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Dirk Kohnert

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African Migration to Europe: Obscured Responsibilities and Common Misconceptions

Abstract

The number of migrants from conflict regions in Africa has been increasing dramatically. The European Union shares dual responsibility for the continuing migration pressure: First, because it fostered over decades corrupt and autocratic regimes with dire disregard to principles of 'good governance'. The aftermath of these regimes is still felt today and constitutes one of the underlying factors for politically motivated migration. Second, the EU contributed to Africa's economic misery due to its selfish external trade policy. Nevertheless, the prevailing perspective of the EU and of its member countries concerning African immigration remains to be focused on security, the foreclosure of its external borders and prevention. Current EU programs and concepts to fight African migration are questionable. Even development-oriented approaches are bound to fail, if not backed by sustainable immigration policies.

JEL classification: F22, F35, F42, F53, N17, N37, N44, O15, O2, O52, O55, R23

Key words: Migration; West Africa; Europe; remittances; brain-drain; foreign trade policy; security; circular migration.

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Zusammenfassung

Afrikanische Migration nach Europa: Vernachlässigte Verantwortung und inadäquate Lösungskonzepte

Die Zahl der Migranten aus den Krisenregionen Afrikas hat in den letzten Jahrzehnten dramatisch zugenommen. Die Europäische Union trägt eine zweifache Verantwortung für den zunehmenden Migrationsdruck. Erstens hat sie über Jahrzehnte korrupte und autokratische Regime ohne Rücksicht auf die Prinzipien „guter Regierungsführung" gefördert. Die Auswirkungen dieser Regime sind in Afrika heute noch spürbar; sie bilden einen wesentlichen Faktor politisch motivierter Emigration. Zweitens hat die EU durch ihre eigennützige Außenwirtschaftspolitik effektiv zur desolaten Wirtschaftslage in den afrikanischen Herkunftsländern beigetragen. Trotzdem bleibt die vorherrschende Perspektive der EU und ihrer Mitgliedsstaaten auf das Problem der Sicherheit, die Abschottung der Außengrenzen und Prävention fixiert. Die laufenden EU-Programme zur Bekämpfung afrikanischer Migration sind konzeptionell fragwürdig. Selbst entwicklungsorientierte Ansätze laufen Gefahr fehlzuschlagen, wenn sie nicht durch eine nachhaltige Einwanderungspolitik unterstützt werden.

African Migration to Europe: Obscured Responsibilities and Common Misconceptions

Dirk Kohnert

Article Outline

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1. Introduction

Africa's economic history is a history of large population movements driven by a variety of reasons: notably, slave-trade and colonialism, violent conflicts, poverty, ecological degradation, population pressure and a certain cultural propensity of some ethnic groups for outward orientation[1]. Still up today, most of the 680 million Africans live under conditions of extreme poverty and insecurity. Although the incidence of trans-national migration remained about the same on a global scale since the 19th century, its structure and direction changed significantly[2]. Whereas Europe was known as source of waves of large scale outmigration up to the early 20th century, trends were reversed after World War II. The rate of immigration in highly industrialized Western European countries has accelerated signifi-

[1] Cf. Adepoju 2003; Bilger et al. 2005; Baker et al. 1995; De Bruijn et al. 2001.

[2] Cf. Haas 2005:1270.

cantly in the past decades. Mostly undocumented Africans constitute a growing proportion of these immigrants. There are well founded reasons to belief that this tendency will accelerate, as Sub-Saharan Africa has probably a higher potential for immigration into the EU than any other region of the World.

All of the twenty least developed countries (LLDCs) are African, and more than half of them belong to crisis torn Western Africa, which in the 1990s gained the doubtful reputation of degenerating into the Pandora box of the continent[3], situated relatively close to West European borders. Some experts even belief that population movements from Africa could evolve into one of the largest in world history in the medium and long run[4]. Therefore, politicians of all sides concerned are well advised to take this development more serious than in the past.

However, experts and politicians alike are deeply divided over responsibilities and the best concepts for analysing or for solving the problem. Even in scholarly literature, several myths about underlying factors and structures of African migration persist[5]. The following pages are meant to clarify some of the conceptual controversies of the current debate and to provide more facts and figures for decision making. A brief analysis of both, current trends in African migration to Europe as well as major factors that triggered it, constitutes the basis for a critical review of prevalent concepts to tackle the problem, notably the discussion of different aspects of the European Commission's 'Global Approach on Migration' and of the revival of fashionable concepts of 'circular migration'.

2. Incidence of West African Migration to Europe

Migration from Africa is a reflection of its socio-economic dynamics over time[6]. In the past decades the number of refugees from conflict regions in Africa increased dramatically. Between 1993 and 2002, the population of 27 out of 53 African states suffered from violent conflicts. At the end of 2005 some 18% of all African migrants were refugees. This proportion is far above the global average, as African refugees constitute about one third of the global refugee population. This may explain, why nearly half (47%) of the 16.7m. cross-border migrants in Africa in 2005 were women and children[7]. Above figures explicitly disregard some 13m. additional internally displaced people, as well as a considerable number of seasonal

[3] Cf. Kaplan 1994.
[4] Cf. Sandell 2005:1; UN 2006a:1.
[5] Cf. Haas, 2005.
[6] Cf. IOM 2003:220.
[7] Cf. IOM 2005:33.

migrants, who would have accentuated the problem even more. But even most of the trans-national migrants remain in neighbouring African countries, overwhelmingly (42%) in Western Africa.

