



A Critical Analysis of the European Union (EU) Securitization of African Migration as Societal Insecurity

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the version of EU constructed interrelation between migration and security whereby African migration (regular and mostly irregular) is perceived threatening to the European civilization and national security with the need for extraordinary measures to address it. This delineates how African migration to Europe becomes securitized and the basic tenets of the securitization substantiate how it has been one-sidedly portrayed. The EU securitization approach towards African migration and its counterproductive outcomes have attracted the attention of this research. This approach is criticized to have created a distorted stereotypical image about African migrants generally while it has failed to prioritize and address the different socio-economic and political conditions fueling irregular migration from the continent. This research has relied on secondary sources and employs a qualitative research method, which reviews current literature on the topic under study. It aims to critically analyze the EU securitization of African migration as societal insecurity with the use of Copenhagen School of Security Study (CSS) conceptualization of securitization and societal security as structural and theoretical framework of the study. CSS elucidates the possibility of transferring a non-political issue or event into the field of security through a speech act, which is known as securitization, and international migration is one of the common focus areas of securitization theory. This research keys on deconstructing the general perception of African migrants as existential threats to the European society compelling xenophobia and societal security issues, necessitating various strict migration policies adopted against African migrants.

Keywords: *Securitization; Societal Security; Migration, Copenhagen School of Security (CSS); European Union (EU); Africa*

Introduction

The inevitability and complexity of international migration touching political, economic, cultural and social lives of the interconnected world coupled with the influence of globalization to create a global village have gained prominence in the present modern dispensation (Barriga, 2013; IOM, 2018). African

migration can be historically traced back to the advent of transatlantic slave trade during the era of colonialism, which was described as "great migration"(Curtin, 1997). This era experienced forceful mobility of Africans, transported to a new world to provide hard labour for the development of American and European economies (Rodney, 1972). African migrants were compelled to work in farmlands, producing cash crops such as; tobacco, sugar, and cotton in which 80,000 Africans were recorded to be transported annually to the Americas, primarily to Brazil and the Caribbean for intensive labor in the late eighteenth century (Castles, De Haas, & Miller, 2013). It was also noted that, there were significant number of African soldiers and slaves employed by colonial imperials to support the military in Europe during the World Wars (Mafukidze, 2006). There were approximately 100,000 Algerians recorded as workers in France within the period of six years after the First World War and around 250,000 North Africans (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) working to supplement labour scarcity in France in 1950s (Malka, 2018). This is considered fundamental to the popular belief of Africans that Europe and America are economically viable regions to work, prosper and obtain security and safety during internal crisis even at the aftermath of the continental colonial experience. Although, Europe is presently considered as principal target by African migrants constituting serious burdens at the EU borders, migration has represented prosperity, security and socio-economic development to the African people (Horwood, Forin & Frouws, 2018).

One of the major concerns of the European Union (EU) historically has been debates not only focusing on African irregular migration but how to reduce or eradicate it. According to IOM (2018), there are more than 2.5 million migrants that have crossed through the Mediterranean Sea to enter Europe without visas. The 9/11 terrorist attacks as well as the attacks that took place in Madrid in March 2004 and in London by July 7 2005 represented a watershed regarding the response of the EU to migration. Migration became security issues due to its association with terrorism and other transnational crimes to the extent that even with the present declination in the number of Africans arriving irregularly at the EU shores, the anti-immigrant attitudes of some EU member states have remained unchanged (Mlambo, 2020). Migration is presently a contributing factor to various changes in structures and institutions in global political, economic and social relationships (Castles, 2010). The remarkable peak in the flow of migration witnessed in the EU in 2015 and 2016 resulted to the framing of migration as a crisis, an exceptional situation that requires exceptional measures (Laine, 2020). This is illustrative of the substantial change experienced in the Europe's handling of migration, asylum and refuge, which is a trend towards a securitized Europe focusing on strong borders restriction of access that have replaced the welcoming approach adopted toward migration of workforce in the 1970's and optimism around the success of the Schengen Agreement (Bockel, 2021). According to Mbiyozo, (2019), there is no voidness in the operation of the EU whereby the interests of member states must be taken into consideration by the European Commission. Despite the declination in the number of arriving migrants (from over one million in 2015 to around 140 000 by June 2019), the EU member states are still torn apart by the unpleasant disagreement on how to collectively manage the issue of irregular migration without contravening the territorial sovereignty of member states and also in adherence to international human rights practices (Mlambo, 2020).

