

BIBLICAL JUSTIFICATION, AND THE CONSEQUENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS OF MIGRATION AND ASYLUM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper begins by introducing the reader to the reflective picture of the present world order of globalization and how its citizens could no longer operate in isolation. It also states why people migrate from one place to the other, either nationally or internationally: across borders. To this extent, the writer affirms that the practice of migration is biblical and should be considered as healthy for the global society. The paper talks about types and factors that cause migration. It x-rays the impacts of migration on both the immigrants, their countries of exit and their host countries. The paper thereafter narrows down to the problem of migration as it relates to the Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria. It examines the reasons for the volatile and acrimonious relationships that exist between the aborigines and the immigrant herdsmen. The paper therefore proffers some solutions to the problems, in order to have a peaceful coexistence among the people of Nigeria. A descriptive technique was employed in carrying out the research. The researcher extensively used both primary and oral sources of information. The research revealed that migration is imperative to globalization. It is needed for national and international developments. The research further revealed the various reasons why people migrate, ranging from sociological, political, and economic to ecological/environmental reasons. However, it finally suggested that extant national and international laws should be invoked in other that, both the emigrants and their host communities would be at peace with one another.

Keywords: Immigration, Emigration, Nigeria, Economic, Refugees

Introduction

Gradually, the world is attempting to come together in an unprecedented manner after a prolonged geographical and boundary isolation and exclusivism of one another. This perhaps is deliberate and aimed towards attaining the new world order, which has reduced the entire world to a global village. Societies which hitherto had lived apart before now; are beginning to make frantic efforts at reconnecting with one another. This is no longer an easy task, unlike

when mankind began its migratory history several millennia ago. This has occasionally brought up a lot of confusion, tension, hatred, resistance and even outright denial. To some, immigration could arise as a result of reasons attributable to ecology, economy, politics, and war. It could also result simply from adventure which is most often called tourism. Immigration, thus could come on the platform of being a refugee and seeking asylums in a foreign land.

To a large extent, some societies are not very open and receptive to such immigration arrangements on the prejudice of race, religion, culture, and level of productivity or otherwise, amongst other reasons. Normally, people don't like moving out of their perceived comfort zones, so to speak. But what happens when the assumed comfort zones become uncomfortable? The next most reasonable action to take would be to migrate to such areas where some levels of comforts could be guaranteed. Therefore, this paper is going to be concerned about why people emigrate, how they decide on their destinations, how they are perceived and accepted by their host communities and how immigrants adapt and properly integrate into the cultures of their host communities.

It is important to examine the fears of both parties, which most often affect their relationships. Most importantly, the paper will attempt to contextualize the topic within the Bible, as a direct attempt to discover the ethical basis for immigration, acceptance and refusal of immigrants with a view to understanding the subject better. Basically, the researcher would be interested in understanding how it impacts on Nigeria.

Biblical Position on Migration/Immigration

Research has shown that, migration has been on in human history since the creation of mankind. These days, though, due to widespread changes precipitated by globalization, more people are migrating than ever before. It is believed that it is now twice as many as 25 years ago. Nearly 200 million people, or one out of every 35 people around the world, are living away from their homelands. This is a large population. It could in fact be the equivalent of the population of Brazil, the fifth largest on the planet.¹

The bible very convincingly supports migration. It is even said that, creation of the universe is a product of migration. The creation account in Gen. 2:1 clearly indicates that the force of the wind that created the solid earth emigrated from heaven, the independent location of God. It then swept over the formless void of waters to bring out a habitable solid earth.

Understanding Migration, Immigration, Emigration and Refugee

There is the need to understand the semantics involved when talking about the very similar words such as migration, immigration, emigration and even refugee/asylum. Migration concerns the movement of an individual or a group of individuals, out of their own territories and moving to another place. On the other hand, immigration is the act of migrating to another place with the aim of settling there. Whereas, emigration is the act of arriving at their host communities for settlement. Most people move from one place to the other to seek refuge because of diverse critical reasons such as war, pestilence, crop failure, famine and uncondusive climatic conditions among others.