Apart from push factors, like violent conflicts, gross human rights violations, population pressure, degradation of natural resources, and poverty, the major part of current migration is due to external pull factors.

Notably young people, threatened by unemployment and lack of perspectives in their home country, are eager to try their luck in what may appear to them at first sight as their El Dorado, i. e. Western Europe. Many of them struggle to reach it, in utter disregard of the involved risks, by all means, mostly illegally. But let there be no misunderstanding, the extreme African poor do not even dispose of this alternative, as migration to overseas destinations involves considerable cost, which can be covered in many cases only with contributions by the extended family (e. g. 800 to 1,200 € per person for the transit from the Senegalese coast to the Canary Islands), good health condition, a minimum amount of risk tolerance, and embedded ness in viable trans-national social networks.

Most African migrants with overseas destinations live in Europe. According to 2005 estimates of the International Organization on Migration (IOM), there are about 4.6m. recorded Africans living in the EU, compared with 890,000 in the USA. The major reasons for this unequal distribution are the comparative advantages with relation to transfer cost, and the established cultural and socio-economic links of African Diasporas to the former colonial powers, England, France, Portugal, Spain, Germany and Italy. According to IOM-census figures about two-thirds of Africans in Europe are from Northern Africa (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia). A smaller, but steadily increasing part arrived from Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The latter overwhelmingly stay in France (274,538) and England (249,720), and, on a smaller scale, in Germany (154,564) and Italy (137,780)[8]. However, these figures are probably grossly underestimated, as they do not take account of the majority of unauthorized Africans living in the EU.

According to estimates of the Migration Policy Institute, there are some seven to eight million irregular African immigrants living in the EU, mostly in its Southern parts. The actual number fluctuates in accordance with the regularisation programs of member states, notably of France, and more recently of Italy and Spain. However, many of the officially recognized migrants fall back into illegality when their limited visas expire or if they fail to meet other conditions for recognizing their legal status[9].

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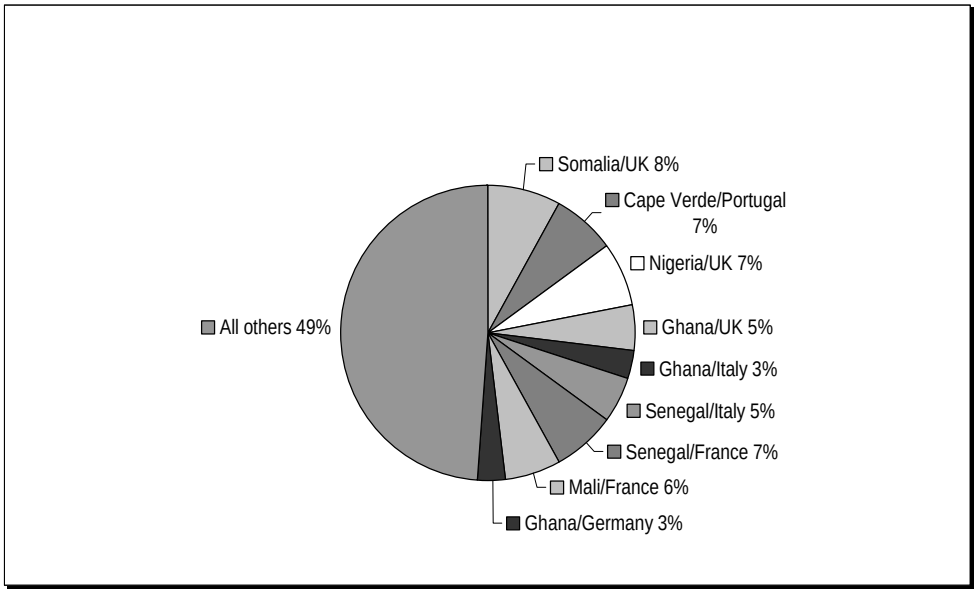
[8] Cf. IOM 2005:26.

[9] Cf. Papademetriou 2005.

West Africans constitute by far the largest share of SSA-migrants in Europe. They came mostly from Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal (see figure 1). In general, Francophone Africans are more likely to migrate to France because of its special socio-cultural post-colonial relations with its former colonies and due to the language problem, whereas Anglophone Africans, notably Ghanaians and Nigerians showed more flexibility in selecting their destination[10].

Figure 1: Breakdown of Major Sub-Saharan African Diasporas in the EU



Source: UN 2006a: 6; IOM 2003:219[11].

However, the attraction of the EU for SSA migrants increases from year to year. According to IOM estimates, between 65,000 and 80,000 migrants crossed the Sahara annually in their strive for unrecorded entry into the EU[12] in the past five years. One of their major transit countries was Morocco which recorded a tenfold increase of SSA migrants between 2000 and 2005 [13]. Subsequently the authorities in Rabat, assisted by the EU, reinforced their borders, surrounding the Spanish enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta, as well as along the Atlantic coast, which contributed to the recent reorientation of the flow of migration[14].

