it challenging to integrate and rebuild their lives (Nyamunda, 2020).

Contemporary migration (late 20th century to the present)

In more recent times, the bad side of migration from Africa is exemplified by the perilous journeys of migrants across the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea in search of better economic prospects in Europe (Herbert Biebach et al., 2000). Many of these journeys are facilitated by human traffickers and can lead to dangerous conditions, loss of life, and exploitation. Migrants often face violence, detention, and deportation in their host countries, exacerbating their vulnerability (H. Biebach, 1990). However, the percentage of migrants in this category is very low, but they are the most pronounced category of migrants.

Brain drain and social impact

The migration of highly skilled professionals, often referred to as a "brain drain," has negative consequences for African countries, as they lose valuable human resources (Easterly & Nyarko, 2011). This phenomenon hampers the development and progress of African nations by depriving them of skilled workers who could contribute to their economies and societies (Carrington & Detragiache, 1999). These historical narratives emphasise that migration from Africa has often been driven by necessity, whether due to colonial exploitation, political instability, or economic hardship. However, these migrations have frequently exposed individuals and communities to immense suffering and exploitation. It is important to recognise and address these historical injustices while working towards more equitable and just migration policies and practices in the present day.

The ugly

The general discourse on migration is largely dominated by war, armed struggles, civil unrest and diseases. Most of the Western tabloids focus their opinion-based evaluation of migration on desperation to escape internal displacement or the possibility of death as a result of war or political tension. This perspective is glaringly supported by statistics.

[14] Evie Browne. 2017. Evidence on education as a driver of migration. London, Knowledge, evidence and learning for development – K4D.

[15] Hellwig, Johanna. 2019. Europe is deepening efforts to attract African talent. University World News – the global window on higher education. Available at: https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20191021095107777. Accessed September 2022.

Table 1
Sources, Definition and Measurement of Variables.

Variable	Description	Measurement	Source(s)	Motivating Study?
NetMigration	Net migration	net migration in a particular year	World Development Indicator (WDI)	Ariu et al. (2016)
ColonialLegacy	Colonial Legacy	Intensity of Colonial Rule	The Colonial Dates Dataset (COLDAT)	Herre et al. (2024)
$\boldsymbol{Econ_{Dev}}$	Economics Development	GDP per capita	World Development Indicator (WDI)	Gil-Alana et al. (2021)
		Income Inequality (Gini Index)	World Development Indicator (WDI)	Ruz (2023)
		Employment	World Development Indicator (WDI)	Shaaba Saba and Ngepah (2024)
$\boldsymbol{Pol_{Stab}}$	Political Stability and Governance Quality	Political Violence Government Effectiveness Rule of Law	World Governance Indicators (WGI)	Adekunle (2021)
$\boldsymbol{Clim_{Chan_{i,t}}}$	Climate Change	Climate Variability {CO2 emissions (kt)}	World Development Indicator	Hamadjoda Lefe et al. (2024)

Source: Author's Computation.

For instance, the number of refugees in host countries grew from 2 million in 1956 to a record 16.9 million in 1999, before reducing slightly to 9.9 million in 2006 (IOM, 2022). However, the figure jumped to 21.3 million in 2021. This sharp rise has been attributed to a series of wars and unrests galvanised and architected by the Western powers. Looking closely at the Middle East, North Africa and some parts of Asia, most of the uprisings that led to wars were umbrellaed under "war on terror". Through this "war", many countries have been plunged into total chaos and irreparable destruction, which has fuelled not only displacement but has also destroyed the hopes and aspirations of many; thereby leaving them with no better alternative than to migrate. Unfortunately, this chapter has been expunged from migration discourse and the maladies inflicted on communities, which are antecedent to forced migration is excluded from every discourse in the mainstream Western tabloids.

Empirical Credence: What does the data Say?

To gauge hypothetically ***'How has human migration evolved over time, and what are the driving forces behind various waves of African migration throughout history'*** we considered a model that includes both time-related variables and factors representing potential drivers of migration.

governance quality in African countries, measured using indicators such as political violence, government effectiveness, and rule of law following (Adekunle, 2021). It captures the influence of political factors on migration; $\boldsymbol{Clim_{Chan_{i,t}}}$ represents environmental factors measured as climate variability (as in the work of Hamadjoda Lefe et al. (2024)) which potentially can influence migration patterns by affecting livelihoods and exacerbating vulnerabilities; $\boldsymbol{\mu}$ represents the error term, capturing unobserved factors and random variation in net migration that are not accounted for by the independent variables; $\delta, \pi, \omega, \varphi$ and θ are coefficients representing the effects of the independent variables on net migration. They indicate the magnitude and direction of the relationships between each independent variable and net migration, holding other variables constant.

