

MIGRALUSION: A MIX-TRANSNATIONAL THEORY OF ‘JAPA’ CULTURE

**An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at Oduduwa Hall,
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria
On Tuesday, 14th October 2025**

By

ADEBUSUYI ISAAC ADENIRAN, PhD, *fspsp*
Professor of Migration and Development Sociology

Inaugural Lecture Series 407

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ISSN 0189-7848

Printed by:
Obafemi Awolowo University Press Limited,
Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Preamble

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, Principal Officers of the University, Distinguished Members of the University Council, Members of the University Senate, Provosts, Deans, Directors, Heads of Departments, Eminent Colleagues, Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. Standing before you this day, Tuesday, October 14, 2025, to deliver the 407th Inaugural Lecture of this great citadel of learning – Obafemi Awolowo University – is an outright making of God, the Almighty, who does only good and wonderful things; a reference of which I am. This marks the 9th Inaugural Lecture from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology since its establishment in 1963. The 8th, which was the last, was delivered by amiable Prof. Mabayoje Anthony Aluko on February 27, 2018.

More than any other consideration, this Inaugural Lecture, entitled “*Migralusion: A Mix-Transnational Theory of Japa Culture*” is to celebrate the faithfulness and the goodness of God Almighty in my life. Though it is designed to serve as a culmination of my career trajectory in measures of research, accomplishments, impacts and vision, yet none of these could have come into fruition without the permission of the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord Almighty. As a human being, whenever I thought the road had closed, He has always made a way despite my imperfections.

Mr. Vice Chancellor sir, kindly permit me to present a synopsis of my background, motivation for choice of discipline, profession and, of course, this inaugural topic. I am a great-grandson of the renowned Yoruba warrior – late Ogedengbe Agbogungboro of Ilesa and a grandson of the renowned indigenous entrepreneur – late Loja Timothy Adewole, the Loja of Odo-Ijesha, who was among the first set of indigenous entrepreneurs to ever establish sawmilling factories in the then British Colonial Nigeria in the 1930s. Indeed, the intricacies of my background would have suggested that I would grow up to become a businessman, most likely in the ‘export and import’ sub-sector. The two generations that preceded me, including my adorable father – late Pa Adeniran Ogedengbe – had towed similar business-related paths. While the male children mostly socialized as *Osomaalo* (indigenous shrewd itinerant traders), the

female gender were habitually renowned as *Alajapa* (shuttle traders). In fact, my maternal grandmother – late Princess Mary Ige Adewole (nee Adebusuyi Ogefongerin) whom I spent most of my formative years with, just like most of her other grandchildren, did trade in processed corn. However, I will affirm of the major motivations which enabled my standing before you today. The major being the visit of my late mother – Princess Agbeke Adepate-ibi Adeniran to the University of Ibadan (UI) in the 1960s. In her narrations, the students she saw at UI then, especially, the females, looked more like ‘angels’ and she did wish that all her children would look like them one day; and the Good Lord did exactly this for her. Also, the presence of the former Nigerian President – Alhaji Shehu Shagari – at the graduation ceremony of my eldest sister – Mrs. Eunice Oladunni Jegede – at the University of Ilorin in 1981 did encourage my mother to support the education of all her children. My mother was, therefore, of the view that education can, indeed, make one to be in close proximity of the President of a whole country. By age 9, I was nicknamed ‘Professor’ by the wife of my late brother, late Mrs. Olufunmilayo Fagbamila (nee Adewolu). Honestly, she was the only one that could provide the reason for such nicknaming because nothing looked professorial within our family setting prior to her coming to the family. Of course, it is now late to ask her for the reason(s)! Meanwhile, my first visit to a university community at the age of 10– University of Ilorin – in 1984, where nearly all Professors that I was privileged to meet practically had white hairs, was a remarkable turning-point. It was so fascinating and attractive to me! Thereafter, I started dreaming and looking forward to a day that ‘book’ will eventually transform my dark hair into white hair as this was the popular assumption among the younger population then.

Migration at Conception

Over time and space, migration has evolved to synonymize human existence. As recorded in Genesis 12:1, the clear call of God Almighty to Abraham was: “leave your country, your people, and your father’s household and go to a land that I will show you”. This command signaled the outset of the Abrahamic covenant, where

God promises to bless Abraham and make him a great nation, which He actually did! All of the events that followed this development in the Book of Exodus clearly indicate that the Lord has not designed human beings to be stationary. Meanwhile, two issues in this commandment are deemed pertinent to this lecture. First, every migratory expedition seems to be routinely shrouded in utmost uncertainty, especially at the initial point of departure. Hence, a good measure of ‘faith’ may have to come in in order to make the move. Secondly, migration, in itself, possesses the capacity to spur creativity, innovativeness and resoluteness within the migrants’ communities, notably at the point of destination. Expectedly, this will directly correlate to the projected ‘divine blessings’ as contained in the Abrahamic covenant referenced above.

Moreover, the mechanisms for formation of communities, countries and continents across the world have suggested that migration has always been central to our being, and to the continuation of existence. Of great significance here are the roles of inter-tribal conflagration in parts of Africa, ascendancy of colonialism and slave trade in the Global South in particular, the establishment of the New World (that is, modern-day United States of America), the rise of modernization and globalization as concepts for borderless socio-economic relations, and interestingly the explanation offered by the Pangea’s theorists of an earlier ‘supercontinent’ and the subsequent ‘continental drift’, which implied the separation (that is, multi-directional migration) of modern-day global continents and their inhabitants into separate entities. As humans are designed, it will not be out of place to affirm that we are all migrants in one form or the other. In fact, for everyone in this hall to be here today, a sort of migratory principle has been observed in the context of seeking for new knowledge about an aspect of our collective realities, which in this case, is human migration. Therefore, similar underpinnings have been the enablers of in-country and out-country mobilities for educational, economic, and associated livelihood opportunities by individuals. Either during pre-historic, pre-modern, modern and post-modern eras, one common denominator of migration as human undertaking has remained extant urge to improve the state of the

human condition, educationally, economically, medically, religiously or security-wise.

Probing into the conceptual significance of human migration and its existential imperativeness may be helpful in presenting a veritable framework to better manage its contemporary vestiges; at least for the good of all. Migration does not only provide a framework for displaying diversities of existence, but possesses the capacity for balancing human development, evenly, across various global regions via unrestricted cross-border and transnational flow of transformational ideas and developmental initiatives.

The Evolution of Migration in Nigeria

As noted by Adebusuyi-Adeniran (2020), in-depth exploration of prevalent procedures for inter-personal interaction across the length and breadth of pre-modern African Society has been indicative of a pattern of inherent culture of migration across time and spaceⁱ. Despite ostensible pre-colonial and post-colonial impediments to cross-border interactions, for instance distance, imposed colonial languages, uncommon colonial experiences and multiple monetary zoning, the migration and mobility of Africans have kept bolstering across histories. Although various colonial regimes in parts of Africa had tended to encourage predominantly intra-border migration at the detriment of cross-border migration within emergent African nation-states, pre-existing cross-cultural interactive patterns did make related cross-border relationships sustainable across histories. Meanwhile, the migratory networks of most cultural groupings in Africa, for instance the case of Yoruba ethnic group within the West African sub-region, has been largely predicated on extant interpersonal (familial) ties (Adebusuyi-Adeniran, Komenan, Bondarenko, Tchumtchoua and Santos, 2025(i): 5-6)ⁱⁱ.

Although the precise periods of commencement of cross-cultural mobilities of most ethnic groups within modern-day Nigeria, and beyond, have remained largely indeterminable, related documentations and oral evidences from various exploratory investigations that I have conducted have convincingly indicated

that such migratory processes did predate mid-19th Century colonial invasion of parts of Africa. During the first segment of the budding migratory cycle (that is, from late 1800s to late 1900s), most migrants of modern-day Nigerian descents had worked as fighters and farmers within the respective host societies. The second segment, that is, from the late 1900s to date has witnessed the shift from most migrants being colonial employees to independent artisans, business owners, transporters and so forth within the respective host societies, especially within the West African sub-region. According to Adebusuyi-Adeniran (2009; 2012), while the total number of migrants of Nigerian origin in Cote d'Ivoire as of 1930 (especially, the Ejigbo-Yoruba) was estimated at 500, by 2006ⁱⁱⁱ, the number had grown to over 1,200,000, of which the Ejigbo-Yoruba accounted for more than 90%^{iv}. The population census held in Nigeria in 2006 revealed that the Ejigbo community in Nigeria had a total of 132,642 inhabitants (National Population Commission, 2006)^v. Impliedly, well over 80% of the entire Ejigbo-Yoruba population was resident in Cote d'Ivoire as at 2006. The granting of citizen rights to all West African migrants by the regime of the late Ivorian President Felix Houphouet-Boigny in the early 1960s caused a further explosion of the migratory trend along the Nigerian-Ivorian corridor. Prevalent interpersonal ties among the migrants and the practice of cross-cultural marriage within the host society has been a strong impetus in this respect (Adebusuyi-Adeniran, 2011)^{vi}.

It is, therefore, interesting to note that the contact between various migrating groups within Africa did not only predate the advent of colonialism on the continent, it has continued to grow over time and space. Equally, it has been holding a formidable promise for the realization of the goal of a borderless African regional space, which should be a positive development for encouraging Africans to stay in Africa (Adebusuyi-Adeniran, 2014; Adebusuyi-Adeniran, Adimula, Yusuf, and Ojomo, 2025(ii): 9-18)^{vii}. Put more succinctly, it appears that Africa has always been a moving continent, and migration concerns here are not particularly new as a phenomenon. What is, however, disturbingly new is the crises that have become

the face of African mobilities, within and beyond the shores of the continent, due to inherent disequilibrium in accessing societal resources and expanding rate of population growth on the continent.

Trends and Patterns of Migration in Nigeria

In terms of migratory capabilities, all regions and ethnic groups in Nigeria have been visibly active across histories. However, in measures of trends and dynamics, there have been apparent variations. For example, while most migrants from Northern Nigeria have been associated more with internal mobilities, a considerable volume of migrants of Southern Nigerian origin has been involved in both internal and transnational mobilities (be it sub-regional, regional or trans-continental). Nevertheless, irrespective of causes of migration (e.g. drought, climate change, economy, education and social instability), most Nigerians have often limited their mobilities to the country and the West African sub-region (Adebusuyi-Adeniran, 2014(i); 2020)^{viii}.

