When The Pasture Is *Greenless*: Nigeria, Libya and the Return of Slave Trade in Africa

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Abstract: **There has been a serious apprehension about Nigerian youths leaving the country in search of the proverbial greener pastures. Similarly, a fundamental shift in migration patterns occurred when the routes through Libya, long used by economic migrants making their way to Europe, became formalized as highway for modern slave trade. This paper adopts a qualitative research design with reliance on secondary sources of data and argues that Nigerians have been trafficked into slavery either in the transit country as Libya or the country of destination mostly in Europe. It observed that there seem to be a failure of expectations from Nigerians who on arrival in these countries realize that the pasture is no longer green as they are sold out as slaves, used for sex labor or thrown into torture chambers on accusation of irregular migration. The paper discovers that there are syndicates and cartels responsible for this illicit trade while a lot of money is made through the conduits used to lure these youths into the illegal business. It equally uncovers that a mere securitization of migration through fences and push-backs will not stop the flow of Nigerians as the Libyan economy seems to benefit from the money made from irregular migrants. The paper concludes that there is need for proper collaboration and intensification of action by the Nigerian and Libyan governments to arrest this ugly trend.**

Key Words: **Greener pasture, Slave trade, Irregular migration, Trafficking, Nigeria, Libya.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The drive for survival and for greener pastures has continued to force millions of West African young men and women to gamble with death in attempts to cross over to Europe and other parts of the world. This quest to escape poverty, hunger, unemployment and insecurity among other reasons at all cost, have caused a major segment of Nigeria's population to seek alternatives for better livelihood prospects for themselves and their families (UNODC, n.d.:1). Those seeking economic survival see irregular migration as the best alternative, given the difficulty and resources involved in migrating through regular and legitimate routes. In many instances, very few of the original number who set out on these dangerous journeys live to tell their stories. While many regularly drown in the Mediterranean Sea, many also die in the desert, and others are sold as slaves in a modern and emerging slave market. Most of the victims of this trade are from West Africa.

Many of them leave home with expectations of getting to Europe and other destinations perceived to have better economic prospects for them, but end up in the slave merchants net in North Africa. The victims are put in camps and sold in open markets in Libya, while the international community watches in silence. The geographical location of Libya renders it a transit route for migrants journeying to Italy and many other parts of Europe. The migration crisis in Libya and its attendant consequences have been made more possible by the instability in Libya, occasioned by the October 2011 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) led war against the regime of the Libyan strong man, Muammar Gadhafi. The fall of that regime left the country even more politically unstable, with increased security threats that are spilling over into other parts of Africa (Egbuta, 2019:1).

Africa has been aptly described as a continent on the move. The continent today experiences all migratory configurations within and outside the continent but the most visible are labor migration, refugee flows and internal displacement. Over 31 million Africans live outside the country of their birth, the majority within the African continent (Adepoju, 2016:1). In fact, the majority of migration is intra-regional or intra-African, especially in west and southern Africa, and only about 25 percent of African migrants go to Europe (Adepoju, 2016:1). 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 the west, 65 percent in the south, 50 percent in central Africa and 47 percent in eastern Africa. The exception is northern Africa, where about 90 percent of its emigrants move to other localities outside Africa. Of the number of migrants on the move in Africa, the majority of them are young people. Africa's population is young with 20 percent between age 15 and 24 and they constitute 54 percent of the total labor force. By 2050, 25 percent, 1 in every 4, of people of working age in the world, will be African (Adepoju 2016:3).

However, the rapid growth of the labor force coupled with sluggish growth of employment creates the trigger for the youth migration, both for the skilled and the less skilled. While over 100 million jobs are needed for the youths that joined the labor force in the last 10 years, the continent was able to barely create remunerative jobs for 37 million (Adepoju, 2016:1). Poor quality education and a lack of skills limit employment opportunities for young people. There is

additionally a mismatch between skills and jobs because technical and vocational education and training has been neglected for a long time. At the moment, youth unemployment is a whopping 50 percent in some countries, and currently the majority of Africa's labor force work in agriculture, the least productive sector (Adepoju, 2016:3). Consequently, poverty, poor governance, recurrent internal instability, mismanaged economies and conflicts have generated so-called economic migrants and refugees and severely eroded the developmental progress of recent years. Africa's impressive economic growth over the last decade has failed to significantly stimulate employment. Africa's jobless growth implies that more jobless Africans are forced into unsafe, irregular channels of migration to rich countries with all the harmful effects that this entails. Indeed, access to gainful employment is a major developmental challenge for governments and societies in Africa today (Adepoju 2016).

Furthermore, Northwest Africa is crisscrossed with climate, migration, and security challenges. From Nigeria to Niger, Algeria, and Morocco, this region has long been marked by labor migration, bringing workers from sub-Saharan Africa north to the Mediterranean coastline and Europe. To make that land journey, migrants often cross through the Sahel and Sahel-Saharan region, an area facing increasing environmental threats from the effects of climate change. The rising coastal sea level, desertification, drought, and the numerous other potential effects of climate change have the potential to increase the numbers of migrants and make these routes more hazardous in the future. Added to these challenges are ongoing security risks in the region, such as Nigeria's struggles with homegrown insurgents and the growing reach of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which has expanded out of Algeria (Werz and Conley 2012). For the United States and the international community, this region is critical because of its potential for future instability. Northwest Africa's porous borders and limited resources, which allow Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb to flourish there, suggest that there is no time to waste in developing better and more effective policies for the region.