Types of Migration

Migration comes in different ways. It could be legal/regular or illegal/irregular. It could be within the same country or from one country to the other. Migration could even be from the village to the city and vice versa. Migration is the movement of people from one place to live in another. Emigrants leave their countries, while immigrants enter other countries. Migration impacts on both the place left behind, and on the place where migrants settle. People have different reasons why they might want to move from one place to another. The reasons may range from economic, social, political and even environmental. Some factors precede migration to take place. They are usually identified as Push and Pull factors. Push factors are the reasons that make someone decide to move. This may arise out of their unpleasant experiences of life in one place which give them good reasons to vacate the place.

Often, Push Factors are precipitated by negative incidents such as unemployment, crop failure, droughts, flooding, war, poor education opportunities or poor services and amenities. Pull factors, on the other hand, are fast-tracked by the expectations which attract people to the new places. They are usually positive things, such as availability of job opportunities, better standard of living, better education or better healthcare services. The decision of people to migrate could be in different forms. It could be **voluntary, or involuntary, economic**, social and political reasons. Other voluntary older retired dependent migrants from temperate regions may wish to do so in order to live somewhere it is sunny and warm. However, many other people have no choice and are forced to leave their homes. These are **involuntary migrants**. Their lives and homes may be in danger due to war or natural disasters. These people are also called **refugees**.²

Forces of Migration

By this, we mean what causes immigration to occur. There are the push and pull forces. By push, we mean what are the internal reasons which are not convenient which push people to migrate to other places. In an opposite manner, the pull force represents those things in other countries that encourage people of different backgrounds to want to come over to such areas. Migration is a global phenomenon³ caused not only by economic factors, but also by social, political, cultural, environmental, health, education and transportation factors. It usually happens because of the push factor of less opportunities in the socio-economic situation of a particular environment and also because of pull factors that exist in more developed areas of the world. For instance, Europe is a thriving continent where life is much easier than what it is in Nigeria, and that informs why the youths of Nigeria are relentlessly drawn to do illegal immigration to Europe by road.

Therefore, many young Nigerians are tempted to risk everything they have to immigrate to Europe. Sometimes, most people would even move from the rural areas of Nigeria to the Township. A better living condition is usually the first and most significant factor or consideration for immigration. The second most-important factor which pushes people to embark on migration is better public service. For instance, it is known that some parts of Nigeria enjoy better health services, electricity supply, good schools, etc., than others. This statement, of course is relative in Nigeria, where government services are almost non-

existent, yet comparison could still be made. This, of course informs why push factor has become very important reason for migration to where life is beautiful and to where is greener. Again, people do become dissatisfied with public transportation of their previous location and a lack of safety in previous places. Another significant factor is better environment, which includes moving because of dislike of cultural/recreational facilities and the behavior of a neighbor.

Factors Responsible for Migration

The important factors which motivate people to move can be classified into five categories. They are economic, demographic, socio-cultural, political and miscellaneous.

Economic

Economic reasons are usually the first and most frequently cited reason for migration. In developing countries, low agricultural income, agricultural unemployment and underemployment are considered basic factors pushing the migrants towards developed areas with greater job opportunities. Thus, almost all studies concur that most of migrants have moved in search of better economic opportunities. The basic economic factors which motivate migration, as earlier discussed in this work could be further classified as 'Push Factors' and 'Pull Factors'.⁴

The push factors are factors that compel a person, due to different reasons, to leave that place and go to some other place. The common push factors are low productivity, unemployment and underdevelopment, poor economic conditions, lack of opportunities for advancement, exhaustion of natural resources and natural calamities. Introduction of capital-intensive methods of production into agricultural sector, and mechanization of certain processes reduce labour requirement in rural areas. The non-availability of alternative sources of income in rural area is also important factor for migration.

The pull factors are factors which attract the migrants to an area. Opportunities for better employment, higher wages, facilities, better working conditions and attractive amenities are pull factors of an area.