[10] Cf. UN 2006a:6.

[11] Available data on migration stock mostly date from 2000 and 2001 and do not necessarily include unauthorized migrants; therefore, they may not represent the current reality.

[12] IOM 2005:42.

[13] Cf. Reuters, Nov. 10, 2005.

[14] Cf. below.

3. Ambiguous Impact of Migration on African Economies

Migration is not necessarily a zero-sum game, where one side losses to the benefit of others; this holds for Africa too. In the ideal case, all parties involved could gain: the migrants, their extended families at home, the countries of origin and the receiving countries, if migration would be properly managed in the overall interest[15]. Unfortunately, selfish interest of major players involved in this game, both on an individual and state level, have hitherto prevented such an optimal solution. Deterrence and zero-migration policies on the part of the fortress Europe for example, encourage irregular immigration, smuggling, marginalization and exploitation of migrants on different levels and stages of their journey to Europe[16].

As usual, the better educated, have most to gain, and because of their resource endowment they are more prone than others to benefit from the pull factors, like better living and economic conditions in their host countries. This is one of the reasons of a considerable '*brain drain*' over the past thirty years, which resulted in the loss of about one third of the African academic work force to highly industrialised countries. Between 33% and 55% of Africans with higher education left Angola, Burundi, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Tanzania in search for a better life and employment in OECD countries. For example, about 20,000 Nigerian and 12,000 South-African doctors migrated overseas, whereas only 33,000 remained in South Africa according to recent WHO statistics. Even the 926 Ghanaian doctors practising nowadays in OECD countries, would be urgently needed at home, where they would represent 29% of all doctors employed[17]. Again, Western Africa has been the most important source of this brain drain, due to the economic and/or political crisis in Ghana, Gambia, Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone since the 1980s (see table 1)[18]. The drain of human capital is most pronounced in the employment sector for highly qualified personnel (see table 1)[19]. Notably island economies, like Cape Verde (69%), Seychelles (59%), Mauritius (48%), Madagascar (36%), but also countries suffering from civil war, like Somalia (59%), Sierra Leone (41%) or Liberia (37%) have been affected[20]. Another remarkable trend is the 'feminization' of the brain drain in recent years, caused by the growing number of highly skilled African women looking for employment abroad[21]. In addition, the migration of highly qualified personnel is a considerable financial burden for the state budget of the countries concerned. According to UNCTAD estimates the loss of one qualified aca-

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15 Cf. UN 2006a:1.

16 Cf. below.

17 ECA 2006:xvi.

18 IOM 2003:216.

19 26.7% in West Africa in 2000ble 1.

20 ECA 2006:30.

21 Cf. IOM 2003:215.

demic costs on average US$ 184,000. Last, but not least, the brain drain delays the growth of an African middle class and the development of sustainable structures of the civil society, which may exert a negative impact on the political and economic stability of the countries of origin.

Table 1: Immigration Rate and Level of Skill of Africans in OECD-countries (25+ years; in % of Local Work Force)

	1990				2000			
	Level of skill				Level of skill			
	Low	Medium	High	All	Low	Medium	High	All
Western Africa	0.3	1.1	20.7	0.5	0.3	2.8	26.7	0.8
Eastern Africa	0.2	1.0	15.5	0.4	0.2	1.6	18.4	0.6
Central Africa	0.5	1.0	9.8	0.6	0.4	1.3	13.3	0.8
Northern Africa	2.2	1.8	6.8	2.4	2.3	1.5	6.2	2.5
Southern Africa	0.1	0.5	6.9	0.5	0.3	0.5	5.3	0.9

Notes: Low skilled = primary education 0-8 years of schooling
Medium skilled = secondary education 9-12 years of schooling
High skilled = tertiary education 13+ years of schooling
Sources: ECA 2006: 29; Docquier/Marfouk 2004.

However, there are also positive – although often neglected – socio-structural effects of the brain drain, beyond the question of remittances which will be discussed further below. This counteracting '*brain gain"* relates to the transfer of knowledge, of innovations and the consolidation or extension of foreign trade relations. New value systems, political and spiritual orientations, acquired by migrants in Europe, and imported into their home countries often contributed significantly to the development of Africa[22]. Migrants among the African political elite for example, mostly educated at European universities, played a decisive role in many liberation movements.

Heroes of African independence, like Léopold Sédar Senghor, Kwame Nkrumah**,** Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, or the many exiled politicians of the ANC, which contributed to the end of apartheid in South Africa, are vivid examples.

In addition, remittances of African migrants can contribute considerably not just to the well-being of their families at home, but to poverty reduction and development on a regional or even national level in general[23]. Case studies from Burkina Faso for example revealed that remittances of migrants reduced the rate of households living below the poverty line by 7.2%[24]. Although average individual remittances from Africans are relatively low (US$ 200-300), com-

[22] Cf. Haas 2005:1272-73.

[23] Cf. OECD 2006:142-43; Gubert 2005; Sall 2005; Haas 2005: 1274-78.