The interconnectedness of migration and security unfurled through the various security oriented policies adopted by the EU in addressing African migration will be enunciated within the conceptualization of securitization and societal security sector by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies (Buzan, Wæver & De Wilde, 1998). The school is considered as "*the most lenient attempt to develop a theory or framework for security studies in a constructivist tradition*" (McDonald, 2012: 117). The EU securitization of migration simply means "*the social construction of migrations as a security threat of great and existential significance for the European Union and European culture as a whole*" (Lalić & Čeranić, 2019, p.48). The construction of immigrants as threats to the social and cultural identity of host community is expounded within the debate of migration and societal security. As put forward by Kouhossounon (2017), the presence of illegal immigrants has only exacerbated the already existing local

social, economic, security and environmental problems. On the constructed implication of migration over societal security, the Council of Europe issued press release within this context; "*the capability of the society to assure sufficient standard of living of its members, eliminate differences and refrain from polarization is threatened by insufficient integration of minorities and immigrants in society*" (Kouhossounon, 2017, p.216). This research argues that, the stereotypical construction of African migrants as generally hungry people and criminals suffering economic and political hardships, insecurities, underdevelopment coupled with terrorism and insurgency potentially threatening the survival of cultural, political and economic development of European society is highly one-sided and a trifling propagated justification for the EU securitization of African migration to legitimize various unethical and harsh policies adopted at addressing this constructed threat, which has only produced counterproductive outcomes.

This research recognizes and condemns irregular immigration of African migrants to the Europe. By definition, regular migration involves complying with the requirements for entry into the countries of destination, which entails obtaining visa, residence, study or work permits while irregular migration involves moving to another country through unofficial means, noncompliance with migration regulations of destination countries, which usually involves the assistance of smugglers and traffickers (Abebe, 2017). Unfortunately, many African migrants have embraced unauthorized migration to the Europe by embarking on dangerous journeys across the Maghreb borders (Giménez-Gómez et al., 2017). Migration to Europe can also be differentiated into two; voluntary migration and forced/involuntary migration. Voluntary migration involves the desire of the people to migrate as a result of improving their living conditions and also to experience and familiarize with new places while forced migration is an involuntary decision with various reasons such as; armed conflicts, deadly economic conditions, terrorist attacks, forceful displacement of people, etc. (Kouhossounon, 2017). It should be noted as well that many irregular migrants are consequences of forced migration who are eligible to obtain protection from another states according to international law. The research argues that, migration should be viewed from a balanced position, which is embedded with both benefits and challenges however, the securitization of migration by the EU through various policies adopted has depicted African migration mainly from negative perspective. Ardittis (2017) argued that, migration from Africa continues to be fundamentally misconstrued and misrepresented, in relation to both its core dynamics and the implications it is asserted to have for European economies and societies. This is explained to be fueled by sensationalist media images and narratives including alarmist and opportunistic right-wing politicians seeking to capitalize on the purported immigrant invasion (Laine 2018b). Africa has therefore been portrayed as a "continent on the move" (Flahaux & De Haas 2016, p.1). The attributed features of this constructed threat is an assumption that, millions of African migrants are predominantly irregular looming behind the European gates waiting for any opportunity to enter. Flahaux and De Haas (2016) argued that, the suppositions underlying this assumption tend to be a mentality that African migration is excessive and driven by poverty and violence. The need to deconstruct this prominent European constructed threat justifying its unreasonable border policies and one-sided partnership with African states has gained the attention of this research, generally classifying it as the EU securitization of African migration as societal insecurity. The Copenhagen School of Security Studies will be employed as the structural and theoretical framework of the study.