While early contact with colonialism, and by extension western education, has given imperative networking advantage to the Yoruba of South-West Nigeria in having a relatively higher presence in Europe and North America, this advantage has equally enabled the Edo sub-ethnic group in South-South Nigeria to continue to record higher number of participants in the processes of irregular migration (such as human trafficking and forced transnational sex trading), notably in Europe, among other locations across the world. Meanwhile, the Yoruba ethnic group in South-West Nigeria and the Igbo ethnic group in the South-East have been very active in both shuttle and long-term mobilities across the West African sub-region, notably along the Nigerian-Ivorian migratory corridor. It is worthy of noting that most international migrations originating from Nigeria routinely terminate along this axis, and never in Europe, North America or any other regions of the world (World Migration Report, 2020)^{ix}. Nevertheless, such are mostly undertaken within the prism of ‘unauthorized’ cross-border trading expeditions, such as smuggling and trafficking. The ECOWAS’ free movement protocol

has been particularly relevant in this regard (ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment, 1979)^x.

Determining the actual number of Nigerians who have emigrated from the country in recent past has been somewhat Herculean due to obvious situational factors. First and foremost, the majority of such migrants have routinely utilized non-official platforms to execute their migratory intentions, and as such, cannot be captured within the frameworks of governmental data sourcing. To a considerable extent, such non-official platforms have been enabled by the inherent porousness of the Nigerian borders, from north to south, east to west. Even, in situations where official data are available, the reliability of such data and their comparative significance when juxtaposed with the volume of uncaptured informal migrations will logically make related official sources inadequate. However, of the officially captured combined unemployment rate and time-related underemployment rate of 15.3% (i.e. 30.6 million) according to the Nigeria Labor Force Statistics Report, Q1 (National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2024), no less than 15% (i.e. 4.5 million) had emigrated from Nigeria as of 2024^{xi}.

Career Trajectory as Academic and Research Consultant

Mr. Vice Chancellor sir, as a student at Ilesa Grammar School, Ilesa (1985-1991), my plan was to study accountancy. However, my foray into the field of socio-development research was purely a divine arrangement. Whereas, I was initially somewhat oblivious of what it entailed, an innate attribute of mine – ‘budding inquisitiveness’ – had been a subtle impetus in this regard. I had always wanted to know everything about life, which is actually the basis of every sociological inquisition. In fact, by age 10, I had completed studying and mastering the map of the entire world on my own volition, basically deciphering the reality of human interrelatedness. Intuitively, it was of my concise aspiration to lay my foot on everywhere on earth at such tender age, and by 2024, when I celebrated my golden jubilee birthday, I have been privileged to lay my foot on every continent (save for the Antarctica), and on more

than 70 countries, either as a visitor, a worker, a researcher or as a resident! No doubt, there is nothing that God cannot do (Luke 1:37). My eventual specialization in global migration research could be situated within the context of both deliberate and indeliberate realities of my being. Affirming therefore that I live what I do and do what I live may not be an overstatement, and all glory be to God Almighty!

Meanwhile, during my undergraduate days at the then Ondo State University, Ado-Ekiti (1995-1999), some of my colleagues seemed to enjoy my tutorials more than the regular classes in relative terms. There was hardly any topic we were taught that this group of my classmates would not bring to me for further explanations. I was practically the ‘preferred lecturer and project supervisor’, though I had a hidden source of inspiration in my real teacher and supervisor – then Mr. Olu-Olu Olufayo (now a Full Professor and the current Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti). While I was not remunerated in anyway, yet I noticed that I did enjoy teaching and supervising my colleagues, even as an undergraduate. My employment with The Presidency as a Planning and Research Officer in 2001, and subsequent secondment to the Citizenship and Leadership Training Center (CLTC), Shere Hills, Jos, Plateau State offered me the first inkling of formal lecturing experience. Nonetheless, I had earlier had a year of social work experience as a corps member of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in Birnin Kudu, Jigawa State (1999-2000).

Upon the collection of my employment letter with The Presidency, my uncle – Baba Michael Adewole (former Director-General, CLTC) – shook my hand in the presence of my mother because of the class of my Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree. On our way home, my mummy asked me why my uncle shook my hand. I took time to explain the meaning of ‘2nd Class, Upper Division’ to her. She was elated and in return she shook my hand and pleaded with me to build on such achievement by studying further. This event did mark a remarkable turning point in my quest for scholarship.

Mr. Vice Chancellor sir, my career in the academia formally commenced with my admission into the Master of Science (M.Sc.) degree program in Sociology at the University of Lagos (Unilag), Akoka, Lagos in 2004 where I was simultaneously engaged as a Teaching/Graduate Assistant up till 2007. Much appreciations to Professor Iyiola Oni who facilitated my admission, Professor Muiyiwa Omobowale, Professor Felicia Oyekanmi, Professor Omololu Soyombo, Professor Fatai Badru, Professor Franca Attoh and Mrs. Janet Adegboyega. By 2007, I migrated from Unilag to this great University with my employment as a Graduate Assistant in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology where I rose through the ranks to be pronounced a Full Professor in 2021. At this point, it will be apt to express my profound appreciation to Professor Omobowale who called my attention to the open position at OAU and did encourage me to apply while we were together at Unilag in 2007. He was also the facilitator of my PhD research at the University of Ibadan (UI), Ibadan. He linked me up with Professor Lanre Olutayo, who has been more than a PhD Supervisor to me. It is equally worthy of mentioning that Prof. Soyombo did show me the way of research during my M.Sc. days at Unilag. The way of migration research was shown to me by both Prof. Olutayo and Prof. Omobowale in the course of my doctoral research at UI.

My doctoral sojourn at the Department of Sociology in UI (2008-2012) was a watershed in my career trajectory. It offered me my first real international academic and research experience at York University, Canada (2011-2012) with a pre-doctoral grant from the Center for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), Waterloo, Canada. It is worth noting that the offer of the grant was on the basis of demonstrated innovativeness of my doctoral thesis entitled ‘Social Networking and Identity Integration among Ejigbo-Yoruba Migrants in Cote d’Ivoire’. Many thanks to my fatherly ‘Supervisor’, Professor Olutayo. You are, indeed, more than a mentor! Altogether, my doctoral thesis did facilitate more than 60 global recognitions for me in forms of research grants, awards, scholarships and fellowships within the first 5 years of its completion. Indeed, our God does only good and wonderful things!

Mr. Vice Chancellor sir, the period of my postdoctoral research at The Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden in 2015 was a remarkable point in my career trajectory. My first published book, from the findings of my PhD research – ‘Migration and Regional Integration in West Africa: A Borderless ECOWAS’ – was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2014 prior to my assumption of duties in Uppsala in 2015. I took a paper-back copy of the book along for presentation to my host’s library. To my amazement, the Librarian asked me: are you sure we do not have this book here? Within a few minutes of search, she returned with an engraved copy of the book. I was dumbfounded and really humbled with what I saw! It was, indeed, a great moment of reassurance that I was actually on the right career path.

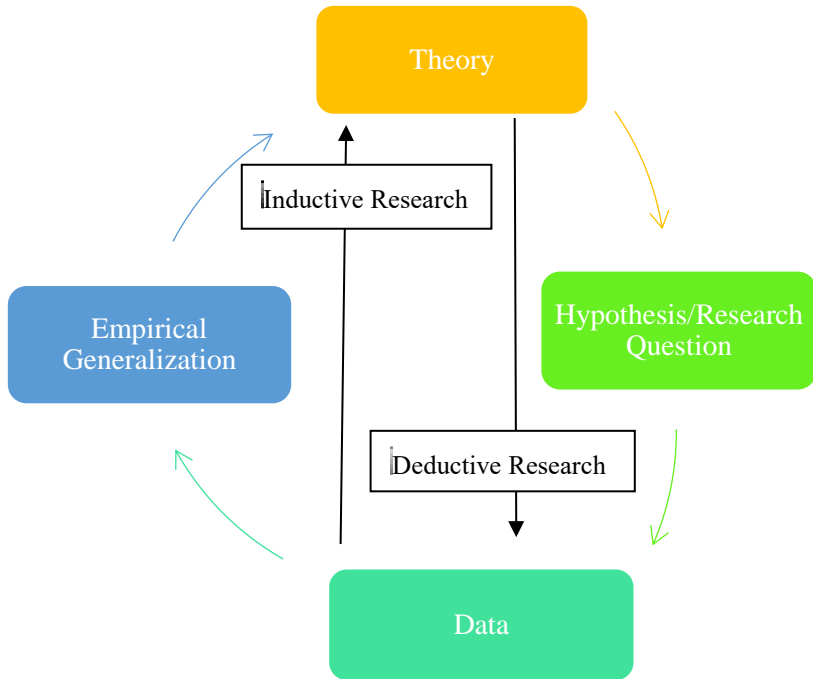
Mr. Vice Chancellor sir, by 2018, my research and writings have given me a noticeable measure of visibility nationally, regionally, and internationally. Between 2019 and now, I have served as a Research Consultant for the Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offenses Commission (ICPC), The British Council, Corporate Risk and Crisis Management (CRCM), Department for International Development (DFID), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), The World Bank and so on. I was the Nigerian Delegate to the UN-backed Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) held in Athens, Greece in 2008. I have also served as the Nigerian Delegate to the adoption of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Smuggling of Migrants (SOM) Protocol) in Vienna, Austria in 2023. By 2025, I received nomination and subsequently appointment as the Chief of Policy for the flagship peace-research organization, the *Society for Peace Studies and Practice* (SPSP). I am presently the Chair of the Nigerian National Technical Committee (NTC) on Trafficking-in-Persons tasked with the preparation of the Nigerian Country Report on Trafficking-in-Persons (2025) under the auspices of the Federal Government of Nigeria and the UN.

Mr. Vice Chancellor sir, aside from presenting my key research undertakings, achievements, impacts, and recognitions (within and beyond the university system) for more than 2 decades, in this lecture, I shall lay bare the direction that my research plans would be taking from now on.

Theory and Research in Sociological Inquiry

In empirical, exploratory or integrated designs, both theory and research are the 2-legs that support all inquiries in the social world. Essentially, theory and research are demonstrated as being mutually impacting, with theory providing the framework for understanding social phenomena and in turn research providing imperative framework to interrogate aspects of pre-existing realities, and possibly challenge inherent stipulations of such realities. Notably, the primary goal of all exploratory inquiries is for the emergence of grounded theories; that is, new knowledge about aspects of pre-existing realities. Basically, sociological research utilizes theoretical perspectives to guide the research process, from formulating research questions to interpreting related findings. Conversely, research findings can lead to the development of new theories or the modification of existing ones.

Figure i: Research Process



Source: Author's Conception, 2025

Theory as Guiding Framework for Sociological Research

This is attainable through the utilization of relevant research philosophies. Positivistic philosophy will provide guidance for quantitative investigations, interpretivist (individual-level) and interactionist (group-level) philosophies will guide qualitative investigations and integrated philosophy will lead the path of mixed-method investigations.

Here, conceptualization helps with meaning construct for derivation of useful information, research questions help with exploratory data collection while hypotheses assist in empirical testing of propositions in quantitative data collection.