In Nigeria, the issue of young people migrating for greener pastures has become very worrisome as they troop out of the country in droves arising from the economic situation in the country with an escalating rate of unemployment. Most of them are lured into such movements from members of some cartels whose means of livelihood is dependent on migrant export to Europe and other destinations in the world. Particularly for the peoples of Delta and Edo states, it has become a thing of pride to have children in various European countries irrespective of what they are doing for a living in foreign land as parents often chide the ones who have refused to join the bandwagon as being lazy. However, the worst aspect of this migration issue is the danger associated with it as victims realize that the expected greener pastures remain a mirage. There are stories of hardship, torture and other degrading treatment of victims of migration with their sales into forced labor as the crowning point. This development has

actually turned the hopes of Nigerian youths who embark on this tortuous route into an unrealistic dream as the expected greener pasture becomes unrealizable. Efforts by the government to sensitize these youths have equally not yielded positive results not even with the tales of torture and deaths of migrant as often narrated by lucky survivors of this misadventure. Although Nigerian migrants operate in diverse routes, the most popular of these routes is the movement to Libya which has attracted much international attention. Migrant slavery is however not new to Libya, as stories of young men sold as slaves in Libya had been the focus of debates at the UN Security Council and topped the agenda at a major summit of European and African leaders. A glaring example is the 2015 Valetta Summit, which not only promoted development-migration partnerships between EU and African countries but rose in utter condemnation of this emerging trade in human beings (Farley, 2018:2).

Around the world these past years, protesters and activists have been making their voices heard about slavery and abuses of migrants in Libya. Celebrities such as Naomi Campbell and Rihanna have joined in the mass outcry on social media. In London, Paris, Pretoria and Stockholm, crowds have been demanding that Europe put pressure on Libya, after a shocking CNN report detailed how some migrants trapped in the country were being forced into slavery. Truth be told, while Libya has been known for horrific abuses in its migrant detention centers, Europe has a large role to play in the horrific conditions that have led to black Africans being sold like livestock in Libya (Attiah 2017). A new report by Amnesty International says that European governments have been "knowingly complicit in the torture and abuses of tens of thousands of refugees and migrants detained by Libyan immigration authorities by actively supporting the Libyan authorities in stopping sea crossings and containing people in Libya" (Attiah, 2017).

The above scenario on the confinement of migrants in Libya particularly Nigerians paints a vivid picture of the return of slave trade in Africa and propels us to set to examine the entire issue of Nigerians migrating through Libya with the hope of penetrating Europe and other destinations in the world. It is most compelling because some of the migrants have become prey in the hands of traffickers whose business revolve around deceiving unsuspecting youths with tales of nonexistent greener pastures in Europe and other global destinations only for them to be sold out as slaves.

Statement of the Problem

There is renewed concern on migration flows among the major contemporary themes in the field of security studies. Migration issues lie at the heart of the national security question and remains matters of both high international politics and national security as well as foreign relations of nations in the international system. Thus, the relationship between Nigeria and Libya has been enmeshed in high wired intrigues over migrant issues and if not properly managed could degenerate into crisis. As a matter of fact, only an

honest and continuous dialogue between both countries would prevent a breakdown of diplomatic ties between Nigeria and Libya. Nigerians have migrated in droves in search of the proverbial greener pastures in Europe and other parts of the world using Libya as a transit route particularly because of its proximity to Europe and other continents in the world. However, the central problem identified by this study is the fact that most of the migrants are held back in Libya in connivance with European countries instead of allowing them to cross over to their expected European destinations. This development has left tales of woes, torture and death from migrants who are forced to remain in Libya by their security agencies and those who survived this maltreatment are eventually auctioned as slave labor. This process turns the dream of these migrants to fairy tale and the expected greener pasture disappears as a mirage to a color other than green. It is in the face of this problem that this paper attempts to answer the following questions: What motivates Nigerian youths to migrate to Europe? Why would Nigerians undertake journeys to unknown destinations in the search for greener pastures? What can be done by the Nigerian government to discourage Nigerians from migrating to Europe through Libya or other transit routes?

Theoretical Framework

There are a number of theories in the literature related to international migration. Therefore, researchers tend to classify migration theories according to various factors such as the origin of such theories, migration patterns, relevant disciplines, and application of such theories in the present study. This section examines such classifications, along with the nature of individual theories applicable to international migration. This paper however adopts the New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM) theory which challenges the assumptions and conclusions of the neoclassical theory of migration as a framework of analysis. This theory focuses on migration from the micro individual level to meso units such as families, households or other culturally defined units. In other words, a key insight of this new approach is that the decision to migrate is not merely an individual decision, but is a collective decision of households or families where their aim is not only to increase income, but is also a risk management strategy in the context of market failures, in addition to failures in the labor market (Stark 1984,1991, Stark & Levhari 1982, Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino and Taylor 1993, Taylor 1999).