Theoretical Framework: Copenhagen School of Security Studies

The concepts of securitization and societal security sector are developed and expounded by the Copenhagen School of security studies (CSS). This school originated from the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute that was formed in 1985 and its seminal work was "*Security: A New Framework for Analysis*", co-authored by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde that was published in 1998. Other significant texts of CS is found in; "*Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe*" by (Ole Wæver et al., 1993), or "*The European Security Order Recast. Scenarios for the Post-Cold War Era*" by

(Barry Buzan et al., 1990). There are three basic arguments developed by the CSS; (1) the development of five security sectors constituting its sectoral analysis of security studies (2) the use of a social constructivist theoretical understanding of security through the development of securitization studies, and (3) the introduction of regional security complexes (Wæver, 2012). Securitization was introduced for the first time by Wæver in his work in 1989, "*Security the Speech Act: Analyzing the Politics of a Word*," which conceptualized securitization as a 'speech act' done by powerful actors that are usually political actors and the media with the aim of constructing allies and enemies, us and them. It is defined as a process whereby a securitizing actor determines or defines a particular event as an existential threat to a particular referent object and upon the acceptance of such rhetoric by relevant audience, certain conditions are created as exceptional measures to address the constructed threat (McDonald, 2012). Securitization explains the fact that, an issue or event might not be threatening in the real sense but due to the potential of the securitizing actor and with the assistance of functional actors, anything can be constructed as threat that requires special measures to address it. The four main components of securitization involves; the securitizing actor who is responsible of constructing the discursive act or framing of security issues, followed by the referent object; who is considered as potential target or victim of the constructed threat and then the threat; which could be anything or event defined as security issues that requires unusual measures to address and lastly, the functional actors; which are conditions made available to influence the referent object's acceptability of constructed threat. Successful securitization then involves the ability of a securitizing actor to construct an issue or an event as a threat that requires special security measures, which is acceptable by the referent object with the help of functional actors (Buzan et al., 1998). According to Demirkol (2023, p.23), "*securitization is a speech act, mainly done by powerful actors such as politicians or media, to put an issue into the core of security.*"

The five sectors of security developed by the CSS are; military, economic, societal, political and environmental sector. It should be noted that, the multidimensionality of migration can be explained from all these sectors but migration has been classified mainly under societal security according to the scholars of this security approach. Societal sector is then defined as the sustainability of traditional pattern of language, religion, culture, and national identity of a state according to Buzan et al., (1998). According to Wæver (2008, p. 581) societal security is defined as the "*defence of an identity against a perceived threat, or more precisely, the defence of a community against a perceived threat to its identity.*" Therefore, societal security is a component of national security and a significant concept for it (Gierszewski & Piwowarski, 2016, p. 33). From the perspective of societal security, identities have been added to the national security agenda (Butler, 2007). Buzan & Wæver (1997, p. 242) argued that they "*tried to show how 'societies' defined in terms of identity could be seen as the referent object for some cases*" The fact that societal security prioritizes the social and cultural identity of a society or state, which could be speculated to be under the threat of migration illustrates the complex interrelation between migration and societal security. According to Wæver (2008, p. 581) societal security is seen as the "*defence of an identity against a perceived threat, or more precisely, the defence of a community against a perceived threat to its identity.*" International migration enhances the possibility of cohabitation of different cultural identities within a state and identities of migrants could be easily speculated as threatening to the survival of language, culture, religion, and traditions of host society. This has represented the negative implication of migration on societal security, a policy shift that has occurred regarding international migration from a positive perspective to security issues as a result of this threat perception (Rumelili & Karadağ, 2017). This research argues that, while this could be a realistic scenario, in most cases, it is a just an act of securitization of migration. The CSS has argued that, migration is securitized and this securitization involves the act of defining immigrants as threats to the economy, culture, and national security of states even though, there is absence of solid empirical evidence proving that immigrants cause terrorism or threaten the cultural identity of host society (Demirkol, 2022). The labelling of immigrants as deviants to the incumbent culture and the priority of societal security to ensure the safety of cultural identity during this diversification of society created by migration represents the complex relationship between migration and societal security (Wæver et al., 1993). This has been demonstrated through the increasing support for

far-right parties in Europe, constituting a significant part of elections in the EU countries and Štefančík et al. (2021) argued that the far-right populist political parties articulated a dichotomy of we/us and they/them to undermine a positive view on international migration.