Theory as Context for Interpretation of Research Findings

Theories do provide the leverages by which the results of investigations can be explained; as such, making sense of patterns and relationships in the collected data. Aside from serving as the conceptual foundations for driving research processes, theories ensure that veritable frameworks are provided for connecting initially stated objectives to eventual outcomes of research. In other words, theories are present in the research process so as to provide the much-needed directions to social investigations, from conception to conclusion.

Research as Tool for Theoretical Development

Theoretical development utilizes three separate procedures via the research process: testing the validity of existing theories, improvement of existing theories, and debasement of existing theories, and as such, generating new patterns and relationships that could lead to emergence of entirely new theoretical perspectives. In essence, research provides imperative data that is used in building, testing, and refinement of theoretical perspectives for explaining relevant aspects of societal realities. Therefore, the relationship between theory and research is procedurally a dynamic, two-way process whereby theory could stimulate research and research could, in turn, stimulate theory.

Theorizing and Researching Human Mobilities

It has been so apparent that most of the analyses on human mobilities have mostly focused on interpretation of related ‘motivation for moving’ and their socio-economic impacts on both ‘releasing’ and ‘receiving’ societies (Richards and Seary, 2000; Shulman, 2000^{xii}). Thus, routinely excluding issues that bother on cross-cultural interaction (i.e. attitudinal), yet transnational and developmental in scope and functioning; of whose prism is perfectly fitting to the prevalent culture of migration and life-long practice of cross-societal eking out of a living within and beyond the shores of Africa (Adebusuyi-Adeniran, 2011). Therefore, the manner of deployment of social capital, such as identity and sociability in the

migratory process, has been a primary focus of my research engagements as a Migration Scholar as succinctly reflected in my work on ‘Transnational Simultaneity: An Emerging African Perspective of Cross-border Lifestyle’ (Adebusuyi-Adeniran, 2019)^{xiii}.

As noted by Mabogunje (1970) in the ‘systems approach to a theory of rural-urban migration’, migration changes the socio-cultural, economic and institutional contexts of inter-personal interaction in both ‘releasing’ and ‘receiving’ countries and enables an intertwined developmental space specific to process of mobility^{xiv}. In essence, my research undertakings have consistently shown that a fluid delineation exists between what Africans term ‘home space’ and ‘host space’ within the framework of respective regional transborder interaction. What is presented as ‘chain networking’ within the African migratory context is the process of attempting to meet and talk to other closely connected or familial individuals who may be useful for the realization of one’s aspirations, for instance in the process of cross-border or transnational mobility. Usually, social capital that produces measures of direct and indirect ‘social connections’ drives the entire process.

Hence, a fusion of Max Weber’s ‘social action theory’ (1991), Peggy Levitt and Nana Glick-Schiller’s ‘transnational social field theory’ (2004) and Walt Whitman Rostow’s ‘The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto’ (1960) is considered expedient in understanding the context of migratory relations and practices of Africans within and beyond the confines of Africa^{xv}. Weberian ‘social action theory’ is of the view that realities are mere expressions of individual dispositions from the perspectives and orientations of these individuals. Interestingly, Karl Marx’s perspective on the relation of ‘being’ and ‘consciousness’ seems to offer a useful explanation in this regard, but Weber emphasized what Marx de-emphasized: that individuals act unhinderedly. Equally, Weber stresses the social action of the individual action, that is, in which the actor considers the past, present and future behaviors of others in order to act. Actions then entail the ideas that people have

about one another, their ability to take on the role of the other, and their definitions of the situations in which they find themselves.

In the context of ‘transnational social field theory’, to fully understand the process of mobility from both pre-migratory and post-migratory perspective, there is a need to extend the limit of migration to interaction because it is central to individual and group construction of inherent realities. The notion of the ‘transnational social field’ has been a formidable tool for conceptualizing the potential array of social relations linking those ‘who move and those who stay behind’ (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004). For ‘The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto’ (1960), the notion of a globalized culture has had profound impacts on ‘free movements of persons’ at both regional and transnational level, that is, the concept of a ‘borderless global space’^{xvi}. This has been particularly useful in explaining the current desire of mostly young Africans to migrate toward the relatively developed societies of the Global North, though such intents often terminate as regional mobilities. Specifically, the burgeoning irregular pattern of mobility along the Saharan-Libyan-Mediterranean Sea-Southern European route could be understood within this context. More notably, irregular migrations from Africa to Europe in particular could be deemed an integral component of Rostow’s ‘conditions for take-off’, which signify a process of transmutation from the ‘traditional society’ to a ‘age of high mass consumption’.

Therefore, the intrinsic ‘fluidity’ of the transnational social field in Africa has become established as an apt platform for constructing and explaining the migratory capacity and practice of Africans within the context of budding global capitalism. It appears that the urge to seek a ‘good life’ is ably supported by the principle of global capitalism and its vestiges. This is not to say that African migrations do tilt towards other continents. Indeed, a significant proportion of migration of Africans commences and terminates within Africa; that is, over 75% (UNDP Report, 2020)^{xvii}.

Conceptualizing *Migralusion*

The notion of ‘migralusion’ has been my personal construct using two pre-existing concepts: ‘migration’ and ‘illusion’. While migration indicates the movement of individuals from one distinctly defined geographical location to another on either short-term or long-term basis, ‘illusion’ implies an act or a process that deceives by producing a false or misleading impression of actual reality. Therefore, ‘migralusion’, in this respect, focuses on espousing the unrealities of related ‘utopian assumption’, especially in relation to south-north mobilities, which in most cases constructed upon unviable foundation. Put differently, the extent of ‘illusion’ that routinely underlies the migratory intentions of most migrants of African descent, is presented through the notion of ‘migralusion’. No doubt the fact that migration could be understood within the context of positive developmental assumptions: the capacity to spur monetary and non-monetary remittances, skills transfer, and, of course, foreign direct investment (FDI).

However, processes underlying the migration of Nigerians to other parts of the world, especially since the outset of the 21st Century, call for in-depth interrogation. Assumed ‘perfection’ of the points of destinations usually make most of the prospective migrants overzealous. To this extent, they do utilize irregular mechanisms, such as trafficking and smuggling to facilitate their movements in some situations. This is the basis of the unrealities that drives the migratory expeditions of Nigerians, as applicable to other African migrants’ groups, in most situations. Of course, even when regular frameworks are still engaged to ‘make the move’, the need for integration into the socio-cultural specificities of the host societies often take the migrants to the realm of ‘migralusion’. Ostensibly, most gains attained on the economic plane are routinely lost on the socio-cultural plane when primordial vagaries of transnationalism (such as hosts’ supremacy, racism, stereotyping and so on) characteristically present limitations to individual and group’s goals. Incomplete integration, as seen in recent racism claim by the Opposition Conservative Leader in the United Kingdom (UK) – Ms. Kemi Badenoch – presents an apt reference here. In spite of all her

attempts to disconnect from her Nigerian roots to help the course of her political trajectory, her adopted home still seems unwelcoming, at least from her explanations. Apparent ‘migrалusion’.

Aside from usual push factors, such as lack of socio-economic opportunities and burgeoning demographic dividend, on the one hand, and assumed pull factors within the realm of utopian configuration on the other, the problems of contemporary mobilities in Nigeria, as applicable in other parts of Africa, have continued to worsen by inherent dangers and criminalities that drive the entire migratory process. This is the bane of African mobilities, especially the cross-border and transnational patterns.

Migrалusion as a Mix-Transnational Theory

As a theory of migration, ‘migrалusion’ has emerged from the outcomes of various empirical and exploratory research, which I designed and implemented to track and explain mobility patterns of cross-border, regional and transcontinental migrants of African descent, particularly Nigerians, within and beyond Africa. However, it has been constructed as a mix-transnational theoretical perspective to the extent that it possesses the capacity to enable admix of both positive and negative outcomes for the migrants, the releasing societies and the receiving societies.

Assumptions of Migrалusion

- i. Migration has both negative and positive outcomes irrespective of the mechanisms utilized in making the move: regular or irregular.
- ii. African migration is more regional than transcontinental: especially at the sub-regional level where cross-border interactions are often considered as activities taking place within common socio-cultural space.
- iii. African migration is largely unstructured in outlook and in practice: modern-day borders are rarely recognized within the confines of the continent.
- iv. African migration is largely driven by elusive expectations: unrealistic prospects of utopian settings at the projected

points of destinations; within and beyond the African continent.

- v. Though migration is central to existence, it is usually unproductive when approached from the ‘point of weakness’: for instance, the use of fake documentation, human trafficking, migrants’ smuggling, visa overstay *et cetera*, could put the migrants at a most disadvantageous stead at the points of destinations.
- vi. Stifled regular migration pathways will make irregular mobility patterns largely inevitable and attractive to mostly youthful population; for example, the projected \$15,000 visa bond by the Donald Trump Administration in USA (2025) will assuredly be counterproductive in mitigating irregular mobilities^{xviii}.

Japa in the Context of *Migralusion*

Japa, which is indicative of the intention or preference of mostly youthful Nigerians for long-term relocation from their country of origin to other countries, especially in the Global North. The extent of unreality that informs the practice or the culture of ‘Japa’ basically unfolds within the realm of ‘migralusion’. As such, ‘japa’ is deemed a strand or a reflection of ‘migralusion’. While ‘japa’ may not necessarily imply an entirely new phenomenon, for example the case with pre-modern migration for creation of new settlements and post-colonial migration for work, its subtle intents and eventual outcomes in present-day Nigeria calls for more robust contextualization. Indeed, such have been particularly unhelpful to the course of individual and group-level existential sustainability. For example, what would be the socio-psychological imports of the experiences of individuals who sold all of their belongings to make the move and yet unable to move? Or, who moved and gained economic advantage at points of destinations, but poorly integrated into the socio-cultural specificities of same host societies? To whose advantage or disadvantage are the professionals trained with Nigerian resources and ‘japa’ without any kind of restitution to the country? Perhaps, some forms of regulation may be desirable in this respect, at least, to give some respite to various institutions that

trained some of these japa-prone Nigerians, especially in terms of financial returns. As at 2025, it costs 46,700 pounds (that is, approximately N100,000,000) to be a registered first year international medical student in the UK (Brighton and Sussex Medical School, 2025), whereas same training is offered by OAU at nearly no costs and its products are taken away practically ‘free-of-charges’. It is high time that migration governance is re-interrogated in Nigeria^{xix}.