Demographic

The differences in the population growth rates of the different regions of a nation have been found to be a determinant in the internal migration. Fertility and the natural increase in population are generally higher in rural areas which drift the population towards the city.⁵

Socio-Cultural

Social and cultural factors also play important roles in migration. Many a time, family and communal conflicts, and quest for independence, do also cause migration. This especially much applicable in areas where residents are sedentary farmers, as well as nomadic pastoralists living side by side. Other attributable reasons could be such as younger generation versus the old generation and their divergent world views. Besides, improved communication facilities, such as transportation, impact of television, good communication network, the

cinema, urban oriented education and resultant change in attitudes and values also promote migration.⁶

Political

Sometimes, even political factors encourage or discourage migration from one region to another as the case may be. After 1960, most of rural people in Nigeria migrated to urban areas because of safety in the capital cities. Hence, the political background, attitudes and individual viewpoint of the people influenced on the migration of people.

Miscellaneous

Other various factors, such as the presence of relatives and friends in urban areas, desire to receive better and quality education, which is available only in urban areas are factors responsible for migration. Closeness of cultural contacts, cultural diversity, great vitality, individual attitudes are also associated with migration.⁷

Impacts of International Migration

Many of these migrants are forcibly uprooted: approximately 30–40 million are undocumented, 24 million are internally displaced, and almost 10 million are refugees. This flow of people precipitates conflicts and controversies. They affect not only migrants, but receiving communities as well, making migration an increasingly volatile and contentious political issue.⁴ The clash of cultures, identities, and religions, along with debates over economics, resources, and rights, has polarized public discourses, making the migration debate complex and confused.

Not only does rhetoric about immigration conflate and manipulate interactions between the migrants and their hosts, it also brings to the fore multiple issues like a threatened national and human security. Consequently, the national sovereign rights, human rights, civil law and natural law of countries are frequently attacked. Unfortunately, the principles governing the debate of migration have not afforded us the concepts necessary to move beyond unfruitful, polemical discourses which relate to the desirability or otherwise of migration. Expression of sentiments that border on the legality or illegality of migration do most often appear subjective. Therefore, citizens and foreigners, usually fail to come to terms with a new global reality of inclusiveness. To this extent, this situation always leaves gaping areas of injustice in the intricate relationships.

Some argue that tougher enforcement will resolve the problem of migration and refugees (as evidenced by the United States, Israel, “fortress Europe,” and other parts of the world), but this massive movement of peoples, regardless of the policies of nation-states, will continue, transforming the contours of communities around the globe. Migration is arguably one of the most complex issues in the world, and it will become more significant in the future. Furthermore, migration is one of the defining issues in the 21st century, and has been referred to by some scholars as “the age of migration.”⁸

Migration and Globalization

There is a visible link between migration and globalization. To start with, globalization represents the opening up of the world, with the attendant opportunities it offers to everybody, from everywhere, aspiring to go to any place or destination of his/her choice. Globalization is a blanket term, which leaves its meaning obscure. Some scholars have suggested that indeed, globalization stands out for quite a large public spread across the world as one of the defining terms of late twentieth century social consciousness.

The term is often distinguished more by what it is not, rather than what it is. One thing though, globalization is not universalism—values which embrace all humanity, hypothetically or actually. In the actual sense of it, globalization may not often be meant by the ability of individuals from every point of the universe to physically migrate to other environments. It could as well mean the terrestrial opening up of the earth through the provisions of technology and information technology. By this, it is possible to sit in the remotest part of Nigeria or any other country for that matter, and be well acquainted with the cultures of the Americans, Europeans and the Asians who are thousands of kilometers away. Therefore, it is no longer strange to find an African behave like a Chinese, either through dressing or through the use of their cosmetics.

We are far more able to talk with anyone in any part of the world than the old age, when communications were limited and or not available completely. No wonder the world is said to have become a global village. This singular reason is more relevant in the pull factor, when people from deprived regions of the earth find those available and accessible alluring factors to migrate to such other areas.⁹

Migrations within Nigeria

Migration within Nigeria is spontaneous and voluntary, majorly dictated by the citizens' quest for better economic life outside their spheres. Migration is a common occurrence in Nigeria, dating back to centuries. The various and independent tribes had traded with one another without restrictions, even prior to the amalgamation of the present entity called Nigeria. Therefore, migration is not strange to Nigerians.