The International and EU Obligations for the Protection of Migrants

The protection of migrants and asylum seekers has been prioritized by the international community through their commitment to certain international conventions (Langford, 2013). Firstly, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms also known as the “European Convention on Human Rights” (ECHR) has been implemented to ensure the protection of refugees since 1950 whereby 47 European parties in total have committed to this convention to protect human rights and political freedoms. The European Court of Human rights was also created from this convention to ensure the protection of people against the possible state oppressions. Article 3 of this convention prohibited any torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment mostly applicable to immigrants. In addition, the main framework of ensuring the protection of refugees has been the United Nations Convention relating to the status of refugees, which is a multilateral treaty known as the 1951 Refugee Convention ratified with the global objective of protecting the people defined as European refugees. The term refugee was principally defined in this document and parties have committed themselves to the “*Principle of non-refoulement*” which means anyone considered as refugee and in danger for lives cannot be sent back to their originated countries according to the Article 33. There are 146 parties noted to have committed to this convention by April 2015 including the EU Member States (Sansus et al., 2020).

The European Union framework for refugee protection as a supranational entity launched the creation of a common European framework in asylum and migration policies, which represented the birth of harmonization policies of member states in this area. There was ratification of the Charter of Fundamental Rights (CFR) in December 2000 by the EU member states, which created a legal framework for political, social and economic rights for EU citizens and residents until being qualified as “*the foundational source of human rights guarantees under EU law, and all national*” as put forward by Langford (2013). The Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997 represents the institutionalization of asylum and migration policies of the EU member states, although it emphasized that, the EU as supranational entity is not the main actor in this area and individual member states retained the rights to manage their borders however, it has demonstrated that there is a shared competencies in terms of asylum and migration. In addition, the European Community since the Treaty of Rome (1957), has prioritized a mission to “develop a common immigration policy” in which distinct policies of member states were harmonized by the EU to ensure an effective protection of refugees and good management of processing asylum (Sansus et al., 2020). As stated before, the EU individual member states retained the right to manage their asylum and migration policies however, it is important to note that, the EU does not operate detachedly from the member states or the people. The European Commission represents the collective interests of member states, it is a politically independent institution that proposes legislation, policies and programs of action and it is also in charge of ensuring the implementation of decisions of the European Parliament, the voice of the people, and the Council (of Ministers), the voice of the member states. There is also Council of the EU (European Council) composed of the government of each state, which represents the highest-level policy-making body in the EU and defines the entire political direction and priorities of the Union but it cannot exercise any legislative functions. European Commission initiates procedures and proposes new laws, which are adopted by the European Parliament and Council (Mlambo, 2020). Article 79 (5) TFEU ensures the right for the states to “*determine volumes of admission of third-country nationals coming from third countries to their territory in order to seek work, whether employed or self-employed*” This explains the fact that, suggested quotas at the EU is deniable based on the right of individual member states (Sansus et al., 2020).

Furthermore, there are common standards found in the asylum and migration policies of the European Legal Framework. The introduction and creation of Schengen Regulation, “*agreement on the*

gradual abolition of checks at their common borders” ratified in 1985 initially for few member states represents a significant step towards the integration in the European Community. The removal of internal borders is stated in its Article 17, which allowed free movement of the people and prepared the basis for a harmonization of the states. This regulation is considered as the main cornerstone of the new shared system based on the EU in addition with the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) that created minimum standards for the management of asylum in Europe. Furthermore, the establishment of “Frontex” by the Council as an expert body assigned with the management of EU borders. The body was assigned with three main missions; to patrol and secure EU’s borders; to target migrants’ smugglers and to rescue migrants at risk. The goals of this agency represent the establishment of common standards and the harmonization of the European external border management. The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) established common set of rules and procedures for the EU Members in order to ensure an effective coordination of migration and Asylum. This EU institution aims to facilitate coordination of the asylum requests and ensure an equal treatment is available for asylum seekers. It created EURODAC that was assigned with the collection and sharing of information about asylum seekers or even the Common European Asylum System or CEAS qualified to support the Member States undergoing migration pressure. Mitsilegas (2014) stated that, the basis of the Common European Asylum System remains the determination of asylum claims at the national level. In addition, the so-called Dublin Regulation (the last called Dublin III) was implemented for ensuring the strengthening of management of the migrants and safeguard the constitutional pillar of the EU asylum policy (Sansus et al., 2020).