The Problem with Contemporary Migration in Nigeria

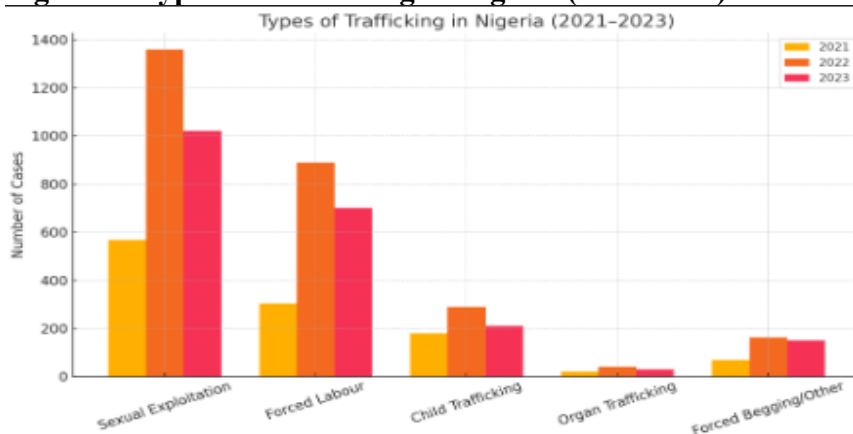
Contextually, the crises of migration in modern-day Nigeria have often been presented within the frameworks of both primary and secondary facilitators. While primary facilitators have been largely economic, for example soaring level of youth unemployment, secondary facilitators being ‘utopian’ connotation of existential reality in the countries of Europe and North America by the teeming young Nigerians, as other young Africans (Adebusuyi-Adeniran, *et al* 2025(ii)). Of all determinants that could be readily advanced as being responsible for persistent human mobilities initiated from Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan African countries, ineffective policies and regulations have remained pivotal. Therefore, unwholesome (irregular) migratory practices, as reflected in human trafficking and migrants’ smuggling, have continued to fester within the larger society. While both are criminal acts, human trafficking is basically driven by elements of force applied by the trafficking network and migrants’ smuggling is propelled purely by voluntary intents on the part of the prospective migrants.

While the interventions of such international agencies like UNDP, UNODC and International Organization for Migration (IOM) in enabling efficient migration management in Nigeria have been somewhat worthwhile, the major challenges have been in two folds: apparent institutionalized contradictions at the level of national policy advancement and implementation, and ‘utopian’ connotation of existential reality in the countries of Europe and North America by teeming young Africans, who have had no previous travel experiences to such places.

Trafficking-in-Persons (TIP) in Nigeria

There has been a high prevalence of human trafficking in Nigeria, notably coinciding with the economic downturn of the early 1980s. By the late 1990s, this modern-day slavery, undertaken in the guise of migration has assumed the center stage in national and international discourse. Its huge manifestation in the country has made Nigeria to be classified as a notable source, transit and destination country of the scourge. Women and children who are the most vulnerable groups are trafficked internally and externally for economic and sexual exploitation, such as prostitution, forced labor, domestic servitude, alms begging, drug trade, child labor, forced marriage, organ harvesting, and so forth. Internally, women and children are trafficked from rural communities to urban centers for exploitation.

Figure ii: Types of Trafficking in Nigeria (2021-2023)



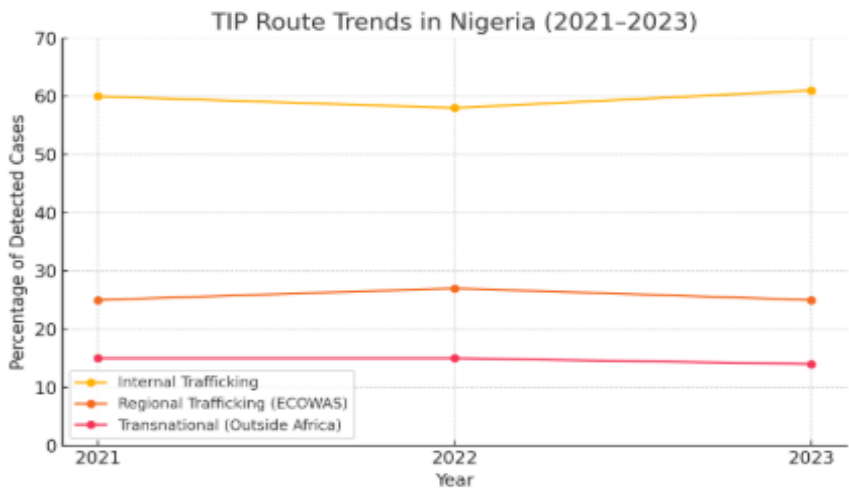
Source: Data derived from NAPTIP official case records, UNODC 2023 Global Report, IOM DTM Nigeria datasets, and U.S. Department of State TIP Reports (2021–2023)

Nigerian women, girls and boys are trafficked in large numbers to North Africa, Saudi Arabia and Europe mainly Italy, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Norway and in limited numbers to the United States and Asia for sexual exploitation and domestic servitude. Women, girls and boys are trafficked from neighboring countries like Chad, Niger Republic, Benin Republic, Togo and

Ghana to Nigeria for begging, prostitution, domestic servitude, armed conflict, and labor exploitation. It is estimated that about 750,000 to one million persons are trafficked annually in Nigeria and that over 75% of those trafficked are trafficked across the states, 23% are trafficked within states while 2% are trafficked outside the country (US Department of State, 2023 Trafficking-in-Persons Report, Nigeria)^{xx}.

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Nigeria, and traffickers exploit victims from Nigeria abroad. Traffickers exploit victims in sex trafficking, as well as in forced and bonded labor in street vending, domestic service, artisanal mining, stone quarrying, agriculture, textile manufacturing, begging, and in the tie-dye sector in the northwest and southwest of the country. Those most vulnerable to trafficking include people from rural communities, internally displaced persons (IDPs), irregular migrants, those working in the informal economy, and those with disabilities. Extreme poverty, lack of economic opportunity, corruption, insecurity throughout the country, as well as climate change-related pressure to migrate increase Nigerians' vulnerability to trafficking. Extreme flooding in the north and southeast has exacerbated already challenging conditions, placing residents at increased risk of trafficking. Highly-organized criminal groups, sometimes linked to Nigerian cult organizations or confraternities, are responsible for most sex trafficking to Europe. Criminal elements recruit foreigners for labor trafficking within the country. (US Department of State, 2023 Trafficking-in-Persons Report, Nigeria)^{xxi}.

Figure iii: Trafficking Route Trends in Nigeria



Source: Data derived from NAPTIP official case records, UNODC 2023 Global Report, IOM DTM Nigeria datasets, and U.S. Department of State TIP Reports (2021–2023).

As at 2024, there were approximately two million IDPs in the country and over 340,000 Nigerian refugees in other countries; many of these IDPs and refugees remain vulnerable to traffickers due to limited access to economic opportunities and formal justice systems. Violence, stemming from expanding terrorist threats exacerbated the vulnerability of many IDPs and limited the government’s ability to respond to the trafficking threat throughout much of the north. Reports indicate government officials, as well as security forces, and aid workers have committed sexual exploitation crimes – including sex trafficking – in government-run IDP camps, informal camps, and local communities, including around Maiduguri, the Borno State capital. Additionally, there were reports from previous studies indicating that traffickers exploited IDPs moving to cities such as Gombe and Kano and to neighboring countries such as Niger Republic for forced labor.

Authorities have identified Nigerian trafficking victims – often exploited by Nigerian traffickers – in countries in Africa, Asia,

Europe and the Middle East over time. Media and government officials have noted significant increase in trafficking to the UAE in recent past. Criminal groups and brothel owners exploit Nigerian women and girls in sex trafficking within Nigeria, in other West African countries and throughout Europe, including Austria, France, Italy, and Spain. Traffickers commonly send victims to Italy, Spain, and the UK for sex trafficking. As noted in the US Department of State, *Trafficking-in-Persons Report, Nigeria, 2023*), 80% of women in Spain's unlicensed brothels are victims of sex trafficking, with Nigerians forming a large percentage of that population. While some sex trafficking victims arrive in Europe believing they will be in commercial sex, traffickers coerce them to stay in commercial sex by altering working conditions and increasing victims' travel debts. Traffickers often threaten victims' families in Nigeria to maintain control; illicit recruiters generally target women and girls from impoverished families and require them to take a loyalty oath to their traffickers. Some victims' parents encourage them to obey their traffickers and endure exploitation to earn money.

An astonishing development in human trafficking trend in Nigeria is the case of 'baby factory', where girls and women are purposely recruited to bear pregnancies, whose babies are eventually sold like commodities – 'baby selling'. The TIP research which I led on behalf of the UN in the South-South region of Nigeria in 2022 was quite revealing. An entire family was in unison to sell one of its granddaughters to traffickers to fund the burial ceremony of her grandfather. So pathetic! But this is the daily reality of some people in the country.

Smuggling-of-Migrants (SOM) in Nigeria

Most Nigerians who are smuggled are men, though Nigerian women, girls, and boys are also smuggled, in smaller numbers. Smuggled Nigerians are usually 16-35 years old, though there is evidence of Nigerians as young as eight and as old as 63 being smuggled. The age and gender profiles of smuggled Nigerians do have implications for their experiences of smuggling, particularly aggravated smuggling offences and other abuses in the context of

smuggling. Although not a representative sample, among Nigerians surveyed in transit and destination countries in 2021, there were relatively higher numbers of people from the South-South region in proportion to the state populations, particularly Edo and Delta States, as well as Lagos State in the South West. Disproportionately higher numbers of Nigerians were also surveyed from the North East (especially Borno, Adamawa and Gombe), the North West (Sokoto), and the South East (Abia and Enugu). However, Nigerians surveyed originated from almost every state in the Federation (UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (SOM) in Nigeria, 2022)^{xxiii}.

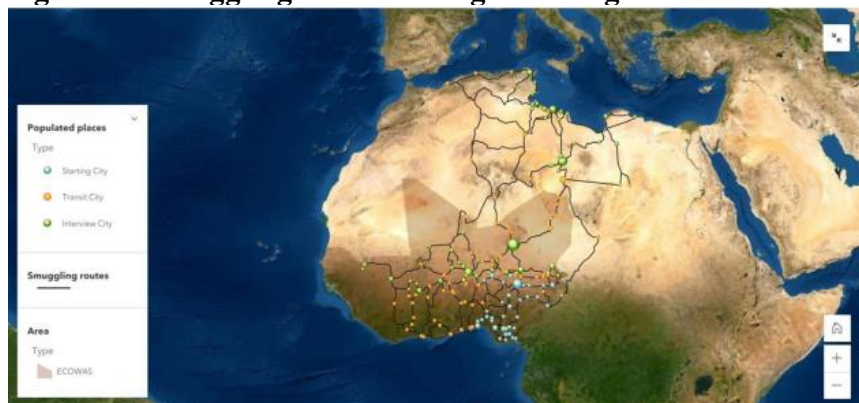
Drivers of Migrant Smuggling in Nigeria

Many Nigerians use migrants' smugglers because they are motivated to migrate and they do not have access to safe and legal migration alternatives or are not aware of those that are available. Of all Nigerians on the move surveyed for the UNODC SOM Observatory (2022), 75% stated that they had planned to use smugglers or travel facilitators when they were preparing for their journey, as compared to 21% who said they had not planned to do so^{xxiii}. 85% had in practice used at least one smuggler or facilitator for their journey. 30% of Nigerians surveyed did affirm that there was no alternative to being smuggled, in order to achieve their migration goals. Some of those surveyed (37%) considered other options before leaving Nigeria, including looking for a better job (72%), moving to a new city (internal migration) (60%), or starting a business (33%). About 18% of this group tried fleeing to a place of safety within the country (internal refuge) and 13% tried to migrate abroad regularly.