However, it is becoming increasingly worrisome these days, how internal migration has become very dangerous and unpredictable. Many have suffered abduction, murder, or at best been maimed as a result of migration. The host communities have like never before, become extremely hostile and very sensitive to emigrants. A number of reasons could be adduced for this. One is that of diminishing and limited economic opportunities. Another is the perceived or actual invasion of tribal lands by the migrants, and perceived or imagined encroachments into, and destruction of the hosts' sedentary communities' farmlands. On a general scale, is the fear of the unknown and the skepticism of losing political power and control of ancestral heritages to the emigrants. Of immediate emphasis is the farmers/herders' clashes in Nigeria. These clashes have been determined primarily by the aforementioned reasons. Unfortunately, it is with no end in sight! The constant fears and tensions occurring between the host communities and the perceived invading visitors are naturally premised on primordial beliefs, which date back in history.

Offshore Emigration by Nigerians

These days when economic chances and opportunities are becoming restricted, unpredictably available and or out rightly absent, overseas migrations have become popular, especially among the young Nigerians. Many find their destinations in Europe, most times under uncondusive and dangerous circumstances. The international community recognizes legal emigration. But paradoxically, most often, young Nigerians emigrate illegally in succumb to economic and political hardship prevalent in the country. This has brought them face to face in violation of the immigration laws of their host communities. The efforts have landed some young Nigerians in slavery, deportation and even outright death outside their environments.

Fulani Migrants and Territorial Invasions

Before any justifiable explanations could be made on the migrating nature of the Fulani herdsmen, there is the need to, from the onset clarify that there are different types and clans of Fulani. Therefore, the word Fulani is generic and could be applied loosely. But, specifically, there are the *Mbororo*, and the other regular Fulani stocks. It is also important to state that, some clans of Fulani are indigenous, as it were, to different regions and countries of West Africa. Most often, those indigenous stocks are not the belligerent ones. The *Mbororo*¹⁰ are majorly guilty of invasion and hostility on the local people.

The general impression that, the Fulani herdsmen are invading lands outside their natural habitations may be real, implicative and dangerous as being speculated, but, beyond that, it is most probable that the situation might not have been properly studied. In the first place, the Fulani tribe has an age long relationships and interactions throughout the space of West Africa. They have always been known as nomads.

The Fulani race constantly moves with its herds, from one place to the other, in search of water and fresh pastures. In West Africa, they are indisputably the most mobile people.¹¹ There are a number of factors which have been identified as reasons why they are constantly roaming the bush as analyzed below:

Cow Breeds

The Fulani affirmed that many of their breed of cows do not like sedentary lifestyle.¹² According to them, such cows feel sick and unhealthy when they stay for a long time in a particular place.

Climate and Ecology

Another attributable reason for their nomadic life is that, for some time now, the Sahara Desert in an unprecedented manner has been encroaching the northern border of the entire West Africa. This has brought about pasture failures and dried rivers. Certainly, it becomes hard for the herds to survive under such hash environmental conditions. In some cases, when there are too many rains in a year, the Fulani like to move their cows further upward to areas that experience low rainfalls. This then calls for the frequent/recurrent movement of the herdsmen, who would do everything possible to ensure that their herds survive.¹³ Economic Countries of West African States' (ECOWAS) treaty stipulates that, there could be unrestricted movement across the region for the members and citizens of the region, for at most 90 days. Although, a permit may be required before citizens, animals and goods enjoy this privilege, enforcement of

same on the herdsmen becomes an illusion/mirage, because they mostly operate in thick forests of West Africa.

Akin to the above point is the quick dissolubility of the herdsmen into any given society in any part of West Africa, and Nigeria especially. The reason is that, the Fulani, wherever they originate, share identical physical features and are well spread and widely located across West Africa, Central Africa Republic, Sudan. Therefore, it is practically impossible for immigration officers to identify and isolate a migrating foreign Fulani man coming into Nigeria.