The need to address the various causes of forced displacement and irregular migration as well as ensure a functioning migration management in Africa led to the establishment of the European Union Emergency Trust Fund (EUTF for Africa) (Castillejo, 2016). This EU Trust Fund was established in order to implement the adopted Action Plan at the Valletta Summit whereby 1.8 billion euros was assigned to the Fund from the EU budget and the European Development Fund (EDF) to be complemented by contributions from the EU member states and other donors (Hunt, 2015). The Trust Fund was anchored on soliciting cooperation from African states by rendering financial support and it is premised on four types of intervention as explained by Knoll (2016); economic program that focused on creation of employment and integrate returnees is the first plan. Secondly, resilience projects designed to augment food security and provide services for local communities and refugees. Thirdly, migration management, which involves combating irregular migration and smuggling with a focus on the return, readmission, international protection and legal migration and lastly, governance and security, which buttress on the need for good governance through the strengthening the rule of law, security and development, border management and conflict-prevention systems. According to Clare (2018), the EU launched initiatives aimed at curbing migration from Africa such as; the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) and the Migration Partnership Framework (MPF) were based on the flawed premise that development assistance can prevent migration. *“It diverts aid to migration goals, and its projects often do not comply with development principles such as transparency, ownership and alignment. Meanwhile, the MPF seeks to use positive and negative incentives across a range of external action areas to encourage partners to cooperate with the EU’s migration goals – primarily on prevention and return. So far, results have been limited and it has soured relations with some partner countries.”* (Clare 2018, p.1). In addition, the European Commission announced its New Pact on Migration and Asylum on the 23 September 2020, which consists of three layers; firstly, the pact emphasizes on the need to set up policies of keeping people in their countries, which has been criticized to have disregarded the positive side of migration. It also emphasizes on the need to address the root causes of migration within these partnership agreements, which has been criticized to have done little towards this effect (Kirisci et al., 2020). Lastly, the emphasis of the Pact to ensure the return of migrants is contradictory to the position of African governments and could affect negotiations around the Post-Cotonou Partnership Agreement (ACP) and the Joint Africa-EU Strategy. African states do not support the EU intensified returns policies, maintaining that returns must be voluntary, which on the contrary, has been the main position of the EU (Mlambo, 2020).

The European Union (EU) Securitization of African Migration

The possibility of security threats emerging through perceptions and reactions to everyday life defines the perceptual aspects of security, which establishes linkages between security and information. The manipulative nature of public sentiment has facilitated the promulgation of alternative facts, false news and one-sided or misleading information whereby the commercial media has become conveyor of negative information, focusing on conflict, violence and spreading fears to the people (Wolfsfeld, 2004). Public information is mainly produced by politicians, media and public debates leading to basic tenets of ontological security. This is shifting of security from traditional, physical, often state-centric, security paradigm to the elemental sense of individual safety, secure self, as well as of confidence and trust that the world is what it appears to be (Kinnvall 2004, p.746). This is exemplified by Rumelili (2015) emphasis on emanating threat from the perception of negative difference between peoples, cultures and states that metamorphosed into common threat scenarios, which gained prominence in Europe following the witnessed migration pressures whereby immigrants are considered threatening to the foundation of European civilization and its ways of life. This constitutes the main reasons why migration has been constructed as security threats leading to securitized migration that is, framed both politically and socially as a threat (Browning & Joenniemi, 2017). The much-circulated media representations of migrants from Africa and the Middle East as desperate refugees trying to sneak into the European Union over, under or through various fences have constructed the perception of an uncontrollable situation that should be addressed by all means through the adoption of exceptional measures (Laine 2018b). This emergency framing of migration as an unprecedented crisis on Europe's borders resulted to the demand of more policing, enhanced border security and stricter migration control (Laine, 2020).

