

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE AFRICA'S CONNECTION WITH THE MIGRATION CRISIS IN EUROPE, 1990-2016

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ABSTRACT

This paper critically examines the Africa's connection with the migration crisis in Europe, which presently constitute the greatest humanitarian crisis since the end of the Second World War in 1945. The countries which bear the brunt of the crisis include Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Italy, Hungary, Spain, Calais (France) and Germany etc. In the first quarter of 2016, for instance, about 135, 000 people were reported to have attempted to migrate to Europe across the Mediterranean Sea. This had resulted in many fatalities involving hundreds of people from the Middle East and Africa. This study focuses on Africa's connection with the migration crisis in Europe. It has been established that thousands of African people have been embarking on desperate journeys across the hazardous Sahara desert and the perilous Mediterranean Sea since 1990s in order to migrate to Europe. In this context, it was reported, for instance, that by the year 2000 about 17, 000 Nigerians were stranded in Libya while attempting to reach Europe through the hazardous routes especially across the Mediterranean Sea. Many other African people from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Ghana etc were known to have been embarking on similar journeys to Europe over the years. The factors which compel thousands of Africans to embark on desperate journeys to Europe include the pervasive poverty and misery in many African countries; the impact of European colonialism on post-colonial Africa's economic production system, and the problem of massive unemployment among the educated youths. There was also the negative effect of tribalism and xenophobia which hinders inter-state mobility of labour within Africa, and the persistent conflicts and wars in some parts of Africa which compel people to flee their communities to neighbouring countries and attempts to reach Europe. There was also vociferous allegations of human rights violations and repressive acts by some governments in Africa which compel their citizens to flee to Europe as asylum seekers and economic migrants. Many migrants sometimes face certain problems including underemployment, poor housing, socio-psychological trauma as well as threats of xenophobic and racist outbursts and violence from white racist extremists in their host countries. The African governments should diversify their economies to achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth for the benefit of the present and future generations.