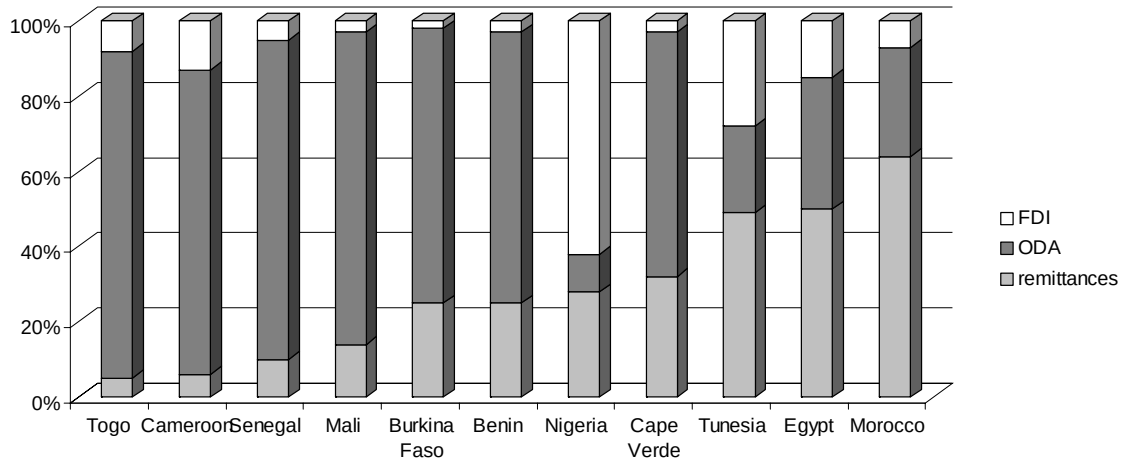
[24] Cf. ECA 2006.

pared with the global average, its overall annual total doubled between 2000 and 2005 from 4.9 to 8.1bn. US$, according to estimates of the World Bank and ECA. All officially recorded transfers of migrants from Africa amounted to 14bn. US$ in 2004. Depending on the respective country, this represented, from 3% (Nigeria, Kenya), 7% (Ethiopia, Senegal, Sudan), 11% (Ghana), 23% (Cape Verde), up to 40% (Lesotho) of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)[25]. Remittances via official channels accounted for over 200 billion CFA (300 million Euros) for Senegal only[26].

However, these official figures reflect only an incomplete image of the reality. Many Africans prefer informal channels for remittances' transactions in view of the lack of performance of the African banking system, notably if they are unauthorized guests in their receiving country. These informal transfers amount to two to threefold of the share of officially recorded remittances, according to estimates of the IOM. In some LLDCs they surpass even private foreign direct investments (FDI) or development aid (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Financial Inflows of ODA, FDI, and Official Remittances

(average of the years 1980 to 1999)



Source: IOM 2003: 228, World Bank data of 2001

Therefore, it has been recognized that remittances (mostly from Europe) constitute the second largest source of external private finance in African developing countries, besides FDI. Up to now they are an underutilized and badly managed source of national development in the countries of origin[27]. However, the EU member countries bear their share of responsibility too: high entry barriers, and the criminalisation of irregular immigrants, result in social seclusion and formation of ghettos of migrants in European capitals, which discourage re-

[25] OECD, 2006:142-143; cf. ECA 2006:75-76.

[26] UN 2006:19.

[27] Cf. Ionescu 2006; Adams et al 2005:1645.

mittances because the concerned prefer to care for their immediate own needs in an hostile social and political environment[28].

4. Migration Routes from Africa to Europe

In the last two decades Northern Africa developed into a transit region for Sub-Saharan migrants. The new migration pattern, its policy response by the Maghreb- and European states, as well as its negative 'side effects' on the migrants concerned, have been analysed in detail by Baldwin-Edwards (2006) and others[29]. The actual number of Sub-Saharan migrants living 'in transit' in Northern Africa is difficult to estimate. Most of them are irregulars, 'without papers', mostly living as outcasts under miserable conditions, in an Arabic xenophobic social environment. A case study of irregular African migrants living in Algiers revealed that about two third of the interviewed migrants considered themselves treated as 'slaves', 'poor wretches', or subhuman beings[30]. According to well-informed estimates, there are at least 100,000 living in Algeria and Mauritania, more than a million in Libya, and some ten thousands in Morocco. They are certainly not welcomed by the local population and the authorities. Between January 2000 and the March 2006 about 35,000 unauthorised Sub-Saharan migrants were forcibly expulsed by Algerian authorities (ibid).

Because of more rigid migration controls of EU member states, the sealing off of its Southern borders and of the costal line between Morocco and Mauritania against the increasing influx of irregular migrants, migration routes shifted increasingly to sea-born alternatives, notably from Senegal, Gambia and Guinea to the Spanish Canary Islands (see graph 1)[31]. The latter registered over 31,000 African refugees in 2006, a sixfold increase compared with 2005, and almost four times as many as in the previous four years combined[32]. Additional 5,000 had been intercepted by the islands' coastguards, and 6,000 migrants died or went missing on the perilous 1,000 km sea journey under appalling conditions, according to estimates of Spanish border authorities in Tenerife[33]. Another 16,000 African migrants arrived on the tiny Italian island of Lampedusa (south of Malta) from the Libyan coast in the same year.