The fact that African migrants mostly move within the continent has not been taking into consideration by the EU media labelling African migrants as an invasion and disaster. According to Schlentz (2010), there are three analytical levels of EU securitization of migration, which are; policies, decision-making and legislation level; technological solutions and lastly, the establishment of institutional, administrative and operational practices. The rise and popularity of the far-right in the EU along with the ways at which they have used securitization of migration as a result of alleged threats posed by African migrants to ontological security and identity of their states as a mean of justifying and legitimizing their anti-immigration, racist and xenophobic rhetoric and praxis are a complete deformation of African migration to the EU (Lazaridis & Wadia, 2015). The externalization and securitization policies of the EU toward African migrants are not a new development considering the increasing rate of migration worldwide which has evoked nationalist politics such as; the situation with the USA/Mexico border regarding irregular migration (Browning, 2017). The western part of Africa has been described to be the central part of EU's securitization and externalization policies whereby these policies have been successfully entrenched due to the financial support embedded in them. Cooperating countries such as Libya, Mali, Niger, and Chad experienced their border agencies and police officers receiving training in border operation and migration management (Mlambo, 2020). The EU and its member states might have committed themselves one way or the other to ensure the protection of refugees' rights and asylum seekers however, the priority given to the adoption of restrictive measures rather than addressing the main causes of migration has become more alarming. Populism has strengthened securitization as the main driving force of curbing migration and while this might have reduced the rate of African irregular migrants, it is a contradiction and contravention of the EU's commitment to protecting refugees and asylum seekers (Laine, 2018). This contradiction has emerged from the ever-changing public and political opinions of the EU member states regarding migration, which could be exemplified using the backlash encountered by the German Chancellor Angela Merkel's open-door policy that led to the acceptance of over a million refugees and migrants, which ended up to the withdrawal of the policy by the German government (Laine, 2018).

The rise of populism resulted to the increasing nationalistic ambitions of right-wing parties, which is considered detrimental to the commitment of EU to democracy, respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law (Kupe, 2019). EU leading member states at developing rights-sensitive standards and procedures towards processing asylum seekers within their jurisdictions, ended up creating barriers for the prevention of asylum seekers from entering their borders whereby migrants are discouraged to undertake the journey to the EU, seemingly seeing the EU member states staying away from their historical commitment to human rights obligations (Palm, 2020). The inflow of irregular African migrants has been overstatedly reported by the media, partly as a result of populists, anti-migrant parties in which the media has framed African migrants as threats to the values and traditions of the EU. This has equally resulted to some irregular migrants engaging in more sophisticated and dangerous routes to enter into the EU. Laine (2020), Palm (2020), Moreno-Lax (2018), and McAuliffe and Ruhs (2018) all argued that, there is a strong relationship between restrictive measures adopted by the EU and the loss of many migrants' lives on the Mediterranean Sea. The closure of many legal routes to enter into the EU compelled migrants to embark on more risky irregular journey whereby they had to depend on traffickers and smugglers. In addition, the implementation of extreme measures to block many irregular exit paths resulted to the detention of many irregular migrants as criminals whereby casualties at the sea and in detention camps are both atrocities liable of avoidability in the light of adopting proper measures. According to De Haas (2008), the EU securitization approach has only produced two problems; the adoption of extreme measures for border control has resulted to a diversification of trans-Saharan migration routes and trans-Mediterranean crossing routes thereby increased the areas of surveillance for the EU countries. Secondly, the increasing surveillance has resulted to the professionalization of smuggling methods in which smugglers are now using larger and faster custom-made boats and zodiacs. Herbert (2019) argued that, the securitization approach of the EU has failed to recognize the main driving forces of migration and failed to address structural inequality factor of migration whereby marginalized people will continue to migrate. Abebe, (2019) argued that, the securitization approach of the EU has not only failed to eradicate migrants from embarking on irregular routes but also resulted to avoidable consequences in which many migrants are held and abused in inhumane detention centers at Libya. Brunet, (2018) argued that, the public opinion has been manipulated by the far-right to create irrational fears of migrants leading to xenophobia, which has created mental walls in the mind of the people who eventually demanded for physical walls. The fact now remains that, some areas of EU securitization approach involved funding of technology-related equipment and ensuring the training of local law enforcement have been overshadowed by the various human rights violations embedded in other adopted policies (Mlambo, 2020).