This regression model allows us to analyse how migration has changed over time and identify the relative importance of colonial legacy, economic development, political stability, and climate change as drivers of migration in Africa. By estimating the coefficients of the independent variables, we can assess the significance of each factor in shaping migration patterns and understand the dynamics of migration evolution throughout history. The variable's measurement and sources are summarised in Table 1.

$$\boldsymbol{NetMigration_{i,t}} = \boldsymbol{A} + \boldsymbol{\delta Year_{i,t}} + \boldsymbol{\pi ColonialLegacy_{i,t}} + \boldsymbol{\omega Econ_{Dev_{i,t}}} + \boldsymbol{\varphi Pol_{Stab_{i,t}}} + \boldsymbol{\theta Clim_{Chan_{i,t}}} + \boldsymbol{\mu_{i,t}}$$

where.

$\boldsymbol{NetMigration_t}$ represents the net migration in a particular year t in country i, calculated as the difference between the number of immigrants and emigrants following Ariu et al. (2016); $\boldsymbol{A}$ represents the intercept term, representing the baseline level of net migration when all independent variables are zero; $\boldsymbol{Year_{i,t}}$ represents the passage of time, capturing temporal trends in migration. This variable allows us to assess how migration has evolved over time; ***ColonialLegacy*** represents the historical legacy of colonialism, measured using the intensity of colonial rule following Herre et al. (2024). Thus capturing the long-term effects of colonial policies on migration patterns. The value 0 was assigned to years when colonisation was absent or ended and value 1 was assigned when colonisation was present or active in the baseline data; $\boldsymbol{Econ_{Dev_{i,t}}}$ represents the level of economic development in African countries, measured using indicators such as GDP per capita (Gil-Alana et al., 2021), income inequality (Ruz, 2023), and employment opportunities (Shaaba Saba & Ngepah, 2024). It reflects the role of economic factors in driving migration; $\boldsymbol{Pol_{Stab_{i,t}}}$ represents the level of political stability and

***Sample** Identification*

In consonance with a stratified sampling framework, Africa is divided into five (5) regions; Western Africa, Southern Africa, Eastern Africa, North Africa and Central Africa. We sought empirical credence from each of the regional categorisations to understand the regional dynamics of colonialism on net migration in Africa. In the western African region, Nigeria was selected because it offers a rich tapestry of migration patterns shaped by colonial exploitation. During the colonial period, Nigeria served as a significant source of labour for British industries, particularly in agriculture and mining (Smith, 1979). The British colonial administration implemented policies such as the forced recruitment of labourers for plantations and mines, leading to mass displacement and migration within the country (Korieh, 2001). For example, the construction of railways and infrastructure projects required labourers who were often forcibly relocated from their homes to work sites. Additionally, Nigeria's role as a hub for the transatlantic slave trade during the earlier colonial era further influenced migration dynamics (Arthur, 1991), with millions of Africans forcibly transported to the Americas.

In the southern region of Africa, South Africa's colonial history, marked by Dutch and British colonisation, has left an indelible imprint on migration patterns in the region. The institution of apartheid, a system of racial segregation and discrimination, led to forced removals of non-white populations from designated "white" areas to racially segregated townships and homelands (Lemon, 2021). These forced removals, such as the infamous Group Areas Act, resulted in mass displacement and internal migration of black South Africans (Sassen, 2010). Moreover, the influx control measures enforced by the apartheid regime restricted the movement of black South Africans, leading to the emergence of informal settlements and migrant labour hostels in urban areas. The legacy of apartheid continues to shape migration patterns in post-apartheid South Africa, with ongoing migration from rural to urban areas in search of economic opportunities.

In the eastern region of Africa, Kenya's colonial experience under British rule significantly influenced migration patterns, particularly through policies of land dispossession and labour recruitment. The British colonial administration implemented policies such as the Crown Lands Ordinance, which facilitated the expropriation of land from Indigenous communities for European settlers (Morgan, 1963). This displacement of indigenous populations led to internal migration and resettlement of communities, often resulting in landlessness and economic hardship. Additionally, the British authorities relied heavily on forced labour for infrastructure projects such as the construction of the Uganda Railway, leading to the forced migration of labourers from various parts of Kenya (Aalders, 2021). The legacies of land dispossession and forced labour continue to influence migration patterns in contemporary Kenya, with ongoing rural–urban migration and internal displacement driven by socioeconomic factors.