As for the Atlantic sea routes, migrants pay the smugglers between US$ 800 and 1,250 for a one way passage from Senegal to the Canary Islands in customary small wooden fishing

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[28] Cf. Haas 2005:1278.

[29] Cf. Boubakri 2004, Fall 2004; Haas 2005a; Hamood 2006; ICMPD 2004; Marfaing 2004.

[30] Cf. Simon, C. (2006): Le Maghreb, espace d'immigration. *Le Monde*, December 15, 2006.

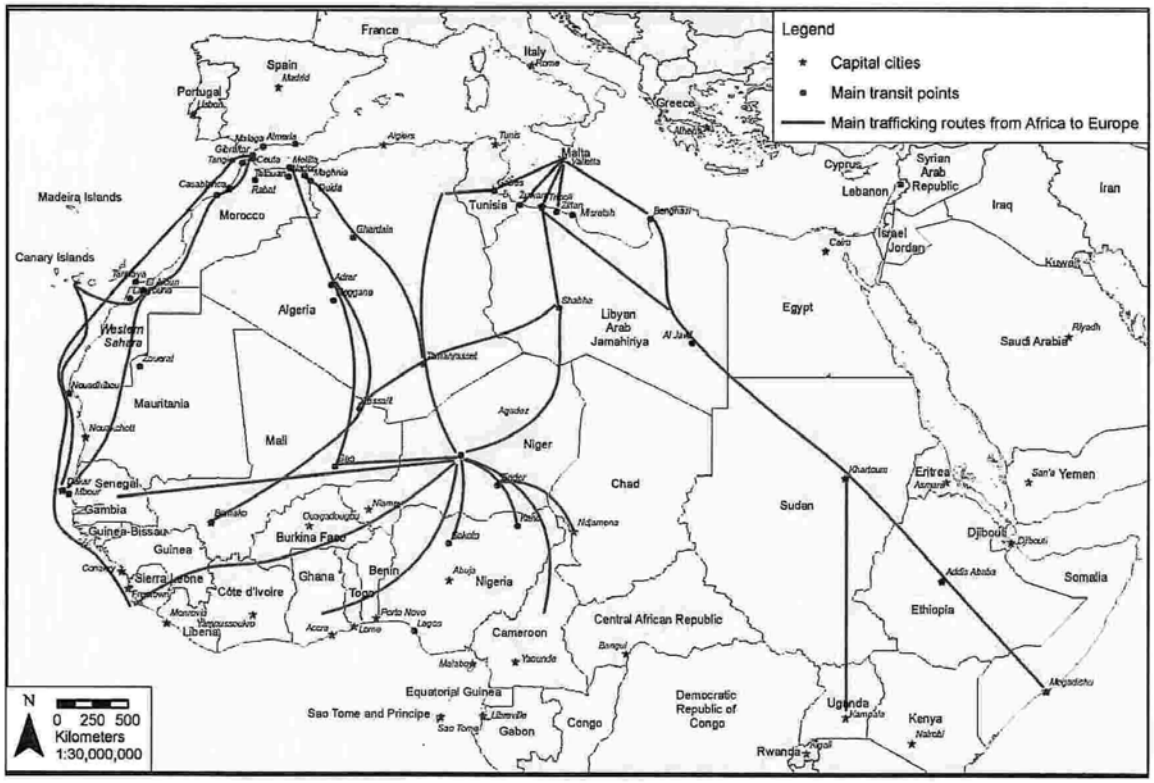
[31] Cf. Parkes 2006.

[32] Cf. BBC-news Africa: Canaries migrant death toll soars. December 28, 2006.

[33] Cf. below in more detail.

boats, called lothios, or 'pirogues of death' in local dialect[34]. Because of the rapid growing demand, boat-builders and carpenters in Gambia started to construct bigger pirogues, especially designated for the transport of 60 to 100 migrants, which cost about 100,000 dalasi (US$ 3,539). They are equipped with two outboard engines, GPS, and a minimum of petrol and other supplies for the eight to twelve day journey, depending on the sea conditions. The transfer in the crowded boats under the open sun is life threatening. Local agents openly admit that the chances the boat will be detected by border patrols before arrival or simply perish at sea, is 50:50[35]. No wonder then that experienced pilots of these pirogues are in high demand. One renowned 'pirogier' was the 'Baron' from Saint-Louis, who escaped prosecution in Senegal in September 2006 by fleeing to Mauritania. He was said to have successfully transported over 1,000 migrants to Tenerife[36].

Graph 1: Migration-routes from Africa to Europe



Source: © UN 2006a:12.

[34] *Cayucos*, in Spanish.

[35] Cf. Fleming, L.: Gambia – new front in migrant trade (*BBC-Africa news*, October 10, 2006).

[36] Cf. Belleret, R.: Chronique des clandestins (12) – On n'arrêt pas la mer avec les bras (*Le Monde*, Octobre 22, 2006).

