Unpacking Migration and Diplomatic Relations in Africa

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Introduction

Migration is a form of relocation or involving permanent moves to new locations. It could be abstract in context such as sharing of culture, perspectives of living, religion, philosophies, innovations and ideas. Migration is similarly a change of residence which could either be permanent or temporary which is necessitated by various push or pull factors. It started with slave raid and trade, inter-ethnic conflicts and warfare characterized the evident movement of indigenes to a place different from their homeland. Religious activities and pilgrimage in the Arabian Peninsula, nomadic herding livestock and legitimate trading have led to migration and movement across borders.

The trend of migrating to the global north with developed countries continues till date. This is favoured by various pull factors in these global north countries. The search and availability for and of better opportunities in terms of job, living conditions, security, health facilities, government policies, favourable business environment continuously draw, especially youths, to these countries. These opportunities are rarely in the countries with the push factors particularly poor living conditions, poverty, poor governance and resource management, corrupt systems, make migrants go through arduous route in getting access to the global north countries, as far as crossing the Mediterranean Sea or Sahara Desert. The perceived opportunities (greener pastures) in those countries are not usually so as some have to be involved in inhumane jobs for survival. At other times, some seek to return back to their home countries when the hardship becomes unbearable.

Migration remains beneficial and critical for both home and destination countries for national progress and prosperity (UNDP, 2009, UNDESA, 2012). Immigrants' contributions in destination countries are getting recognized in the provision of vital labour, services, and skills to their new land or their role in the reproduction of workforces including their sustenance, housing, education, and training in countries around the world (Schiller, 2009) though not very publicized. Shain and Barth, 2003 noted that migrants now form Diaspora communities who turn to be political actors in their destination countries. Similarly, the source countries benefit as immigrants contribute so much to the growth and development of their home countries as they remit their accumulated financial, human capital, resources and influence in various works of life: governance, politics and journalism among others.

Migration and Diplomacy

The perception and projection of a country in the comity of nations has great influence in their mutual relationships and strategic responses. This further determines the country's involvement in global markets, gaining of domestic political support and attention, participate in global affairs, and to enhance their status on the world stage (Xiufang & Naren, 2009). Country's imaging is not limited to the involvement of governance but further affects the treatment meted to the citizens. Citizens are held in high esteem if there is a good country's image projection and otherwise. Migrants from Africans, Blacks generally, have had to go through rigorous border scrutiny as many countries have bad image projection. The recent spark in misrule, governance, corruption, failed system has dented the images of African countries and migrants have had to duly pay for this. Alexander & Henry, 2005 categorized perception and the portrayed image of a country and her citizens with an anticipated resultant action in Table 1. They further noted that this perception has degenerated into a pseudo-environment where people define first and then see, rather than see first and then define.

Table 1: Relationship Pattern, Image and Potential action

Relationship pattern of other nation	Image of other nation	Potential Action
Goal compatibility	Ally	Cooperation
Status equal	Enemy	Attack or conflict
Power equal	Dependent	Control or exploitation
	Imperialist	Potential invader
		Sabotage

Source: Alexander & Henry, 2005

Preference for governance, participation in international affiliations, global acceptance and international support given to a country and her citizens are determined by the image, positioning and perspective of the country.

Peacemaking and Diplomatic Relations

Peacemaking is another constituent of diplomatic relationship and it remains a core among nations who are members of the United Nations. United Nations refers peacemaking as "action to bring hostile parties (which can even be within a country or aggrieved parties) to agreement, essentially through such peaceful means as those foreseen in Chapter VI of the Charter of UN, Pacific Settlement of Disputes". Bolaji (2011) further noted peacemaking as the "diplomatic effort intended to move a violent conflict into nonviolent dialogue, where differences are settled through representative political institutions". Diplomats have been called upon to achieve this aim as they seek conflict resolution through dialogue with aggrieved parties. The recent xenophobic attack in South Africa, attack on Nigerians in Ghana were resolved through diplomacy. Evacuation of returnees is aided by the existing ties among countries. At other times, troops have had to be sent from other nations when there is an increasing threat to internal security in a particular country. Nigeria and Ghana have been noted for their time to time contribution and supply of troops in peacekeeping. This involvement aims at generating funds for its military due to the scare resources available and also earn promotion for involving personnel. However, there are causalities recorded during this endeavour.

Migration and Remittances

Migrants have continuously contributed meaningful quota to the development of their home countries. They form associations and organizations to curb brain drain, infrastructural deficit and initiation of empowerment

programmes. Of note is the formation of: Nigerians in the Diaspora Organization (NIDO), Office of Senior Special Assistant on Foreign Affairs and Diaspora (SSAFAD); these have been working with significant organs in the country to harness the opportunities by the international migrants to contribute substantially to the development of the country.

Remittance by international migrants has always been either formal or informal. The World Bank Migration and Remittance Report 2019 estimated that $23.03 billion was remitted by Nigeria international migrants. This is the highest in the sub-Saharan region. Informal remittance can also be in-kind through sending of clothes or cars by migrants (Hernandez-Coss 2006, 2-3).

The movement of people for trading, service rendition, seeking for added values of life, education, improved lifestyle, good health services amongst needed necessitated the need for official engagements between the involving countries. This has been coordinated through diplomatic relationship among the countries.

The goal of this is to enhance and strengthen ties as well to modernize and revitalize a country's image and thereby make it more attractive for partners, investors, consumers, and tourists.

Trade facilitation and Migration

In Africa, trading among nations has been facilitated with the establishment of free trade zones, wherewith the continent being grouped into eight (8) economic zones. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was instituted to strengthen economic and trading of goods particularly in the Africa region through trade facilitation among the economic zones. Trade facilitation being defined by World Trade Organization in 1998 as "the simplification and harmonization of international trade procedures", where trade procedures are the "activities, practices and formalities involved in collecting, presenting, communicating and processing data required for the movement of goods in international trade". This facilitation is to remove all bottlenecks, procedural challenges affecting trading and similarly improve trading in the continent.

Conclusion

Migration will continue as human existence continues. There will continually be the need to seek not only greener pastures but opportunities across the continents of the world, as interaction will necessitate movement. Migrants on their part should do due diligence in the process of migrating as not all opportunities are worthwhile in pursuing especially when there are intriguing factors. It is therefore necessary that diplomatic relations be strengthened to remove existing challenges being faced while trading, moving and seeking opportunities by migrants. Fundamental issues of governance should be addressed particularly by African leaders as this will reduce migration including seeking illegal means and also increase perception of the citizenry. Prestige of the citizenries will also count as the destination countries accept migrants as huge contribution to their countries and not dependents.

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