The theory suggests not to ignore individual behavior, but to study it in the context of a group (Stark 1991). When a group is considered, households are in a position to diversify risks of economic well-being by utilizing labor resources in different ways. Massey et al. (1993) argue that family members could be made to earn an income in order to minimize risks of job insecurity and income fluctuations by assigning them economic activities both in the country of origin and in the hosting country. Through this, deterioration of local income could be compensated by

migrant remittances and vice versa (Wickramasinghe and Wimalaratana, 2016: 23). Furthering the argument, Cassarino (2004) opines that the return of migrants to the country of origin after achieving such targets as savings, insurance, household needs, acquisition of investment capital and skills is logical.

The new economics of migration (NEM) theory has come to challenge some of the assumptions of the neoclassical approach, offering a new level of analysis and different nature of migration determinants and it shifted the focus of migration research from individual independence to mutual interdependence (Stark 1991). The key argument is that migration decisions are not made by isolated individual actors but typically by families or households. Further, the decisions of migrants are influenced by a comprehensive set of factors which are shaped by conditions in the home country. As such, migrant decisions are not based purely on individual utility-maximizing calculations but are rather a household response to both income risk and to the failures of a variety of markets, labor market, credit market, or insurance market (Massey et al. 1993). Hence, migration in the absence of meaningful wage differentials or the absence of migration in the presence of wage differentials, does not imply irrationality but rather compels us to consider a set of other variables related to relative deprivation (a household performing relatively worse to other households will be readier to send a member abroad) and risk-aversion and risk-minimization of household income (Stark 1991, Stark 2003).

Introducing these concepts, Stark (2003) largely had in mind the risk aversion of poor households in developing countries where there are rarely institutional mechanisms present, such as government programs or private insurance markets, and therefore migration provides a meaningful strategy in dealing with different market failures. Remittances play an important and integral part in the new economics of migration research as they directly support the concept of household interconnectedness and the diversification of risk while analytically connecting the empirical study of the causes and consequences of migration (Taylor 1999).

A number of improvements in NELM could be observed in comparison to the Neoclassical Theory. The emphasis on wage differentials in the Neo-classical approach is outperformed by the group role of households in NELM, challenging the assumptions of the former. However, it should be noted that wage differentials and household decision making are not mutually exclusive or antagonistic categories. Families are very likely to consider wage differentials to be a strong, though definitely not the only factor, when choosing a work destination for their family member abroad. Therefore, it can be said that NELM challenges the neoclassical approach only to the extent that it pays attention to the structural conditions of the individual, and not just the labor market. The conceptual framework built around the role of families and households under NELM has highlighted that remittances act as part of a mutually beneficial arrangement between the

migrant and the migrant's family (Lucas & Stark 1985). Therefore, NELM's focus on labor as a pooled resource of a household has become a vital criterion when compared to the individual role played by the migrant in the Neo-classical explanation.

While being able to analyze in parallel the determinants and effects of migration, the NELM has been criticized for sending-side bias and for its limited applicability due to difficulties in isolating the effects of market imperfections and risks from other income and employment variables. Overall, the theory has not received much following or empirical testing. Essentially a social choice account, it has also been critiqued for overlooking dynamics within households (i.e. gender roles) and being too heavily future oriented (Faist, 2000:22).

This theory is quite apt for our present study because of the peculiar nature of the issue of international migration in Nigeria. Nigeria's migration pattern to a larger extent has transcended the individual to that of the macro level where the family is deeply involved in migration decisions and most times serves as sponsors. The peculiarity fits succinctly to the situation in Edo and Delta states in the South-Southern geo-political zone of the country where migration to Europe particularly Italy for girls and women and to other parts of the world are top most priority for families who often go to the extent of selling properties to raise so much money for their children to migrate to various destinations in the world. A deeper interrogation of this peculiar phenomenon reveals that families embark on this venture with the hope of a better future through resource mostly financial repatriation from the migrant child. In fact, these families are neither deterred by the dangers posed by such migration nor the lure that such huge finances could be ploughed into meaningful businesses in Nigeria for an equally better but less risky life for the migrant child as well as the family.

Overview of International Migration

Simply put, migration is the movement of people from one geographical location to another, either on a temporary or permanent basis (Ekong 2003). It also means the permanent movement of individual or group over a distance changing residence and crossing a specified boundary. It can be categorized into two, namely, internal and external (Clark 1972). While internal migration involves movement between one Nigerian community and another, external migration refers to the movement between Nigeria and other countries. In all, migration can be voluntary and involuntary.

For the United Nations (UN), moving people from place to place for living or working purposes is referred to as migration (Huzdik 2014, UN 2016b). As per the UN (2016a), international migration at present has become a global phenomenon where its complexity and impacts are largely felt. When analyzed from the development perspective of a country, international migration has both its advantages and disadvantages. It is argued that migration is a positive force for development since it facilitates development for the receiving country, as the country is able to obtain the required knowledge, expertise and services of skilled and unskilled labor. However, the receiving country may also suffer due to unwelcome migrants moving into the country as refugees. On the other hand, the sending country may suffer from brain drain due to the heavy outflow of skilled labor, despite the receipt of remittances.