Concerning the risk evaluation of such journeys, the long distance over the open Atlantic is not the only problem. Senegalese fishermen were already forced before to travel along the West African coast up to the Golf of Guinea in search of valuable catches, because their local fishing grounds had been depleted by foreign (mostly EU) fishing armadas[37]. The new GPS technique facilitates orientation[38]. Besides irresponsible neglect of basic security precautions on the side of the smugglers, the major cause for imminent danger lies in the special framework conditions for these transports, i.e. clandestine refugee-transfers in overcrowded boats on the high sea, enforced by the close surveillance of the multinational Frontex sea- and air born forces[39], patrolling along the West African coast, organized by the EU and concerned African states. This was demonstrated by the sad fate of a tiny rickety yacht which started at Christmas 2005 with 37 Senegalese migrants on board, towed by a bigger smuggling vessel with destination to the Canaries. On the way, the smugglers severed the towing line, possibly, because they feared detection by the coastguard planes, and the yacht drifted into the open Atlantic. On April 30, 2006 fishermen from Barbados, rescued the boat, driven by the trade winds over the Atlantic, but nobody had survived the ordeal; they found only eleven mummified corpses and some evidence of their origin and fate on board[40].

Notwithstanding these imminent hazards, the desperate migrants see no alternative. Apparently, even Asian smugglers joined already the lucrative business. They transport migrants from Pakistan, India or Bangladesh by air to West African harbours where they are loaded on board of unseaworthy ships meant to reach the Canaries. In September 2006, a rusty fish trawler with 160 Pakistani and Indians on board was intercepted by the Spanish coastguard before the Canaries. In February 2007 a fish trawler, overloaded with some 400 migrants from Kashmir and different African origins, set sail from Guinea to the Canary Islands and broke down in international waters off the Mauritanian coast. It was towed, after one week of wrangling over the responsibility for the rescue mission, to the Mauritian port of Nouadhibou for the repatriation of the migrants[41]. Most of the irregular migrants whose nationality could be identified were repatriated to their home countries. Thus, on the base of a

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[37] Cf. below.

[38] Belleret, R. (2006a): Chronique des clandestins (10) – L'irrésistible appel du large (*Le Monde*, Octobre 20, 2006).

[39] 'Frontex', the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union, was established in 2004. In 2006 it prevented some 4,000 African migrants to reach the Canary Islands (cf. BBC-news Africa, January 26, 2007).

[40] Cf. Nation News, Barbados, May 7, 2006. Connotations with the deplorable conditions of the Atlantic slave trade are not too far fetched.

[41] Cf. dpa, September 15, 2006; UN 2006a: 12; BBC-news Africa: 'Mauritania to let migrants land'. February 10, 2007; UN-news Service: 'West Africa: UN Refugee Agency Calls for 400 People Adrift to Be Allowed to Disembark'. February 9, 2007.

bilateral agreement between the Spanish and Senegalese immigration Authorities 4,400 migrants, interned in refugee camps on the Canary Islands, were repatriated by plane to Saint Louis (Northern Senegal) between September 9 and October 26, 2006.

5. Unfair EU Foreign Trade Policy Reinforces Migration Pressure in Africa

The enduring desolate economic situation and bleak perspectives of most households in African LLDCs account for one of the major reasons for African trans-national migration. This has been recognized by the member states of the EU too. At the joint EU-AU migration summit in Tripoli (November 22 to 23, 2006) they promised to stem the growing flow of migrants, among others by a significant increase in development aid to the most affected West- and North African countries, specifically targeted on potential migrant populations. In total, the EU promised to allocate some € 40m. to boost job creation in Africa[42].

However, aid and development do not necessarily lead to a reduction of migration. On the contrary, different studies suggest that at least the kind of economic growth promoted by the highly industrialized Western countries and by the WTO, based on a neo-liberal approach of trade liberalization, would stimulate migration from Sub-Saharan Africa in the medium and long run[43]. This applies the more, if the donor countries obstruct sustainable growth of African LDCs by non-tariff barriers to trade, unfair subsidies and dumping prices which undercut the comparative advantages of these countries for labour intensive agricultural products in the world market[44]. Thus, studies published by the World Bank, international NGOs, and others repeatedly blamed the EU in this respect, proving that the EU foreign trade policy contributes to a significant extent to reduce the income-earning possibilities of West African producers, in pursuit of the commercial interest of the EU member states, and to the detriment of development in Sub-Saharan Africa[45]. In addition, this selfish foreign trade policy of the EU and its member states counteracted its own pro-poor development cooperation with African states which it tried to implement since decades. The most blatant examples are the EU fisheries and agricultural policies, the negative effects of which have been discussed in more detail elsewhere[46]. Just the elimination of unfair cotton subsidies paid by the USA, China and the EU to their farmers would increase the income of West African cotton producers by US$ 250m. per annum. According to ODI estimates, EU cotton

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42 Cf. BBC-news Africa: 'EU unveils new immigration plans', November 30, 2006.