Using a smuggler is often perceived as cheaper and easier than independent irregular travel, particularly due to the incidence of bribery along the migratory route. Over one-third of Nigerians surveyed who had used a smuggler or facilitator did so because they thought it would be easier (36%) and one-quarter (25%) because they thought it would be cheaper than travelling independently. The presence of non-state armed actors outside of Nigeria, and especially on routes from Niger to Libya, demanding protection money from those who travel through the territories they control, or

claim to control, also necessitated the use of migrant smugglers. Most of the intending migrants in Nigeria do avoid regular routes through the north of the country to the borders with Niger Republic, due to security risks. Smugglers do not necessarily protect Nigerians from such risks, but the conditions of travel and abuses experienced along the way do not act as a deterrent in any manner.

Figure iv: Smuggling Routes of Nigerian Migrants



Source: UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants, 2022¹

Many Nigerians interviewed in 2019 and 2021 stated that they were aware of the risks and conditions – including women who were aware of the risks of sexual violence – but still decided to embark on a smuggling journey. Some returnee-Nigerian migrants were intending to try again. When asked whether they would have started the journey knowing what they did now, 62% of Nigerians surveyed in 2021 said yes, 23% said no and 15% were undecided. Similarly, 49% stated that they were very likely or likely to encourage others to migrate as they did, 20% were neutral, and 31% said they were unlikely or very unlikely to do so.

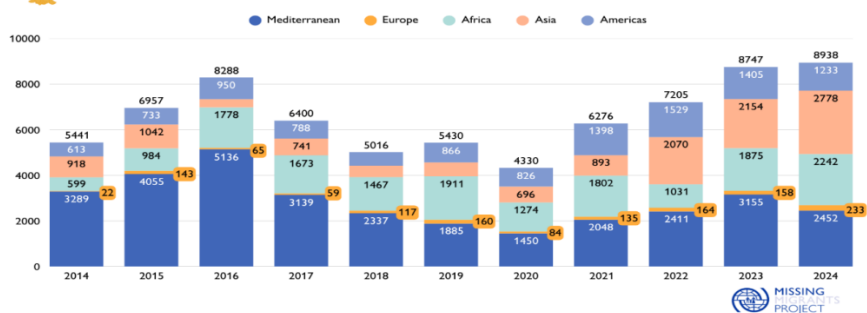
Actual Risks and Dangers

¹ UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants calculations based on surveys conducted during 2021 with Nigerians on the move in Burkina Faso (62), Libya (299), Mali (72), Niger (250) and Tunisia (63), in partnership with the Mixed Migration Centre.

According to data from IOM (2025), 2024 has remained the deadliest year on record for migrants across most regions in the world, including in Asia (2,778 people recorded dead), Africa (2,242) and Europe (233). While the total 2,242 deaths documented in the Mediterranean Sea in 2024 are not the largest annual total ever for African migrants, such huge number indicates the need for adequate search and rescue systems as well as the need for safe and regular migration routes as alternatives to this risky pattern^{xxiv}.

Figure v: Migrant Deaths by Region, 2014-2024

 **Migrant Deaths by Region, 2014 - 2024**



²Figure 12: Migrant Deaths by Region, 2014-2024

In spite of the fact that TIP and SOM are different in terms of procedures, most irregular migrations that commence as SOM; that is, as a voluntary act usually end as TIP, that is, entailing elements of force, particularly along the migratory routes and at the points of destinations. A common denominator of both is shared threat and inherent risk.

Media, Technology and Irregular Migration

A good number of human traffickers and migrants’ smugglers operating in Nigeria often provide credence to their nefarious

² International Office on Migration (IOM, 2025). “2024 is Deadliest Year on Record for Migrants.” International Migration Vol. 63(3), 21 March 2025

activities using the media. For example, most irregular migrants of Nigerian origin traced to Europe, Middle East and North Africa up to 2025, have been recruited via fake job vacancies and fake admissions in the countries of destinations. Aside from traditional media like TV and radio, traffickers have equally resorted to the use of online media, especially social networking platforms like Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, LinkedIn and Twitter in recent past (UNODC Compendium of Good Practices of State Taskforces in Combatting Trafficking-in-Persons in Nigeria, 2023)^{xxv}. With, increasing number of mostly Nigerian youths entering the web of irregular migration, the scourge has continued to bolster within and beyond the shores of the country. A good reference here is the case of recently rescued Nigerian women who were promised educational opportunities in Russia via a virtual media-driven ‘Alabuga Start’ program (2025). Instead, of education, they were engaged as producers of weapons at the Russian ‘Alabuga’ weapons manufacturing complex to support its ongoing war with Ukraine. As noted by one of the returnee-victims, the information I got before I went to Russia was that I was being offered the opportunity to study computer science. But it was actually to produce drones for use in Ukraine, which was even risky for experts.

Conflicts, Displacement and Irregular Migration

A major stimulator of irregular migrations in Nigeria has been persistency of human displacement as a result various conflicts across the country, particularly violent insurrection of the Boko Haram insurgents in the North-East. Estimates on the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) are often very unclear, and they tend to differ greatly in terms of sources (governments, international agencies or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)). This is partly due to the nature of IDP movements, in contrast to forced migration, habitually involve short distances, and are often, short term.

In addition, internal movements are less often recorded than international movements because they are conducted in the same country of subsistence. Of notable significance, however, is the fact

that large numbers of IDPs in parts of Nigeria do end up as irregular cross-border migrants, principally within the West African sub-region. The primary precursor to this development is intrinsic non-recognition of most of the international borders in Africa by Africans from both sides of the geo-political divide. Associated trans-border movements in Africa have often been deemed by the people as practices taking place within an undifferentiated cultural context. Hence, in most cases, differentiating IDPs from refugees in Africa has remained a Herculean task. In this light, irrespective of the nature of human displacement in Africa, its vestiges have continued to transcend established geo-political borders, within and beyond the continent.

Migration and Peace Studies

With both unbridled transnationalism and itinerant internal migration playing significant roles in unabated inter-group crises in parts of the country, it is expedient to situate related interventions within the context of peace studies. Peace studies, as an interdisciplinary field, does not only identify the causes of conflict and violence, it as well presents strategies for preventing, mitigating and resolving them in a sustainable manner. Without addressing inherent porosity of the Nigerian international borders with their attendant transnational organized criminality outlook, resolving such long-standing internal crises as obtainable in Benue and Plateau states will continue to be elusive. In fact, crises spurred by itinerant internal migration in form of ‘farmers-herders’ crisis in Nigeria are directly connected to unbridled transnational mobilities (Adebusuyi-Adeniran, 2020(ii))^{xxvi}. Peace Studies has to factor associated contents into its curricula and in its interventions for a more pragmatic outcome to be attained in the context of Nigeria.

Utopianism in Irregular Migration

Theoretical construction of ‘overseas’ as perfect societies, where a good life is easily accessible irrespective of an individual’s educational and/or economic attainment has been quite unhelpful to the path of positive migrations. In this regard, Europe and North America are assumed to be capable of offering the opposite of what

Africa presently offers; that is ‘socially constructed hopelessness’ as identifiable in worsening state of the human condition and routine disproportionate access to societal resources. Indeed, such overt assumption of ‘hell’ and ‘heaven’ on earth mostly among the youths in Africa has continually heightened extent of desperation and vulnerability to irregular migrations.

Migration and Corruption

Desperation enables the vulnerability of prospective Nigerian migrants to undue exploitation. Corruption and official complicity in irregular migrations remained significant concerns, inhibiting law enforcement action and perpetuating impunity. Corruption appears institutionalized, especially along the routes used for trafficking and smuggling of Nigerian migrants within and beyond the country. In a national investigation, which I coordinated on behalf of the UN in 2022, a significant proportion of Nigerian irregular migrants tracked down along the Nigerian-Nigerien corridor did affirm their preference for utilizing illegal routes for their journeys and their willingness to pay bribes to both government and non-state actors along their respective routes (UNODC SOM Observatory, 2022). It was unequivocally affirmed that relative to the official processes for migration, the non-official procedures are much more preferred because of their workability. This now bring to the fore issues that pertain to the need to make the regular migratory pathways less cumbersome for migrants, especially those with genuine mobility intents. This is the most tenable way to obliterate both official and non-official corruptive tendencies in the migratory process.

Migration Management Strategies: Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Reflections

In modern history, there has never been any time that global migration has been organized in such a way to reflect a win-win outcome, notably at the level of Global North-Global South interaction. In fact, while cheap migrant workers from the Global South are used to support household, economic, industrial and infrastructural development in the Global North, such class of migrants are routinely presented as burdens on the Global North at

will. Nevertheless, a replica of how migration should be better managed could be seen in the functioning of such regional economic community (REC) like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), established in 1975 as the West African regional integration agency, and in the operations of such global migration agency like the IOM, established in 1951 as the UN migration agency.

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

IOM is the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration and is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. IOM works with its partners in the international community to assist in meeting the growing operational challenges of migration, advance understanding of migration issues, encourage social and economic development through migration and uphold the well-being and human rights of migrants. More people are on the move today than at any other time in recorded history; 1 billion people – comprising a seventh of humanity (IOM, 2025)^{xxvii}. A variety of elements – not least the information and communications revolutions – contribute to the movement of people on such a large scale. The forces driving migration as a priority issue are: climate change, natural and manmade catastrophes, conflict, the demographic trends of an ageing industrialized population, an exponentially expanding jobless youth population in the developing world and widening North-South social and economic disparities.