In the northern region of Africa, Algeria's history of French colonisation left a lasting impact on migration patterns, characterised by forced labour, population displacement, and migration to and from neighbouring countries. During the colonial period, the French authorities implemented policies such as the "code de l'indigénat," which subjected indigenous Algerians to forced labour and restricted their movements (Asiwaju, 1978). Many Algerians were forcibly relocated to work on French plantations and in urban centres, leading to internal migration and displacement. Moreover, the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962) resulted in significant population movements, with hundreds of thousands of Algerians fleeing violence and persecution to seek refuge in neighbouring countries such as Tunisia and Morocco (Fraleigh, 1967). The post-independence period saw continued migration flows, both voluntary and forced, driven by economic factors and political instability.

In the central African region, The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has a tumultuous colonial history under Belgian rule, marked by forced labour in rubber plantations and subsequent migration patterns driven by post-colonial conflicts and instability. During the colonial period, the Belgian authorities implemented a brutal system of forced labour, known as the "concession system," which subjected Congolese labourers to harsh working conditions and exploitation (Frankema & Buelens, 2013). Many Congolese were forcibly displaced from their homes to work in rubber plantations, mines, and other extractive industries, leading to internal migration and displacement. The legacy of colonial exploitation continues to reverberate in contemporary DRC, with ongoing conflicts and political instability driving forced displacement and migration both within the country and to neighbouring regions.

These narratives highlight the diverse colonial histories of Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Algeria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and their profound impact on migration patterns in Africa and thus inform the criteria for inclusion in our study's sample. By studying these countries, we aim to offer valuable insights into the complex dynamics of colonial-era migration and its enduring consequences.

Estimation strategy

Following Adekunle et al. (2022b), the Common Correlated Effects (CCE) estimator was applied to elucidate changes in the output elasticities of the net migration model. This estimator is particularly adept at handling panel data with unbalanced or different frequencies, as it allows for heterogeneous variances and correlations across groups and periods (Makina, 2012). Essentially, the CCE estimator estimates the coefficients of the panel regression model while accommodating heteroscedasticity and autocorrelation across individuals and periods. It does so by assuming a common factor structure for the disturbances (errors) in the model, wherein the common factors capture the correlation structure across individuals and periods.

Considering the inherent diversity among countries in terms of economic development, political stability, and colonial legacies, the CCE method enables the incorporation of correlated effects across countries and time periods. This feature allows for a more effective capture of heterogeneity compared to traditional estimators. Moreover, recognising that colonial-era migration may have enduring effects that evolve over time, the CCE estimator accommodates time-varying factors such as economic development and political stability by permitting correlation across time periods. Consequently, this ensures that the estimates remain robust to changes in these variables over time.

Furthermore, the CCE estimator acknowledges the unique historical, cultural, and geographical characteristics of countries that influence migration patterns. By allowing for correlations across countries, it provides more accurate estimates of the relationships between variables. Additionally, the CCE method handles missing data and unbalanced panels by leveraging all available information in the estimation process, thereby mitigating biases arising from missing observations and enhancing the reliability of the findings. Finally, the CCE estimator facilitates robust inference by accounting for heteroscedasticity and autocorrelation across countries and time periods. This ensures that the estimated standard errors are valid, enabling reliable hypothesis testing and confidence interval estimation. Thus, the comprehensive features of the CCE estimator make it a valuable tool for analyzing panel data, particularly in studies exploring the enduring consequences of phenomena like colonial-era migration

The baseline regression results in Table 2 provide a quantitative analysis of the factors influencing net migration. Each variable's coefficient indicates the strength and direction of its impact on net migration, while the t-statistics (in parentheses) show the statistical significance of these impacts.

With the intensity of Colonial Rule showing a coefficient of 1.3590 and a t-statistic of 10.55, it shows that a higher intensity of colonial rule is associated with increased net migration. Understanding the historical

Table 2
Baseline Regression.

	(1)
	Net Migration
Intensity of Colonial Rule	1.3590***
GDP per capita	(10.55)
Income Inequality (Gini Index)	0.4794***
Employment	(55.85)
Political Violence	0.9116***
Government Effectiveness	(9.11)
Rule of Law	−0.0832***
Climate Variability {CO2 emissions (kt)}	(−6.45)
Constant	−6.0733***
	(−11.40)
Year Effect	No
Country Effect	No
Observations	1170
R	0.336

t statistics in parentheses.
*$p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

context and legacy of colonial rule can help policymakers address migration trends, potentially by improving socio-economic conditions in formerly colonised regions. The GDP per Capita has a coefficient of 0.4794 and a t-statistic 55.85. This implies that higher GDP per capita significantly correlates with increased net migration. Economic prosperity attracts migrants. Policies aiming at economic development could help manage migration flows by either retaining citizens or attracting skilled migrants. The regressor income Inequality measured as the Gini Index has a coefficient of 0.9116 and a t-statistic: of 9.11. Higher-income inequality is associated with higher net migration. Reducing income inequality through progressive taxation and social welfare programs could mitigate migration pressures by creating more equitable economic conditions.