43 Haas 2006; Martin et al 1996.

44 Cf. Haas 2005: 1271-72.

45 Cf. Anderson et al. 2005; Baffes 2005; Borrmann et al. 2005; Hinkle et al. 2004; Oxfam 2006.

46 Cf. Kohnert 2006.

subsidies account for up to 38% of income losses of cotton farmers in West- and Central Africa; its elimination would increase the cotton export earnings of Benin and Chad Republic by US$ 9m. and 12m., respectively[47]. The EU recognized already in 2002 the necessity of a better coherence between its fisheries- and development policy concerning the ACP member countries; but up to date it did not put corresponding measures into practice. Even high ranking representatives of EU member states, like the German minister for Economic Development Cooperation, Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, and the German President Horst Köhler, criticised the double talk and the lack of coherence of EU trade and development policies during the WTO conference in Cancun (Mexico, 2003) and the Africa Forum summit in Accra (Ghana, January 2007), but again, apparently without great success.

6. Contested EU Measures to Prevent Irregular African Migration to Europe

The prevailing perspective of the EU concerning African immigration is still focused mainly on security and prevention, neglecting the chances for development linked to it for all sides concerned[48]. During the joint Migration and Development Conference at Rabat (Morocco, July 10 to 11, 2006), attended by ministers of over 30 African and European states, the African partners accepted in principle the demand of their European colleagues for a more active involvement in the close supervision and prevention of irregular migration ('Action Plan of Rabat'). However it was agreed upon that stepping up border controls both at land and at sea would not suffice. New ways to open up legal ways of temporary or 'circular' migration and development of employment opportunities in the transit countries and countries of origin was considered to be a necessary supplement. At the Tripoli summit in November 2006 the EU vice president Franco Frattini recommended once more a quota system of legal immigration, adapted to the specific needs of each EU member country.

But whether more draconic proposals to seal off the 'fortress Europe' had been discarded all together was not certain. This concerns notably the construction of concentration or 'reception' camps for 'boat people' and other irregular migrants and refugees outside the EU borders in Northern Africa, proposed among others by the British Premier Blair in 2003 and the German and Italian ministers of the interior Otto Schily and Giuseppe Pisanu in 2004, but fiercely contested by other governments of EU member states and by human rights groups. In 2004 the EU proposed to set up five 'reception centres' in Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia at an ulterior date. On November 5, 2004, the leaders of the 25 EU gov-

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[47] Cf. Gillson et al 2004.

[48] Cf. Baldwin-Edwards 2006; Parkes 2006.

ernments agreed on the approval of common asylum rules for the EU until 2010, whereby it should be examined, if there is a possibility to process asylum claims outside the territory of the EU[49]. At least one camp was built in Libya with assistance of the Berlusconi government already in 2004. Another camp was constructed with Spanish assistance in Nouadhibou, Mauritania, where up to 4,000 undocumented migrants were interned in 2006, mostly from Senegal and Mali[50].

In the meantime, the implementation of other more subtle proposals of the European Commission's 'Global Approach on Migration' was accelerated, like the creation of job-recruiting centres for temporary African migrants in their home countries, co-financed by the EU and interested member states. In February 2007 an EU-pilot project in Mali was under construction, similar centres were planned for Senegal, Ghana and Mauritania. Their aim was to match the European demand for cheap labour, notably in Spain, Italy and France, in sectors like agriculture, building or cleaning, to the corresponding offer of suited African job seekers[51]. Initially the job centres will be restricted to the capital, but later on regional offices in outlying towns or villages, where most migrants start their journey are envisaged. However, these plans were strongly opposed by right wing EU politicians, notably in Poland and other East-European member states, like Slovakia and Lithuania – as well as Romania and Bulgaria, which recently joined the EU. They argued that it would be difficult to understand for millions their voters, who would be happy to have low-skilled jobs in agriculture and other sectors within the EU, why they could not work freely in all EU member states, whereas millions of Euro would be spend on African immigrants.

As similar populist views opposed to African immigration are increasingly fashionable all over Europe, policy makers were at pains to propagate 'modern' concepts of 'circular migration'[52]. On the basis of recent research findings, they underlined the positive aspects of migration if managed properly, like the development potential of remittances[53] or the taping of other African Diaspora resources for development[54]. Although the new concepts are certainly more than a simple re-vitalization of old models of temporary migration, as employed

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[49] Cf. Gnusser 2004.

[50] Cf. 'Mauritanie : L'Espagne prépare un camp d'accueil pour les émigrants clandestins à Nouhadibou' (Paris: AFP, March 24, 2006); 'Mauretanien: Transitland für MigrantInnen oder Hilfspolizist der EU?' 25.01.2007 <http://fluechtlingsrat-hamburg.de/content/eua_250107_Mauretanien_Veranstaltung.html>.

[51] Cf. BBC-news: 09.02.07: '*European Union development commissioner, Louis Michel, is in Mali for talks to set up the EU' s first job centre for African migrants'.*

[52] Cf. Vertovec 2007:7.

[53] Cf. above.