Economic and political factors, family reunification and natural disasters sometimes cause migration to happen. In relation to the present global setup, it can be observed that internal and external conflicts of sovereign states compel people to leave such countries. The best example would be the moving of people from Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria due to civil wars. On the other hand, poverty and lack of decent jobs have become reasons for leaving countries, which is considered as economic migration. This is often seen in inter-country migration, especially in migration from developing countries to developed countries. There is a global tendency for people of developing countries to move to developed countries in search of more comfortable lives. Further, more travel options and a speedier flow of information have made migration easier to happen around the world. Migration therefore has emerged as a major demographic force throughout the world in the past few decades, especially with globalization.

It was estimated in 2015 that the total number of migrants in the world is 244 million which is 3.3 per cent of the total world population (UN 2016b). Europe, East and West Asia stood on top as the most popular migrant destinations. In 2015, the total migrant population in Europe was estimated at 76 million and in Asia, it was 75 million. The United States of America hosted international migrants totaling 47 million, which was the largest number hosted by an individual country. Northern America became the country hosting the third largest number of international migrants, which amounted to 54 million (UN 2016b).

When examining the countries of origin of international migrants, it may be observed that Asia accounted for the highest number amounting to 104 million, which was 43 per cent of the total international migrant population in 2015 (Wickramasinghe and Wimalaratana, 2016:16). Europe was in the second place having 62 million migrant origins, while Latin America and Caribbean were in the third place having 37 million migrant origins in 2015. India accounted for the largest diaspora in the world amounting to 16 million, and Mexico accounted for 12 million of migrant origins (UN 2016b).

Migration can be classified in a number of ways; e.g., by the reasons for the migration, the social class and education of the migrating people, the duration of relocation and the geographic distribution of the resettlement. Further, a distinction can be made in the classification of migrants according to whether their contact with the 'majority' or

'dominant' culture is deemed voluntary. Migrants can be classified as immigrants and sojourners when the change in their location results in contact voluntarily, whereas refugees are deemed to change their location involuntarily (Berry, Poortinga and Segall 1992). For example, immigrants choose to migrate, and thus be in increased and regular contact with the 'majority' culture in preparation for migration, for potential economic and/or educational advancement, whereas refugees are forced to migrate, and thus be in contact with the 'majority' population involuntarily, to escape persecution. Additionally, rural-urban migration has been associated with economic and educational reasons for relocation, whereas migration across nations has been associated with economic, educational, social and political reasons (Bhugra 2004).

The process of migration has been described as occurring in broadly three stages. The first stage is pre-migration, involving the decision and preparation to move. The second stage, migration, is the physical relocation of individuals from one place to another. The third stage, post migration, is defined as the "absorption of the immigrant within the social and cultural framework of the new society". Social and cultural rules and new roles may be learnt at this stage (Bhugra 2001).

Historical Background to Migration Policy in Libya and Nigeria

Historically, immigration flows into Libya began in the 1960s just after the discovery of oil and hydrocarbons there. In the following decades, the rise in oil revenues together with ambitious economic and social programs and the country's lack of sufficient indigenous manpower, continued to attract large numbers of immigrants, particularly those from neighboring Arab countries, and especially Egypt and Tunisia (Iwuoha, 2018:2). Meanwhile, a number of severe droughts and violent conflicts in the Sahel region triggered other refugee and migrant flows to Libya, mostly Nigeriean Tuaregs and also Tubu refugees (Bredeloup and Pliez 2011). Despite Libya being, first and foremost, a country of immigration, the deterioration of immigrants 'conditions in the country has also made it an important country for transit migration and particularly for the many migrants trying to reach Malta and the Italian Isle of Lampedusa (Fargues 2009).

The arrival of the British in the mid-19th century provided a framework for large-scale migration as the British needed a large labor force for mines, plantations, and public administration. The resulting rural-rural migration moved people to work as migrant tenant farmers, farm labor, and/or migrant traders. Substantial emigrant streams were particularly reported for the Yoruba of South West Nigeria to Cote d'Ivoire, Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), Dahomey, Mali, Togo, Niger, and Ghana. These movements were linked to the artificial nature of colonial boundaries, which split the people of common culture and ethnic groupings into different countries (Iwuoha 2018).

In another clime, documented history of migration in the territory that is now Nigeria dates back to four simultaneous slave trades in Africa between 1400 and 1900, the largest being the transatlantic in which 12 million slaves were exported from west, west central, and eastern Africa to the European colonies in the Americas beginning in the 15th century (Iwuoha 2018). The three other slave trades, the trans-Saharan, Red Sea and Indian Ocean, which began before the transatlantic one, involved another 6 million people. Estimates from Havard economist Nathan Dunn indicate that Nigeria lost about 2 million people during the 500-year period, out of which about 1.4 million slaves were shipped to the Americas (Iwuoha 2018).