Within the realm of irregular migration, IOM has been active in facilitating the repatriation of stranded Nigerian migrants back to the country, particularly from Libya in recent past. Aside from repatriation, it has equally been involved in rehabilitation and reintegration of such returnee-migrants. However, an issue of interest is the fact that all supports given to the returnees are used to facilitate their re-entry into the web of irregular migration from which they have been rescued. This is the dilemma! All of the push factors have remained unchanged at the point of departure.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

As a core mandate of UNODC, safer migration is prioritized as reflected in the Sustainable Development Goal 10. Hence, curbing all reflections of irregular migration, such as human trafficking and migrants' smuggling, is focused. With the mandate to make the world safer from drugs and crime, UNODC is committed to support Member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which draws together various elements into a comprehensive and forward-looking framework and explicitly recognizes the interrelationship between sustainable development on the one hand, and the fight against drugs and crime, including irregular migration, corruption and terrorism on the other^{xxviii}. The 2030 Agenda reflects a shift in global thinking on how cross-cutting issues – including the rule of law and fair, effective and humane justice systems, as well as health-oriented responses to crime - are enablers for development, and how their absence impedes development in countries of all income levels. Within the past three decades, UNODC has been supporting the Nigerian government to curb all crimes associated with migration within and beyond the shores of the country. It has established the SOM Observatory for NIS; facilitated the National Action Plan on Human Trafficking, and presently putting together the Nigerian TIP Country Report (2025).

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

The ECOWAS' Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence, and Establishment, adopted in 1979, has been the main tool to enable a borderless West African sub-region; aims to facilitate the free movement of people, goods, and services within the region. It outlines the rights of citizens to enter, reside, and establish businesses in other member states. The protocol is a key component of ECOWAS' regional integration efforts, fostering economic and social development. In comparison to other regional groupings in Africa, the ECOWAS' Protocol on free movement has been quite efficient. However, prioritization of national interests above regional interests, as noticeable in region-wide migration management and practices has been a major impediment.

Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS)

The NIS is the Nigerian government agency responsible for the country's border security and migration management. It was established by the Act of Parliament in 1963, which was replaced with the Immigration Act (2015) to equip the service with the legal instrument to combat the menace of SOM in Nigeria. The NIS was separated from the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in August 1958, known as of then as the Immigration Department, and headed by Chief Federal Immigration Officer. The initial Law regulating migration in Nigeria was the Immigration Act of 1963 which was amended in 2014 and again in 2015 (Immigration Act, 2015)^{xxix}. Upon restructuring in 1963, the NIS has been positioned to manage modern migration in the country according to global, regional, and sub-regional best practices. Unfortunately, the assigned tasks of the NIS and what it actually does have been irreconcilable over time and space. This is actually the foundation of contemporary crisis of migration in Nigeria. Indeed, the crisis has had its conceptual root in the naming and tasking of the NIS. While the tagging of the agency as the 'Immigration Department' under the NPF by the colonial governments did align with their interest in capturing 'in-flow' of migrants into the country as of then, and not in 'out-flow' of migrants (emigration), sustaining 'Immigration' in the agency's name post-colonial rule has been quite untenable. What NIS does is beyond mere capturing of data on in-flow of migrants into the country; that is, immigration. It equally handles emigration, border security, passport control (and issuance), intelligence, consular service, prosecution and so forth. The name – NIS – has not in any way reflected global best practices because it limitedly suggests only one of its multiple responsibilities - immigration. It does more than this. The time is so auspicious now to change the name to either of these: Nigerian Migration and Border Service (NMBS) or Nigeria Migration and Border Security (NMBS).

National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI)

NCFRMI is the Nigerian agency responsible for coordinating national action on the protection and assistance of internally

displaced persons (IDPs). It also manages the care and maintenance, resettlement, and rehabilitation of IDPs and other persons of concern. The NCFRMI was established by Decree 52 of 1989 and its mandate was expanded to include IDPs in 2002. NCFRMI is mandated to coordinate national action for the protection and assistance of refugees, asylum seekers, returnees, stateless persons, IDPs, and migrants^{xxx}. Though the agency is saddled with the implementation of the Nigerian Migration Policy (MPC), it seems it lacks adequate capacity to undertake. This has been noticeable in the inability of the MPC to make any meaningful impact on enhanced migration management since its establishment in 2015).

National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP)

NAPTIP is the Nigerian federal agency established in 2003 to combat human trafficking and related issues. NAPTIP works to prevent, suppress, and punish trafficking-in-persons (TIP), especially when women and children are involved, and also to protect the victims. NAPTIP's 10 zonal commands, including the Abuja headquarters, each operated at least one victim shelter, for a total of 13 shelters for trafficking victims. NAPTIP shelters offered six weeks of initial care, although officials often allowed victims to stay longer if needed. Access to the shelters was not based on victims' cooperation with law enforcement. The government provides access to legal, medical, and psychological services, as well as vocational training, financial empowerment, family reunification assistance, and business management skills to victims while in government shelters. NAPTIP partner with other national and international agencies involved in curtailing human trafficking in Nigeria and beyond.

The Nigerian Migration Policy (2015, Revised 2025)

With a comprehensive National Migration Policy (MPC) (2015, Revised 2025), which aims at managing migration flows, protecting migrants' rights, and harnessing the benefits of migration for national development, the country does not lack in relevant migration management initiative. The NMP promotes orderly

migration and protects Nigerian citizens abroad, while also focusing on managing foreign nationals in Nigeria. Key initiatives include an updated visa process, a crackdown on irregular migration starting August 2025, and a comprehensive framework for labor migration. Key components of the policy are labor migration, internal migration, migrants' reintegration and alignment with international frameworks like the UN's Global Compact^{xxxix}. Meanwhile, from outset, the policy is limited with saddling NCFRMI with its coordination. Statutorily, the NIS is responsible for totality of migration management in the country, while NCFRMI is largely limited to handling internal emergency dynamics in most cases. One will wonder how policy coordination will be productive with such arrangement. Urgent reform of NIS is necessary, especially in its naming and assigned tasks. Apparently, migration has been unable to serve the course of national development in the country due ineffective management strategies across time and space.

National Action Plan on Human Trafficking in Nigeria (NAP) (2022-2026)

Executing the National Action Plan (NAP) on Human Trafficking in Nigeria (2022-2026) funded by the Government of Switzerland marks a transition from policy formulation to active implementation. Spanning August, 2023 to July, 2025, the plan was an offshoot of an earlier intervention: 'Strengthening the policy framework and response to human trafficking in Nigeria' (January, 2020 – December, 2021). In its initial phase, this initiative facilitated the completion of a comprehensive baseline report in September, 2020, assessing the status of human trafficking and the national response strategies in Nigeria. The NAP (2022-2026) serves as a strategic national initiative to combat human trafficking in Nigeria, outlining clear objectives to guide stakeholders in aligning their efforts effectively. Its implementation is anticipated to garner significant compliance from state actors due to its critical importance^{xxxix}. The ongoing phase II of the initiative focuses on supporting the implementation of the NAP. UNODC's role involves

providing technical assistance to NAPTIP, aiming to achieve several objectives, including:

- Enhancing the existing coordination system established by the NAP through regular stakeholder consultative engagements and policy-level meetings.
- Standardizing data collection, monitoring, analysis, and reporting, which are related to the NAP through the establishment of a reporting framework and the inauguration of a national report hub.
- Strengthening the capacities of pertinent stakeholders to effectively implement the NAP through specialized capacity-building training programs.

However, just like the case with NMP, NAP's implementation has not factored into consideration the larger constitutional mandates of the NIS as the government agency responsible for both border security and migration management in the country. This is another albatross in the drive towards enablement of safer migration pathways in the country.

Evaluating the Problems and Prospects of the State and Non-State Interventions

It is instructive to note that non-arrival of any returnee-migrant (at least through official channels) in Nigeria in recent past has not in any way implied non-existence of trapped migrants of Nigerian origin in places like Libya or the end of ongoing migration crises. The Nigerian government seems to have lost interest in pursuing the resolution of the crises to a logical conclusion. More than any other consideration, the political survival of most influential political actors in Nigeria has assumed a more prominent position. In this regard, it is routine for any other government business to be suspended in the country until it is most auspicious for the political actors to intervene. However, the implications of such a lackluster approach to the crises emanating from processes of irregular migration from the country have remained massive. There is no doubt that most of the gains already achieved, especially through the frameworks of the EU-IOM joint initiative, are bound to be

reversed. Equally, the emergent IOM-AU-UN joint initiative, which is specifically planned to target Nigerian returnee-migrants from Libya, is destined to experience similar strains as the existing EU-IOM joint initiative because it has been projected to explore its frameworks.

While it would be correct to affirm that two interventionist programs are still running that address the challenges of irregular mobility in Nigeria, that is, the EU-IOM joint initiative and the Edo State government's Edo State Taskforce on Anti-Human Trafficking (ESTAT) plan, it would also be correct to assert that neither of these is presently achieving the ultimate target of reintegrating the returnee-migrants to, at least, their pre-migratory socio-economic conditions. In addition, the EU-IOM joint initiative has been designed to manage the repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of voluntary African returnee-migrants from parts of Europe to Nigeria (and other Sub-Saharan African countries) and not from Libya. Nevertheless, efforts are ongoing to adapt this initiative to address cases of African returnee-migrants from Libya through the frameworks of the IOM-AU-UN joint initiative. However, in measures of accomplishment, it is only the EU-IOM joint initiative that one could claim to have been relatively successful. The process of rehabilitating returnee-migrants within the frameworks of this initiative has been commendable. Aside from routine business skills being delivered to the returnees, the scheme has been able to provide some forms of logistic and financial assistance to them. The basic hindrance on the path of attaining full reintegration for the returnee-migrants has been the lackluster posturing of the national government toward its duties of providing logistic, financial and monitoring support to the rehabilitated returnees. By design, the work of the Nigerian government ought to have started from where that of IOM stops. While the IOM completely delivered on its expected assignments, the Nigerian government has never fulfilled its expected roles in any noticeable way. In this regard, successful reintegration of returnee-migrants has usually been unachievable, but rehabilitation has been commendable. On the other hand, unlike the EU-IOM joint initiative, the Edo State government's ESTAT program has been dragging its feet largely as a result of lack of

workable contextualization of the entire intervention. Hence, only its short-term goal of welcoming the returnee-migrants back to Nigeria, offer of skill acquisition training and payment of a stipend of 20,000 naira (less than 45 euros) for a maximum of 3 months to each of the returnees, which seems like partial rehabilitation, has been conducted. All other targets that would have ensured sustainable realization of both the medium-term and long-term goals of the plan have remained hanging. Aside from funding, current classification of issues related to international migrations on the 'exclusive legislative list' (which comprises functions of the national government) in Nigeria might eventually render the ESTAT intervention impotent. Despite the promises that the plan holds, the national government is highly unlikely to adapt the ESTAT frameworks at the national level. However, it should be noted that neither of these interventionist programs (EU-IOM joint initiative and the ESTAT plan) has included spaces for offering employment opportunities to the returnee-migrants, either short-term or long-term. This, of course, is the dilemma of the entire intervention. It seems that the returnee-migrants are being taken along a path that would ultimately make a return to the 'trafficking space' unavoidable. Various skills and business training aspects of these interventions should have ensured eventual progression or accessibility of employment opportunities in most cases. In terms of extension of existing programs, only the EU-IOM joint initiative offers a significant prospect as it is billed to be adapted to the maturing IOM-AU-UN joint initiative. However, the problem lies with attainment of actual reintegration, which the existing EU-IOM joint initiative has been unable to achieve due to the non-cooperative outlook of the national government. Of course, there is no doubt about its capability to attain expected rehabilitation targets for would-be returnee-migrants to Nigeria. With governments at both federal and state level in Nigeria being in perpetual politicking mode, the processes of rehabilitation and reintegration of returnee-migrants will continue to be of less significance insofar as political participation remains highly commercialized. Expectedly, such passive disposition is bound to complicate the current migration crises in the country, and in all of Africa. Most of the gains that have

been attained to date (notably, through the EU-IOM joint initiative and the ESTAT program) are projected to be steadily obliterated until the concerned bodies are willing to live up to their responsibilities in respect of mitigating the crises of irregular migrations emanating from the country.