Employment has a coefficient of −0.0832 and a t-statistic of −6.45. This implies that higher employment rates correlate with reduced net migration. Improving employment opportunities can decrease the push factors for migration, thus retaining the workforce within the country (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016a). Political violence has a coefficient of −6.0733 and a t-statistic −11.40. This implies that higher political violence is strongly associated with increased net migration. Reducing political violence through conflict resolution, stable governance, and law enforcement can significantly decrease forced migration due to unsafe conditions (Bredtmann et al., 2019). Government Effectiveness has a coefficient of −0.0832, and a t-statistic: −6.45. This result indicates that better government effectiveness is linked with decreased net migration. Enhancing government effectiveness through transparent governance and efficient public services can retain citizens by fostering trust and stability (Shaaba Saba & Ngepah, 2024).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of the push factors behind illegal emigration underscores the imperative need to dissect the roots of desperation that drive individuals to undertake such perilous journeys. The narrative presented reveals a complex tapestry of historical and contemporary elements that have collectively contributed to the dire circumstances faced by many African nations and their citizens. From the legacies of colonialism and the dismantling of traditional conflict resolution systems to the challenges posed by postcolonial statehood and governance, a tumultuous history casts a long shadow. The imposition of foreign institutions and the persistence of colonial-era influences have left deep scars on the sociopolitical landscape of the continent, further eroding trust in leadership and institutions. Yet, it is essential to recognise that the issues at hand extend beyond the past. The role of external powers, particularly Western countries, in fuelling or orchestrating conflicts through direct or proxy involvement is a stark reality. This dynamic, often driven by geopolitical interests, perpetuates instability and contributes to the conditions that drive individuals to seek refuge in other lands.

The question that lingers is whether the West bears culpability for the socioeconomic and political disarray that has driven illegal immigration from Africa. While the narrative presents compelling evidence of Western involvement and manipulation, a comprehensive understanding of the issue requires a nuanced examination of the historical legacies, geopolitics, and global economic structures which was presented. In essence, addressing the root causes of illegal emigration calls for a multifaceted approach that considers not only the actions of external actors but also the complexities of internal governance, the aspirations of the African people, and the need for international cooperation to foster stability and prosperity on the continent. Only through a holistic and collaborative effort can we hope to mitigate the desperation that drives illegal migration and pave the way for a more hopeful and secure future for all involved.

Recommendations

To effectively address the root causes of illegal emigration from Africa, it is imperative to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted factors driving this phenomenon. This analysis should delve into the historical context, examining the enduring legacies of colonialism and the dismantling of traditional conflict resolution systems. By understanding how historical injustices and power imbalances continue to shape contemporary migration patterns, stakeholders can develop targeted interventions to address structural inequalities and promote stability.

Moreover, it is crucial to examine the geopolitical dynamics at play, particularly the role of external powers, including Western countries, in fueling conflicts and instability in Africa. By recognising and addressing the geopolitical interests driving external involvement, efforts can be directed towards promoting peace, conflict resolution, and sustainable development in affected regions. Internal governance challenges also play a significant role in driving illegal immigration. Corruption, weak institutions, and lack of accountability undermine state capacity and exacerbate socioeconomic disparities, contributing to migration pressures. Strengthening governance and institutional capacity within African nations is therefore essential for addressing root causes and building resilience to external pressures.

Empowering African communities economically, socially, and politically is another critical aspect of addressing illegal emigration. Investments in education, job creation, and community development can provide alternatives to migration by improving livelihoods and opportunities locally, thereby reducing the incentives to undertake perilous journeys. Furthermore, fostering international cooperation and diplomacy is essential for addressing global economic structures and promoting fair trade, investment, and development in Africa. By working collaboratively to tackle systemic inequalities and create enabling environments for sustainable development, nations can address the root causes of migration and promote shared prosperity. Humanitarian assistance and protection are also paramount, ensuring that migrants and refugees are treated with dignity and their rights upheld throughout their journey. Upholding humanitarian principles is essential for mitigating the risks and vulnerabilities faced by migrants and refugees and promoting their safety and well-being.

Lastly, supporting research initiatives and knowledge-sharing platforms is crucial for deepening understanding of migration dynamics and informing evidence-based policymaking. By building a robust knowledge base, stakeholders can design effective interventions and strategies that address the root causes of migration and promote sustainable solutions for all involved parties.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Adewale R Aregbeshola: Writing – original draft, Validation, Supervision. **Ibrahim Ayoade Adekunle:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Project administration, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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