However, it was not until after independence in 1960 that flows from Nigeria to countries beyond the region occurred on a large scale. From the 1950s through the 1970s, the emerging elites moved mainly to the United Kingdom due to the legacy of colonial ties, for educational pursuit, and in few cases for administrative matters. As political tensions engulfed Nigeria and as its economy stagnated in the late 1970s and 1980s, the stream of emigrants increased. By the early 2000s, an increasing number of Nigerians had migrated to countries such as Spain, Italy, Ireland, Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium, as well as the Gulf states (Iwuoha 2018).

The Libyan government carried out large scale expulsions in the 2000s, in order to adjust labor migrations to its labor-market needs with the aim too of pleasing Europe. Expulsions increased from 4,000 in 2000 to 43,000 in 2003 (EC 2005), 54,000 in 2004 (EC 2005), 84,000 in 2005 according to the European Parliament, 64,330 in 2006 and over 5,000 in the first two months of 2007 (ECRE, 2007). Most of the expelled were Sub-Saharan Africans (HRW 2006). Importantly, the International Office for Migration (IOM) noted that at the peak of the Libyan crisis in 2011, over 706,000 migrants had crossed Libyan borders.

II. MIGRATION POLICY IN LIBYA AND NIGERIA

On the Libyan side, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi had encouraged migration from Africa with a policy of open borders. The Libyan economy needed this workforce, and it allowed Gaddafi to boost his credentials as a Pan-African leader. Incidentally, when Islamic State (IS) first arose in Libya its primary targets were mostly migrants, Egyptian Copts, Eritreans, and Asians who worked in hotels or in oil fields. Additionally, the Libyan government established a political economy of illicit trafficking, which had immense influence on both migration flows and political violence. Many political foot soldiers of the regime in power were freely allowed to engage in this illegitimate business. For many border communities in Libya, both in the south and on the Mediterranean coast, smuggling is the only thriving non-oil economic sector (Iwuoha 2018).

Smuggling of people is part of a system that uses trade in subsidized goods (such as petrol or wheat) as "start-

up money" to deal in illegal goods such as weapons and drugs. Migrants are often used to transport these items. The smuggling networks lived in a symbiosis with the Gaddafi regime, which turned a blind eye in exchange for a share of the revenues and for political allegiance. After the civil war that toppled the Gadhafi, many of the militias that had fought against him entered smuggling business and at the same time gained relevance in politics, further enhancing the relationship between smuggling, power, and violence (Bredeloup and Pliez 2011). Libyans encouraged human right*s violations against refugees and migrants (Smith, 2017). Detention centers for migrants in Libya fall short of international standards, by the admission of some Libyan officials. Outside, migrants are often abused, subjected to all forms of violence and torture, and reduced to slavery and forced labor. It is no wonder that many of those who eventually make it to Europe from Libya report that the inhuman conditions there were the main factor that convinced them to flee at any cost (Iwuoha 2018).

Incidentally, African countries have made considerable efforts to ensure safety of their emigrants or improve their conditions through bilateral and multi-lateral agreements due to the risks that migrants are regularly exposed to. Provisions for the free movement of persons have also been pursued within regional agreements. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) all have the promotion of the free movement of persons within the region as a long term objective.

Although provisions of the convention forbidding the repatriation of refugees exist in the national constitution and in the organization of African Unity Convention, which Libya has ratified, the country is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol. However, Libya has made efforts to cooperate regionally for reliable border security as a way of controlling migration. First, in February 2012, Libya signed a tripartite agreement with Chad and Sudan on border surveillance and security (Cole 2012). Subsequently, in March 2012, a joint border force was established by the three countries, but its deployment has been plagued by delays (Wehrey 2012). Second, Libya and its neighbors at a conference in March 2012 adopted the Tripoli Plan which includes provisions for specialized training in border security, the use of advanced technologies, and the enactment of laws that underpin better border control. At the conference, participants discussed the possibility of creating an expert committee to share expertise and equally agreed to draw up a permanent mechanism for regional cooperation in combating organized crime and illegal immigration (Mohammed and Ramzi 2012). Third, Libya has engaged in high level delegation visits to neighboring countries. In December 2012, Prime Minister Zeidan led a high-level delegation to Algeria, Chad, Niger and Sudan to discuss border security issues and bilateral relations (Iwuoha 2018). The visits resulted in agreement with Chad, Libya, Niger and Sudan to form a joint

security committee to look into implementing mechanisms related to border security and migration (UNSC 2013).

Also in the Ghadames Summit (Southwestern Libya) in January 2013, the Libyan Prime Minister Zeidan met with his Algerian and Tunisian counterparts and adopted a coordinated security strategy to enhance security along their common borders. Part of their agreement included the sharing of information on trafficking routes and illegal immigration networks, the creation of a committee which will convene on a regular basis and provide recommendations to country governments, civil society initiatives in order to encourage cultural and social exchanges along joint border areas and the development of governance initiatives in border areas involving the private sector and civil society organizations. In addition to all of the above, Libya has been working with its neighbors to develop its border regions and to improve the livelihood opportunities of communities residing there. For example, in May 2013, Libya, Sudan and Egypt agreed to establish free trade zones in the tri-border area, including provisions to improve transport and energy infrastructure and facilitate the cross-border passage of goods and people (The Tripoli Post 2013).