The Politics of Global Migration

Both latent and manifest actions of most national governments in Africa have shown minimal interests in mitigating the tide of irregular migration of Africans, especially the youths, to other countries, particularly European countries. Besides associated opportunities offered by the ‘migration-development’ nexus, as measurable in terms of remittances accruable to respective countries from the diaspora communities, a recurrent latent function of irregular mobilities of Africans has been depressurization of African leaders of their responsibilities to their citizens. In other words, budding irregular migration pathways have often been explored by the political class in Africa, in a rather subtle way, to relieve themselves of the tasks of facilitating socio-economic opportunities for their teeming youthful population.

Though the urge for economic growth has remained an imperative for mostly developed countries of the West, yet the average population growth rate has been less than one. This is why the African ‘demographic dividend’ has been on high demand to support respective economic production, particularly in Europe and North America (Adebusuyi-Adeniran, 2020)^{xxxiii}. Interestingly, via inherent ‘master-servant’ immigration conditionalities and apparent non-receptive dispositions of the local population in most cases, both regular and irregular immigrants of African descents are projected as ‘societal burdens’ within the frameworks of socio-economic engagements in various countries in the West; such as Germany, France, UK, USA *et cetera*. Indeed, most of the gains attained on the economic plane by the migrants are routinely lost within the realm of social integration when vagaries of transnationalism present limitations to their emancipatory capabilities. It is a common knowledge that global powers,

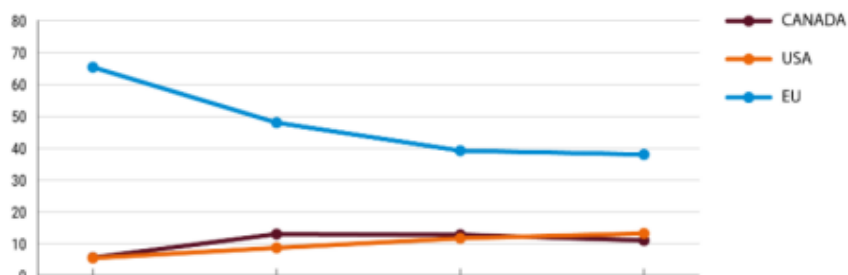
especially of the G-7 (Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, UK, and USA), have been capitalizing on apparent crises of governance in the Global South. To a considerable extent, situational peculiarity appears to be the most tenable context within which the problem of failed/failing governance structure has continued to be projected in contemporary Africa (Adebusuyi-Adeniran, 2025(i); 2025(ii)). However, in practical terms, overlapping private/public interests, corruption, inter-group conflicts, social injustice, increasing economic deprivation and apparent lack of development initiatives among the political class have remained the most common reflections of dysfunctional governance structure in Africa. All of these determinants have, in combination, been the springboards for unstructured patterns of human mobility within and beyond the shores of the continent.

Migration as a Weapon of Subjugation and Global Dominance

The subsisting trend of south-north migratory preference has continued to reflect a sort of neo-colonial scenario wherein the ‘colonizers’ do not have to come here to get the work done, but the would-be colonial subjects struggle all through to become subjugated. Unlike the case during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade when the colonialists and the slave buyers had to be responsible for all ingrained logistics, we now source for loans, sell land, sell houses and other belongings to ‘make the move’. Indeed, entire communities now do monetary contributions to facilitate the smuggling of members of their communities to Europe, Middle East and North America (UNODC SOM Observatory, 2022). Interestingly, most of the stimulators of irregular migrations from Africa, including Nigeria (such as intergroup conflict, political corruption, and poor economic policies), are traceable to the inordinate, exploitative interests of the ‘savior’ global powers in most cases^{xxxiv}.

Figure vi: Asylum Applications by Nigerians, 2017-2020 (EU, USA and Canada)

ASYLUM APPLICATIONS BY NIGERIANS, 2017-2020, IN EU, USA, AND CANADA



Source: UNODC³

As case reference, internal conflicts in Africa are usually over natural resources that never benefit the continent, but the West in most cases, and of recent, China. How can one explain chocolate being cheaper in France and the UK than in Ghana and Nigeria? Who grows cocoa? Who are the laborers in chocolate factories in Europe? Equally, overreliance on economic prescriptions of the Brent Wood Institutions has routinely enabled dis-incentivization of sustainable industrialization in the country, and indeed, worsened state of unemployment. There has been no other realm where this crisis has been depicted more than the increasing number of Nigerians seeking for asylum in Europe in particular. In all of the situations, the need for ‘economic migration’ has become inevitable, especially among the youths. It should be noted that ‘economic migration’ is usually detestable within the realm of international migration (specifically at the level asylum processing) because of its assumed parasitic tendency. To address this, the EU recently toyed with the idea of ‘Asylum Processing Centers’ for Africans in Africa, which clearly negates the notion of global best practices. Indeed, similar effort by the UK in collaboration with Rwanda recently failed. The deportation of non-African nationals to Eswatini by the USA (2025) has continued to generate resentment, particularly from within the country^{xxxv}.

³ UNODC Elaboration of UNHCR Refugee Statistics

With modern day utilization of migration as a global political/diplomatic tool of engagement, a more pragmatic approach to migration management has become expedient at national, sub-regional and regional level in Africa. Indeed, a rebranded NIS should be able to live up to the billing of making migration working for the good of all Nigerians.

Is Donald Trump Ultimately Correct?

It is indubitable that President Donald Trump of USA's approach to immigration matters is manifestly archaic and unprofessional. However, it is of my concise opinion that both latent and multiplier implications of his migration policies, predominantly as they pertain to Africa are capable of spurring positive developmental changes, if well deciphered by the political class in particular. Of course, recourse to usage of 'principle of reciprocity' as being applied by the Nigerian government in responding to the reduction of visitor's visa validity for Nigerian to maximum of 3-months is ill-advised. The USA does not necessarily have to lose in any significant way stopping all Nigerians from entering the country as of now. But Nigeria has everything to lose in this connection. Focusing on the messenger, and not the message, at this point will be counter-productive. A major consideration here is economic determinant, which is clearly in favor of the USA.

What is the latent message of President Trump to Nigerians, and to the rest of Africa? Go and sit down and make your countries 'great'? Don't we want to do this? We have to, because no one will ever do this for us. In spite of the fact that he presents his message derogatorily, we just have to see the positivity in it^{xxxvi}. We need to look the way of endogenous emancipatory initiative in order to drive economic growth and human development in a sustainable manner. The western world is aware of the unquenchable desire of the middle class and the upper class (including the political class) in Nigeria for emigration of their children (and other dependents) to the more settled societies of the West, particularly through frameworks of foreign studies; now attracting untoward attention of the far-right

parties. Year in, year out, this trend has persisted. Though individual-level progress seems manifested, the collective good has continued to steadily regress.

The multiplier message of President Trump is deducible from his insistence on the need for African professionals in his country to return-homeward to assist in developing their respective countries. Though the present state of infrastructure in Nigeria, for instance may actually be discouraging in this regard, yet the message is valid. We have seen Indian and Chinese diaspora doing exactly same and the stories in these countries have not remained what they used to be. Diaspora skill transfer may just be central to making Africa great ‘again’; stop unwholesome dream of transnationalism, and essentially mitigate the tide of irregular migrations to other parts of the world. In view of the foregoing, President Trump’s message might actually be timeous for us, not necessarily a negative one; so also, Kemi Badenoch’s.

Positivity of Global Migration

Either approached ‘regularly’ or ‘irregularly’, migration has the tendency to spur positive outcomes, for example through remittances and skill transfer to the initial points of departure. It is not all about negativities. With a total of \$20.98 billion remittance inflow into the Nigerian economy in 2024 (World Bank, 2024), the contributions of such to household livelihood and national development have been significant^{xxxvii}. This represents over 20% of total remittances to Africa within the same period; that is, \$95 billion.

Figure vii: Remittances by Nigerian Diasporas (2015-2024)
Nigeria's Remittances Between 2015 and 2024 (\$ billion)



Source: World Bank, 2024⁴

Nevertheless, the contributions of immigrants to the development of the host societies cannot, as well, be underplayed at any level; regional or transcontinental. It is a common knowledge that a country like the USA is well noted as country of immigrants due to the role ingrained migratory diversities played at its conception and in propelling its drive towards a superpower status.

Unlike what mobilities used to be in pre-colonial African societies, a good number of women has also become active players, especially in the aspect of informal cross-border trading within the West African sub-region. More than any other benefits, post-colonial economic dynamics have significantly ensured obliteration of gender gap in economic participation (Adebusuyi-Adeniran, 2015; 2025(ii)).

Migration as Industry: Exploring the Demographic Dividends
Migration is now beyond mere movement or survivalist relocation of abode. Unlike the largely unstructured migration patterns prevalent in Nigeria, as applicable in other parts of Africa, as of present, elsewhere, migration is managed as an industry and as essential resources directly contributing the gross national product and the larger national developmental drive. South Asian countries

⁴ World Bank Data on International Remittances; Nigeria, 2024

(such as Sri Lanka and India) and South-East Asian countries (such as Indonesia and the Philippines) have relatively transformed migration, at both cross-border and transnational levels. They have not left migration at just the level of individuals' remittances, especially to respective households. Migration has been made a win-win-win (WWW) scenario; that is, accruable benefits traversing migrants-government-destination trajectory. Citizens rarely migrate transnationally without the knowledge and active participation of the governments in these regions. The case with Sri Lanka is most interesting. The government manages transnational mobilities of its citizens as an integral component of its national development agenda. Indeed, some academic training and skill acquisition programs are directly connected to the specific needs of various migrants' receiving countries, especially in the Middle-East. Of recent, Sri Lankan youths were being encouraged to undertake nursing and auxiliary health training for eventual engagements in the Middle-Eastern countries of Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and so forth^{xxxviii}. Such initiative has been on the basis of demand from the countries of destinations. Recruitments are, therefore, undertaken in partnership with governments on both sides. This model offers protection and negotiated incomes for the migrants; it offers revenue for the home country and reliable source of needed manpower for the host country.