Sociological Factor of a Long time Seclusion

The torture of long wandering in the bushes brings to the researcher's attention, the sociological factor of isolation. The implication of this is that, because the migrating Fulani had wandered for so long in the bush,¹⁴ and without having much contact with humans, they often tend to be very tired, hungry, aggressive, unfriendly and hostile. That perhaps justifies why they appear not to have respect for international borders, local indigenes, their lands and property. It must be mentioned that in that case, they perceive everyone in sight as an enemy, which must be dealt with in order to have their way and penetrations. This carefree attitude of the Fulani nomads has often caused clashes between them and the indigenes, who most often are sedentary farmers on their ancestral lands. The Fulani herdsmen do not mind leading their flocks into the farms for grazing. This is the crux of the tense relationship that exists between the herdsmen and the indigenous people.

It will not be out of place to consider the primordial attachment a Fulani man attaches to his livestock. It is said that they place more premium on their livestock than they do to their children. To the Fulani, the herds are of immeasurable value than humans. No wonder they would do anything to feed their stocks, even if it means hurting, killing and decimating the local farmers.

Psychological Reminder of Primordial Conquests

The Fulani people had originally migrated from the Fouta Djallon region of Senegal, and subsequently spread to other parts of West Africa in the early 19th Century. It is instructive to state that, precursor to their migrations were religious wars (Jihads), and conquests, which ultimately resulted in establishment of political hegemonies. As descendants of the older generations, where history is being passed down, there is an unwritten script of a possibility of a repeat of what happened in the 19th Century, when lands were captured and the people (aborigines) dominated and subjected to the Fulani administration. Perhaps this explains why the herdsmen still prefer to roam the bushes with sophisticated automatic and semi-automatic guns, which have often been used to murder the local indigenes. Of course, this is a false belief in this much more sophisticated, enlightened and already consolidated territorial spaces of 21st Century Africa. In a bid to actualize their fantasies of forceful land grabbing and domination, they have often been resisted by the owners of the ancestral lands.¹⁵

Conclusion

The research has shown that everybody should be free to migrate as it is in agreement with the

teachings of the bible. Ideally speaking, people do not like to move out of their comfort zones, except if and when necessary. Therefore, when a citizen of one country decides to migrate to another country, it must have been caused by some pressing factors which are beyond his/her control. To that extent, the world has become a unified settlement in a commonwealth setting, which should be prepared to accommodate legal or regular migrants. Having said that, it is incumbent on citizens of the world to show civility and compliance to internal laws of their host countries and communities. Observance of these would ensure peace and tranquility in the world order.

Recommendations

While the paper agrees that there is nothing intrinsically bad in migration, and that it is approved by the bible, there should however be some obligations to be carried out by the Nigerian State, so as to avoid brain drain in the country. Putting in place such facilities would ensure that youths do not unnecessarily migrate to other countries, while emigrants too, would be correctly guided in their behavioural etiquettes while they stay in Nigeria.

- Nigeria's land, sea and air borders must be properly manned to prevent irregular movements
- Border protocols must be enforced
- To make life meaningful to the citizens, government of Nigeria must improve on its economic and political deliveries to the people
- Young Nigerians should be adequately empowered enough to engage in meaningful enterprises wherever they are located in the country
- The political class must ensure that it does not rule by division. Serious efforts must be done to properly integrate the masses
- Adequate legislations must be put in place to protect both citizens and non-indigenes. This would ensure that everyone lives in any part of Nigeria, with all rights and privileges guaranteed
- A conducive political environment must be ensured. This would set in place economic enablement/empowerment of citizens, thereby ensuring economic productivity
- Nigeria should ensure that everyone feels free to carry out his/her legitimate business without interference in any part of the country
- Excessive attachment to States and regional administrations should be eradicated, and be replaced with national patriotism
- Extant laws on illegal bearing of arms should be enforced on the nomadic Fulani
- As much as possible the occurrence of frequent movement in the bush by the herdsmen should be discouraged. To this extent, government should ensure that the herdsmen liaise with the traditional rulers in their immediate communities for lands to be leased to them for grazing
- Where herds destroy a farmland, the herder should be made to compensate the farmer. Same goes to the farmers who kill herders' animals. That would eliminate impunity on both sides of the farmers
- Herders should be educated on the need to place premium on human lives and on the property of their host communities