For Nigeria, immigration is governed by the Immigration Act of 1963 (chapter 171) that focuses on the national security, admission rules and expulsion procedures. The Act does not really address the problems of residence, for instance, and some of its provisions also conflict with the country's obligations under the ECOWAS protocols and such can be deemed to be outdated. Following the 2008 ECOWAS Common Approach on migration document, Nigeria endorsed a National Migration Policy which was ratified by the Federal Executive Council in May 2015 (Iwuoha 2018). As expressed by the International Office for Migration (IOM) in Nigeria, the policy provides, inter alia, a framework to strengthen the linkages with Nigerians abroad and their contribution to the development and poverty reduction agenda of Nigeria.

It will also provide an appropriate legal framework for both internal (within Nigeria) and international migration, proper collection and dissemination of migration data, address issues related to diaspora mobilization and border management, decent treatment of migrants, internally displaced persons and asylum seekers as well as the role of civil society in migration management, in order to ensure a more efficient management of migration in Nigeria. Among other things, the new policy gives more rights to migrants by establishing clearly the rights of residence and better addressing trafficking and smuggling activities. Residence rules have been defined by administrative practices that filled the gap left by the 1963 Immigration Act. Residence in Nigeria distinguishes between ECOWAS citizens that are entitled to the ECOWAS Residence Card and other foreigners that can request the Combined Expatriate Residence Permit and Aliens Card (CERPAC) (Lutterbeck 2006).

We have taken the above path to trace the various policies guiding migration and immigration activities in both

Libya and Nigeria as a way of giving a background to what is expected from both countries. However, the various policies expose a lacuna which has to do with monitoring the activities of citizens on international migration. Nigeria for instance is less concerned about the outflow of its citizens to other parts of the world even in the midst of glaring evidences of what befalls Nigerian migrants in foreign land. From Libya, Malaysia, Italy to South Africa and beyond stories of woes trails Nigerian migrants particularly the youths who are made to believe that checking out of the country is the surest route to the proverbial greener pasture. In fact, even the establishment of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) in 2003 has been able to address these issues as the agency requires effective collaboration with other security agencies to carry out its mandate. So as lofty as these laws are put in place to address migration issues, it still follows that migrants are experiencing very difficult times as exposed by the situation between Nigeria and Libya. It has been argued by scholars and analysts alike that the economic gain of migration is at the center of the whole saga in migrant treatment in Libya and other global destinations.

Nigeria and Libya: The Search for Greener Pastures or the Return of Slave Trade in Africa?

For many decades, Libya has been a country that many would like to visit. Indeed, the booming oil industry, coupled with the then Libyan leader, the late Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's Pan-African philosophy attracted migrants from other countries, including Africans to explore the country for economic benefits. We had lots of Africans, especially from the West African sub-region who go to Libya or use the place as a transit to Europe and other parts of the world for greener pastures. Unfortunately, Libya descended into chaos and has become a failed state after the West supported an uprising to overthrow the Gaddafi regime leading to his death, for allegedly backing terrorist group, abuse of human rights and lack of democracy.

For over six years, Libya has not known peace, law and order had broken down and regrettably huge stock of arms have been let lose into the country and are used by terror groups to cause mayhem, including abuse of human rights of migrants who are caught up in the crises. Sadly, video footage of Black Africans being subjected to inhuman treatments including being sold openly as slaves, has gone viral on social media, evoking the painful memories of the slave trade that humanity has put behind it centuries ago and moving on with the cherished values of human dignity and equality of man as espoused by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Although this human trade has attracted worldwide condemnation, it is surprising that nothing substantial has been done to arrest this ugly trend.

Each year, tens of thousands of people pour across Libya's borders. They're refugees fleeing conflict or economic migrants in search of better opportunities in Europe. Most have sold everything they own to finance the journey through Libya to the coast and the gateway to the Mediterranean. But a recent clampdown by the Libyan coastguard means fewer boats are making it out to sea, leaving the smugglers with a backlog of would-be passengers on their hands. So the smugglers become masters, the migrants and refugees become slaves.

The world's most vulnerable, fleeing war and poverty back in their home country, are being abused and auctioned off as slaves, a shocking danger facing migrants and refugees in Libya. It has been reported that hundreds of people are being auctioned in modern day slave markets in Libya for as little as $400. Libya is the main transit hub for refugees and migrants attempting to reach southern Europe by sea. They are coming from countries like Nigeria, Eritrea, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Senegal, Sudan and Somalia. The power vacuum in Libya after the fall of Muammar Gadhafi has made human trafficking and people smuggling a booming trade. According to a report by Roots TV Nigerians top "illegal" migration to Libya and Italy. Additionally, the International Office for Migration (IOM) in statement has confirmed that a total of 19,452 Nigerians have been assisted to have successfully return home between April 2017 and February 2022, with more than 500 assisted to return in 2022 alone. These statistics has gone to show the number of illegal immigrants from Nigeria in Libya talk less of other African countries.