The Nigerian Migration to the United Kingdom (UK): *The Japa Syndrome*

One of the significant examples of African migration to the EU is the recent outmigration of Nigerian youths to the United Kingdom. This basically involves the adoption of the most famous colloquial term *Japa* representing the national term for the migration. *Japa* is a novel term adopted by Nigerians to describe the outmigration trend of Nigerians into the Europe and other parts of the world, which is defined according to Professor Toyin Falola, as a Yoruba word that means to flee (regular or irregular), and once achieved, a celebration comes with it as it feels more like gaining freedom from challenging conditions of Nigeria (Premium Times, 2022). This term firstly reflected properly in the statistic of visa applications received by Schengen countries such as; Germany, Hungary, Finland, Italy, and Spain in 2018 showing a total of 88,587 visa applications received, followed by 49.8% rate of rejection (The Guardian, 2019). The most recent statistic shows an increase of 51% in the rejection rate of Schengen visa applications lodged by Nigerians (Schengen visa info, 2022). In addition, the recent statistic released by the UK government shows that 486,869 study visas were granted as of June 2022 ranking Nigeria as third after India and China, increasing from 8,384 to a record of 65,929 study visas to the UK (Okunade & Awosusi, 2023). There are described push and pull factors responsible for the recent Nigerian migration to the UK in which factors such as high level of poverty, poor economic conditions, a

high rate of unemployment, the quest for a greener pasture, the desire to acquire international academic qualifications and high level of insecurity classified within political, economic, and socio-cultural as push factors that pushed Nigerians to embark on this journey while the pull factors involve the decisions of the UK government to withdraw funding decisions of schools from the elected Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to the schools and impose per capita funding on students, deepening the inequalities witnessed in the state, making the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer (Kotz, 2015; Whitty et al., 1998). In order to address the resultant effects of the decline in public funding of education, most UK tertiary institutions increased the enrolment of international students who could afford the top-up fees at the expense of local students' enrolment (Brazzill, 2021). Furthermore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Institute for Fiscal Studies recognized a drop in vacancies across all sectors by at least 20%, with food services and accommodation falling to 93%. Opened vacancies increased since April 2020, with a record of 1.3 million vacancies between November 2021 and January 2022. The increasing labour shortage is explained to be as a result of three factors; firstly, the Institute for Employment Studies noted that there are many people who are not working and not willing to work in the country; secondly, there was declination in foreign workers as a result of Brexit and COVID-19 pandemic, which compelled many people to return back to their countries and lastly, there are increasing jobs with low wages and little benefits, which could only be attractive to international students (Okunade & Awosusi, 2023).

Regardless of the fact that, the UK opened policies to welcome migrants to fill certain gaps within their system, the flow of Nigerian migrants in the country has been defined threatening that requires special measures to contain. According to a statement released by the UK Home Secretary, the Government has stated that there would be a wave of new restrictions on the people coming into the Britain in order to bring down the rate of legal immigration. The Home Office announced that, there are reforms to restrict care workers from bringing their family members to the UK starting from March 11, 2024. There will be an increase to the required minimum salary for the people coming through a Skilled Worker Visa, from £26,200 to £38,700 starting from April 4, 2024. There will be increase to the minimum income threshold for the people bringing dependents to the UK through family visas, which demands workers to earn at least £29,000 annually before they can bring a family member starting from April 11 (Business Day, 2024). The Interior Secretary, James Cleverly stated that, *"I have been clear that migration is too high and we must get back to sustainable levels. Last year I set out robust measures to reduce the numbers coming into our country – tightening the rules on care workers, skilled workers, and making sure that people can support their family members that they bring over. It is a firm approach, but a fair one, and gives those affected time to prepare whilst ensuring that migration comes down. The British people want to see action, not words. We are delivering the change we promised and which they expect, lifting pressure on public services and protecting British workers with the utmost urgency"* (Business Day, 2024). This exemplifies the fact that, migration is considered relevant when the economic situation is in dire need of it however, it is defined threatening when the needed quota is obtained. The definition of migration is predicated upon the conditions of national security, which recognizes both benefits and challenging factors embedded in migration and they can be both instrumentalized excuses of how states tend to securitize it.