[54] Cf. Haas 2006a; Ionescu 2006.

by the German 'Gastarbeiter' system in the 1960s and 70s, they share some common shortcomings, notably with respect to negative social effects in sending and receiving countries[55]. The social costs in the receiving countries are related to the highly asymmetric distribution of cost and benefit of immigration. Whereas certain sectors of the economy, as well as the middle and upper class, who employ the labour or services of immigrants, can gain considerable profits, notably if employed under precarious black market conditions, the lower strata of the society, especially unqualified labour, will be exposed to cut-throat competition both on the labour market and in the social services. Increasingly violent social conflicts between disillusioned migrants and their neighbourhood, insufficiently integrated into the society and often living as outcast in suburban ghettos, like in Cachan (Paris) and other French cities in 2005, are foreseeable also in other European countries, probably reinforced by related ultra right wing excesses. The envisaged immigration quota systems for temporary migration, already practiced in veiled form of periodical 'regularization' of hundred of thousand unauthorized immigrants in Spain, Italy and France, in the past ten years, might solve short term problems on national labour markets. But on the medium and long run they are likely to increase the social and political tensions caused by baldy managed immigration policies. Even an adequate and sustainable integration concept for immigrants would be viable only, if it would comprise a significant improvement of the labour market conditions for domestic citizens living under precarious economic and social conditions. And last, but not least, the unfair EU foreign trade policy mentioned above, should be replaced as soon as possible by Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) between the EU and ACP countries on equal footing [56], supplemented by sustainable reintegration and development programs.

7. Conclusion

African migration is a reflection of its socio-economic dynamics since the times of the slave trade. In the last decades the number of refugees from conflict regions in Africa increased dramatically. The conflict ridden and poverty stricken region of Western Africa became the cradle of migration from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe, where most African migrants with overseas destinations live. They flee from their desolate economic situation, violent conflicts or political persecution. The drain of human capital from Africa is most pronounced in the employment sector for highly qualified personnel. Another remarkable trend is the 'femini-

[55] Cf. Castles 2006.

[56] Cf. Borrmann et al 2006.

zation' of the brain drain in recent years, caused by the growing number of highly skilled African women looking for employment abroad. However, migration is not necessarily a zero-sum game, where one side loses to the benefit of others. There are also positive – although often neglected – economic and socio-cultural effects of the brain drain. Remittances of African migrants contribute considerably not just to the wellbeing of their extended families at home, but to poverty reduction and development on a national level in general. They constitute the second largest source of external private finance, besides foreign direct investment. In addition, a counteracting 'brain gain', i.e. new value systems, political and spiritual orientations, acquired by migrants in Europe, results in a transfer of knowledge and of innovations.

The European Union and its member states share a heavy dual responsibility for the continuing migration pressure: First, because they fostered over decades corrupt and autocratic regimes like that of Eyadéma's Togo[57] or successive Nigerian military dictatorships, with dire disregard to principles of 'good governance'. The aftermath of these regimes is still to be felt today, and constitutes one of the underlying factors for politically motivated migration. Secondly, the EU contributed to Africa's growing economic misery, due to the damaging effects of European selfish external trade policy. Nevertheless, the prevailing perspective of the EU concerning African immigration remains to be focused on security, the foreclosure of its external borders and prevention. Even current EU programs to combat African migration 'at the roots' with increased development aid to West African countries concerned, may be based on illusions. Available evidence and literature points to the fact that this policy of 'development instead of migration' is bound to fail because of the peculiar overall structure of economic growth in West Africa, promoted by the highly industrialized Western countries and the WTO. Their neo-liberal approach to development, based on global trade liberalization, will rather stimulate migration from Sub-Saharan Africa in the medium and long run.

The European-African migration summits in Rabat and Tripoli in June and November 2006 even strengthened the policy of exclusion. Yet, well adapted immigration regulations would serve the interest of all parties involved. Last, but not least, it could contribute to protect the over-aged population of European member states in the long run against threatening economic decline. Even Germany and France meanwhile hesitantly accept the fact that they are an immigration country. The EU commission endorses a limited and temporarily restricted immigration of Africans. However, two fundamental problems remain unsolved. Cost and benefit of immigration are distributed asymmetrically between EU member countries and between social classes within the EU. Both will aggravate the imminent danger of violent conflicts and of right-wing extremism in the immigration regions. The revitalization of old

[57] Cf. Kohnert 2005

concepts of 'selective', 'temporary' migration under the heading of the modern approach of 'circular migration' is unlikely to solve the problem either. Yet, well adapted immigration regulations could serve the interest of all parties involved. Last, but not least, it could contribute to protect the over-aged population of European member states in the long run against threatening economic decline.

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List of Acronyms

ACP – Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific countries (mostly former colonies of European colonial powers)

AU – African Union

CFA – Franc CFA, where CFA stands for *Communauté financière d'Afrique* ('Financial Community of Africa')

EPA – Economic Partnership Agreements between EU and APC countries

EU – European Union

FDI – Foreign Direct Investment

FRONTEX – EU agency based in Warsaw, specialised in the field of border security

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

IOM – International Organization on Migration

LDC – Development Country

LLDC – Least Developed Country

ODI – Overseas Development Institute, London

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SSA – Sub-Saharan Africa

WHO – World Health Organisation

WTO – World Trade Organisation

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