The number of Nigerians involved in the illegal migration to Europe through Libya far outnumbers those of other African countries. There are also numerous tales of woes, starvation and torture from both Nigerians and other African nationals as this testimony by one Mohammed from Niger. Mohammed worked in his owner's field in Libya, bent over for hours pulling tomatoes from the soil, he would think often of the days when he was a free man. He had lived a modern life in Zinder, Niger's second-largest city. He grew up in a good family and learnt in school to speak two foreign languages, English and Arabic. Mohammed fled Niger when he was just 17 years old, when extremist Boko Haram militants came to his area. He paid smugglers to take him across North Africa and to Europe, but when they reached Libya, he and other migrants were detained by a Libyan militia. There began a three-year ordeal that saw him thrown into prison, held for ransom, and bought and sold into bonded labor or debt slavery. Mohammed was 20 at the time of giving this testimony. He looked haunted by his time in Libya, and has not dared to use his last name, afraid that the militia that caught him in Libya might find him in southern Tunisia, where he now lives (Sherlock 2018).

Testimonies like Mohammed's, recorded by NPR, suggest a pattern of slave-trade abuses of migrants detained in Libya. The conflict-ravaged country is a final stopover for many people from across Africa and parts of Asia taking long, risky journeys for refuge in Italy or onward in Europe. Italy has sought to reduce the number of arrivals by financing and training Libyan authorities to stop the migration, even as

rights experts decry inhumane conditions for asylum-seekers in the North African country.

Sami Obisike, a 30-year-old Nigerian returnee from Libya, describes the detention center where he was held as a 'slave market' and as the 'prison where they sell people'. Like Mohammed, from Niger, the smugglers' car that Sami rode in was detained by a militia once they crossed into Libya. The migrants were bundled into another vehicle and taken straight to this prison where they sell people. According to him, this prison is a large, dark room, crammed full of African men and women where he barely had space to sit or lie on the concrete floor. One is not allowed to take a shower with all the heat while the air was putrid. And all the while, Sami says, Libyans would come to haggle with the guards. What they were haggling over was the price for prisoners. For him, buying migrants from one detention center and selling them to another for profit has become a booming business in Libya.

For Victor Okoro, the story remains the same only that his case seems to attract less sympathy. The Delta born 27-year-old college graduate abandoned a booming family spare parts sales business and converted the business capital for payment to an agent who promised to deliver him in Europe through Libya. His plight is less pathetic when placed side by side with the amount (seven hundred thousand Naira) he had to pay for the trip to Europe via Libya which could start a meaningful business in Nigeria. It thus becomes worrisome what other greener pasture could surpass this huge amount. As is the case with others, he soon realized that the pasture had turned green less with a harrowing experience in Libya where he ended up being deported with assistance of the Federal government of Nigeria.

In another account, one of the detained migrants, a young man named Victory, says he was sold at a slave auction. Tired of the rampant corruption in Nigeria's Edo state, the 21-year-old fled home and spent a year and four months and his life savings trying to reach Europe. He made it as far as Libya, where he says he and other would-be migrants were held in grim living conditions, deprived of food, abused and mistreated by their captors. When his funds ran out, Victory was sold as a day laborer by his smugglers, who told him that the profit made from the transactions would serve to reduce his debt. But after weeks of being forced to work, Victory was told the money he'd been bought for wasn't enough. He was returned to his smugglers, only to be re-sold several more times (Elbagir, Razek, Platt and Jones 2017). This implies that the migrants are not only bought for forced labor but must surely be at a profit just as other marketable commodities.

In Nigeria, Edo and Delta states is notorious for illegal migration to Europe and other global destinations. It is not a hidden issue that parents encourage their children to migrate with the hope that the family fortunes will improve and not minding what is going to befall their children in the host country. Italy had for a very long time played host to most Edo female migrants who are sold out as commercial sex workers in Italian cities for money that will first settle the cost of the master who would have arranged the trip for a fee. There have been stories of these girls being abused to the extent that they are made to sleep with dogs and other domestic animals in what seems as the peak of dehumanization and debasement. From the proceeds of this commercial sex business, most migrants buy and send vehicles to their parents back home and often build houses for the family and are celebrated each time they visit home in spite of the knowledge of their vocation in Italy and other cities in the world. As a matter of fact, those who refuse to tread this path are abused and treated as failures having failed to migrate in order to help change the poverty status of their families.

For many Nigerians, the only means of reaching Europe is by taking the risk of crossing the Sahara Desert to one of the North African countries. Recently, Libya has become the most preferred country of transit for illegal immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, from where they embark on a more suicidal journey of crossing the Mediterranean Sea into Italy. Many are making this arduous journey on their own volition, spending days and nights going through dunes and mountains, violence and suffering, risking their lives in temperatures sometimes as high as 50°C. Other hazards faced by the immigrants include possible abduction by several rebel groups, such as the Salafist, or the marauding Touareg gangs, who often rob, and rape their victims. Increasingly, among these migrants are young girls, who are lured into this journey under the pretext that work awaits them either in Libya or in Italy without any disclosure of the nature of work. Sadly, these girls end up in brothels, subjected to horrible sexual abuse, until the unlucky ones die in the hands of their captors. A few lucky ones are rescued by the police or the Nigerian Mission in Libya or any other transit country. Unfortunately, some often contract HIV/AIDS while in these brothels and will have to battle with the dreaded sickness through their life time.