Discussion and Conclusion

The prioritization of security-oriented approach towards migration in Europe is as a result of the political and media debates regarding migration, which has failed to present a more balanced picture of both costs and benefits of migration pitted against one another for the privilege of evaluation. The widespread rhetoric on the challenges of migration largely outperform its benefits whereby immigrants are portrayed as threats to our land, culture, identity, values and conventional ways of life. A picture of the EU being fully under the attack of invasive foreigners constituting the basic ideas behind the securitization of migration is contestable and this research argues for the need to re-evaluate the existing

EU-African relations and most in particular, the role that migration plays in this entire conundrum. Palm (2020) argued that, privileged nations with financial and technological capacity can close their external borders with use of massive investments in sophisticated surveillance systems and financial means, influence agreements with transit countries that would secure their interests of preventing aliens from entering their borders. However, these are not considered as ideal solutions to the challenges of migration thus illustrating how it has only been one-sidedly portrayed. The research takes cognizance of some developmental projects that might have been carried out by the EU toward addressing the root-causes of migration from Africa however, it argues that the situation of African migration is not as horrible as it has been portrayed. Migration cooperation between the European Union (EU) and African countries has been ongoing in various formats and venues targeted toward similar objectives whereby the cooperation started with those countries in the immediate Southern neighborhood (Mediterranean countries) and later on, in the West Africa. It is also noted that, the absence of internal coherence among the EU member states regarding the issues of migration resulted to an increased focus on the external aspects of the EU's migration policy (externalization) and cooperation with partner countries (Bisong, 2023).

The EU externalization and securitization migratory policies are predicated upon the created negative perception of migration as societal insecurity, which has produced counterproductive outcomes. Schöfberger (2019) argued that, *"the making of EU migration policy has been interlinked with intense negotiations on what African mobility means for EU borders."* As a result, European policies toward African migrants have focused on readmissions, returns and reducing the number of irregular migrants from Africa. It is then interesting to note that, the estimation of IOM on irregular migration accounted to be around only 15% of African migrants (Achieng, El Fadil, & Righa, 2020). With this minimal percentage compare to other continent, irregular African migration has gained more media attention than regular migration most particularly, those who are highly skilled African migrants, in health and technological sectors, migrating to developed countries through regular channels. This research argues that, the EU's migration policies have mainly focused on curbing irregular migration through securitization and criminalization of African migrants and has paid less attention to other aspects of African migratory movements. It is also noted that, the ineptitude of the EU to come up with an effective developmental policies to address irregular migrants seeking entry into the Europe through irregular routes has resulted to the prioritization of securitized responses. The policy of return and readmission of irregular migrants is also considered not fitting the expectation of African governments. The EU has mostly negotiated informal agreements with African states and incentivized them to take back their deported citizens from the Europe in which African states would have to be strategic about such acceptability as it can fuel uprising from the local population who sees remittances as means of social protection that is lacking from the side of the national government. Thereby, African governments are avoiding not to be seen as facilitators of this deportation by emphasizing on the fact that, the return of migrants should be voluntary and not a forced action. Additionally, it should be noted that, African migration is diversified and cannot be grouped as a single, uniform movement as it is has been portrayed by the EU. According to Bisong (2023), there are different considerable factors facilitating this diverse migration such as; the massive displacement of people due to armed conflicts in Sahelian countries resulted to forced exits of many migrants such as; conflicts in Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, South Sudan and DRC, and violence in Mali, Nigeria and Burkina Faso, and many more. There is also circular migration that has to do with seasonal pattern and availability of certain jobs in another countries demanding the migration of professionals, and there is transnational migration which is as a result of the role of social network determining the destination of migrants, and also there is trafficking and smuggling of migrants across borders (Bisong, 2023). Consequently, the need to come up with policies at addressing migration must take into consideration the complexity of these issues, requiring different measures to addressing different issues and not just a singular classification, criminalization, externalization and securitization measure employed by the EU.

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