Life for most Nigerian immigrants in Libya is pathetic. With almost no chance of crossing into Europe, no work or decent place of abode, in addition to the harsh reality of trying to adapt to a strange cultural and social environment, many resort to crimes, like drug trafficking, prostitution, brewing and selling alcohol, theft and burglary amongst other vices. These immigrants fail to understand that the Nigerian criminal justice system is fundamentally different from that of Libya, and what can pass for an individual's right in Nigeria may attract severe penalty in Libya. Therefore, sometimes out of ignorance, some Nigerian immigrants find themselves in serious problems. As an illegal immigrant, one literally have no rights and far away from home and family, chances are that one would not be able to raise money for legal representation, thus ending up with long jail terms (Iwuoha 2018). This is a basic reality of life as an illegal immigrant almost everywhere in the world. The fact remains that what is illegal remains so in most countries of the world as irregular migration rarely afford migrants the luxury of converting to a regular status.

In the past many years, the Libyan authorities have repatriated thousands of illegal immigrants back to Nigeria. Because of the administrative implication of this exercise, sometimes the immigrants are put in detention camps for months before their deportation. This is not a pleasant experience for anybody, but the immigrants have to blame themselves for their plight. No matter how long the immigrants stay in Libya without residence permit, they remain illegal immigrant and subject to be deported any time they are caught. The dream of going to Europe through the desert has remained an illusion for most of the immigrants, but in spite of this, the adventurers are undeterred. One lucky survivor captures this situation thus: "sadly, many are unable to make the journey alive as the desert is littered with carcasses of our citizens, men, women and children whose families back home would never know their fate" (Pastore, Monzini and Sciortino 2006). With all this, the dream of greener pastures by migrants becomes a mirage and slavery hitherto wiped out of the surface of the African continent has returned in earnest in Libya.

It is pertinent to state that the Nigerian government is equally part of the problem of this illegal migration just like Libya which is the beneficiary nation. If the government had provided opportunities for its teeming youths by being prudent and transparent in the management of the abundant natural resources, our numerous youths would have been gainfully employed or economically empowered in any lucrative venture and the thought of migrating to any country for greener pasture would not have arisen in the first instance. It is therefore stating the obvious that our leaders are vulnerable in this despicable act of selling human beings as animals or goods in Libya.

Curbing Illegal Migration and the Libyan Slave Trade: The Way Forward

From all of the above, this paper offers the following recommendations in curbing the illegal migration and the booming slave trade in Libya.

(i) That both the Nigerian and Libyan government should collaborate and draw up concrete program of action to stamp out the slave trade cartel and as well stop the protection of syndicates in people smuggling trade in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially across Nigeria and Libya. The AU and the West should act now to stop this heinous crime against humanity and help to restore law and order and return Libya once more to the comity of civility. This is more so because the mere securitization of migration through fences and push-backs will not stop the flow of people through this route.

(ii) The National Orientation Agency (NOA) in Nigeria should join the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) in educating Nigerians particularly the youths from undertaking journeys purported to be in search of greener pastures in hitherto unknown land. This civic responsibility should be extended to parents who are in the habit of encouraging their children from embarking on such trips.

(iii) The Nigerian government should take proactive measures through the Nigerian Embassy in Libya to repatriate Nigerians who are trapped in that country in the bid to forestall their being sold into slavery as currently revealed. The Embassy should be encouraged to liaise with the Diaspora Commission in the search for Nigerians in that country in order to salvage them from the danger of torture, dehumanization and outright sale as common commodities.

(iv) There is need for transparency, accountability and prudent use of resources by successive Nigerian leaders in a way that will guarantee employment generation, skills acquisition and youth empowerment programs that could provide employment and positively engage the teeming Nigerian youths from embarking on this illegal search for greener pastures.

III. CONCLUSION

This paper examined the issue of illegal migration by Nigerians through Libya to Europe and other destinations in the world. It discovered that the migrants are pushed by many factors including poverty, unemployment and sometimes family pressure to embark on the tortuous journey to hitherto unknown destinations. It observed that many people including human traffickers, smugglers and terrorist groups are benefiting from the illegal trade in persons which has resurfaced in Libya with great intensity. Obviously, good governance is key to sustainable development, peace and security of any nation and Nigeria cannot be an exception. Therefore, policies and programs of government should be inclusive, participatory and accountable if the dividends of democracy are to be delivered to the citizens. Legitimacy of leadership, fair and equitable allocation of resources and stable political system are key to addressing the urge by Nigerian youths embarking on irregular migration in search of greener pastures which often lands them in slavery as witnessed in Libya. We conclude with a clarion call on the international community and agencies such as the United Nations, European Union, African Union, ECOWAS and many other regional and sub-regional agencies to rise in condemnation of this despicable acts by the Libyan authorities and halt the resurgent of slave trade in the continent.

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