In essence, besides monetary and non-monetary remittances accruable as both short-term and long-term benefits of human mobilities, especially cross-border and transnational patterns, migration has actually portended industrial tendency. Just as goods and services are commodified, so also migration does possess transactional value. With its youthful population (of below 25 years) presently estimated at 60% of the total population of 1.55 billion and a projected rise of 180% by the turn of the century, Africa, Nigeria in particular, stands a good chance of becoming the 'powerhouse' of the new 'black gold'; that is, 'demographic dividend'. While Africa's young population is projected to twice that of the entire Europe by the turn of the century, Europe and Asia's young population are expected to decrease by 21% and 28% respectively

within the same period (Adebusuyi-Adeniran, 2020). This implies, in terms of manpower requirements, a case of deficit for both Asia and Europe, which would require supplementing roles of migrants from other global regions, such as Africa. How do we take advantage of this as a source of power and prosperity as a country and as a continent via efficient migratory pathways? This is the point at which a greater understanding of how the global migration system could work for all becomes essential. Hence, it is not about retrogressive migratory tendencies, but about how migration can work for the good of all. The discourse, therefore, may not necessarily be about stopping migration, but about how it can work for the good of all, which is actually the basis of international development philosophy.

‘Ile labo isimi oko’ in the Context of Changing Migratory Patterns

In spite of the fact that a good number of migrants of Nigerian origin often integrate into the economic frameworks of their hosts, they are never disconnected from the socio-cultural specificities of their home. This has been particularly applicable in the context of regional migration as exemplified by the Yoruba ethnic group, with whom the adage ‘ile labo isimi oko’ (home is the place of rest) kept resonating among its migrants. In my cross-border investigation on ‘Social Networking and Identity Construction among Ejigbo-Yoruba migrants in Cote d’Ivoire’ (Adebusuyi-Adeniran, 2010; 2012), it was noted that there was greater preference among the Ejigbo-Yoruba migrants to retire homewards by the age of 65 irrespective of the extent of their integration and attainment in Cote d’Ivoire. In fact, for those who died there, their remains are brought back to Nigeria as a matter of routine, irrespective of ingrained logistical challenges^{xxxix}.

Meanwhile, emerging migratory patterns in Nigeria, post-Covid-19 era, seem to be presenting a conceptual challenge in describing where is actually ‘home’ and where is indeed ‘away’. Unlike the case presented hitherto, Nigerians of age 65 and above now join the ‘japa’ pathway via a sort of ‘chain migration’; retiring overseas,

which seems like an aberration. That is, ‘Okò labo isimi ilé’ (‘overseas is the place of rest’) now. Notably, such changing migratory preferences cannot be dissociated from apparent stifling socio-economic subsistence in the country (Adebusuyi-Adeniran *et al*, 2025(ii)).

Is Envisaged Migration Explosion a Reality?

Although projected migration misfortune across all global regions in the course of the 21st century appears to be more of a realistic estimation. Yet, it seems to also possess the capability of making the global space a more equitable realm if its inherent strength can be aptly annexed. In a significant proportion of the countries in the global north, for example Austria, Italy, Germany, Sweden, and the UK, the native population has been shrinking for decades. Birth rates have fallen steadily to the extent that each native generation is about two-thirds the size of the last. Non-European immigrants, especially from Sub-Saharan Africa and other global regions, have rushed to claim a place in Europe. In Germany in particular, the 2015 pro-immigration policy of former German Chancellor, Angela Merkel has apparently infused German democracy with a current of hardline anti-immigration nationalism post her era. This appears to be the outset of the crises. As noted by Caldwell (2019), the population pressures emanating from the Middle-East in recent decades, already sufficient to drive the European political system into conflagrations, are going to pale beside those from Sub-Saharan Africa in decades to come^{x1}.

Nevertheless, in all of these processes, it is possible for migration to work for all. It is possible to have a global space with less drive for transnational mobility, especially regarding the irregular patterns and the south-north trend. It is possible to equilibrate the entire global space from the standpoints of both pro-procreation and anti-procreation regions. It is high time that migration is viewed more as a developmental variable, which works for all rather than as a ‘push and pull’ dichotomous undertaking that tends to polarize the globe and its people even further.

The Future of Migration in (and beyond) Africa

Inappropriate policy responses to the crises being spurred by mostly unstructured mobilities in Africa appear to be pointing to a future of migration marked by increasingly complex measures, within and beyond the continent. With a population change rate of 2.1% and crude death rate of 1.2%, demographic transition in Nigeria has continued to have strong repercussions for the age structure of its total population^{xli}. Budding birth rate and reducing mortality rate jointly cause rise in the number of very young individuals as subsets of the total population. Except deliberate efforts are made to reconcile forms of education and training being offered with relevant manpower needs; thereby facilitating the entry of youths into economically active life, the prevalent migration crises in Nigeria, and in other parts of Africa, are bound to worsen. While the active population has increased at a faster rate than the total population, the employed active population has decreased less rapidly, resulting in a deteriorated employment market situation. The observed high level in the rate of unemployment can be attributed mainly to the difficulties for first-job seekers in finding a job, rather than to lay-offs of employed workers.

Concluding Comments

It is interesting that as the rate of population growth in Africa is increasing, the rate of population growth in Europe, among other developed countries, has been decreasing. Instead of affirming that a ‘migration crisis’ is being spurred by the African continent, it is imperative for the entire global system to explore how related demographic dividends could work for all. For global regions where the birth rate has stalled, migrants are essential to sustain economic growth. Equally, for such migrant-producing regions where population growth rates have been steadily increasing, accruing remittances will be relevant in alleviating poverty at household level, and equally in enabling economic growth. As surmised by Adebusi-Adeniran (2009:3), transnational remittances to Nigeria have been quite useful in curtailing the trend of household poverty for the past two decades^{xlii}.

Migration, either regional or transregional, regular or irregular, could be made to work across the board. Rather than being perceived as a scourge to be stopped at all costs, the crucial issue is how to better manage the ingrained processes that should be a priority for governments and institutions at various levels. Instead of being adjudged as a burden, migrants should be seen and evaluated as ‘agents of development’ at both points of departure and arrival.

Professional Accomplishments

Research Contributions

My tenacious focus on projecting the practice of human development as a veritable platform for spreading emancipative initiatives at both regional and cross-continental levels has continued to enhance my visibility within the limits of associated academic, research and policy engagements. Routine application of both explanatory and exploratory designs in most of my field investigations and analyses has facilitated the emergence of self-developed ‘representational data collection strategy’ (RDCS) framework. Impliedly, this self-developed mixed-method procedure has largely facilitated my presence at numerous academic, research and policy congregations in several countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America where I have made more than 120 research presentations within the past two decades.

Between 2005 and 2024, I have been privileged to be a recipient of several academic and research awards and recognitions (in forms of scholarships, fellowships, awards, study, research and travel grants) from notable academic and research-based institutions across the world. The granting institutions include University of Oxford, United Kingdom, Open University, United Kingdom, University of Pittsburgh, United States, Uppsala University, Sweden, University of Oldenburg, Germany, International Science Council (ISC), France, International Institute of Social History (IISH), The Netherlands, South-South Exchange Program for History on Development (SEPHIS), The Netherlands, South African Institute for International Affairs (SAIIA), South Africa, Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA),

Senegal, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Nigeria, Center for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), Canada, International Sociological Association (ISA), Spain, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta (CSSSC), India, Atlas Economic Research Foundation (Atlas Network), United States, Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, Greece, The United Nations, among others.

The impact of my research outputs has also facilitated my appointment as a Visiting Research Scholar at York University, Canada (2011-Date), Visiting Researcher at University of Porto (2025), External Expert at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), Norway (2017); as a Regional Advisor for Corporate Risk and Crisis Management (CRCM), Germany (2017), as a National Research Consultant with the United National Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2019) and as a Consultant/Senior Research Fellow at the Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Commission (ICPC)/Anti-Corruption Academy of Nigeria (ACAN), Nigeria (2020). The discernibility of my research outputs via the platforms of major global publishers has enabled my appointment to the editorial advisory board of Cambridge Scholars Publishing, United Kingdom, Working USA: Journal of Labor and Society (Wiley-Blackwell), United States, and African Review of Migration and Environment (ARME), Cote d'Ivoire.

Theoretical Contributions

My research on the migratory dynamics of the Ejigbo-Yoruba migrants within the West African sub-region for nearly two decades has facilitated the development of '**transnational simultaneity**' as a theoretical basis for understanding the implication of dual identity cleavage for different migrants' groups within the West African sub-region. Hitherto, various theoretical assumptions and field investigations have attempted to explain the phenomena of trans-border relation and identity construction as separate concerns. However, none has sought to establish a formidable relationship between them, especially at regional level, prior to the development of '**transnational simultaneity**' as a veritable framework for

interpreting associated concurrent attachment to two nations by a migrants' group. This theoretical contribution surmises that the implication of related cross-border processes is the production of a people engaged in a kind of 'transnational subsistence dualism' (that is, transnational simultaneity) wherein border, distance, language, government and associated variables are no longer barriers to interpersonal and intergroup relations across the borders.

Contributions to the University

- As the Head of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria from 2022 to 2025, I simultaneously oversaw nurturing of 4 new programs of studies in Communication and Media Studies (Mass Communication, Broadcast Journalism, Film Production, Information Science and Media Studies) to maturity.
- Under my watch, these programs of studies, in combination, did assume the status of one of the most sought after and highest admitting in the University as at 2023/2024 academic session, receiving nearly 70% of all newly admitted students in the entire Faculty of Social Sciences (that is, within 2 academic sessions of establishment).
- I convened the 1st African International Conference on Transnational Organized Crimes (AICTOC) in the University in June, 2023 with participants from Africa, Europe, North and South America.
- Indeed, the establishment of a Passport Processing Office by the NIS at the University was hugely inspired by the AICTOC in 2023. Many thanks to the VC – Prof. Bamire – for seeing this through.
- **SOAS Partnership:** During my tenure as the Head, I was able to facilitate a research and exchange partnership with the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, United Kingdom. The partnership focuses solely on anthropological contents within the frameworks of SOAS' GLOCAL AFALA initiative.

- **Strategic Partnership with MICCOM Cable:** I was able to facilitate a multi-million, multi-year strategic partnership with MICCOM Cable Ltd on behalf of the University in February, 2025. Though this initiative is domiciled in the Faculty of Technology, its eventual benefits will traverse all Faculties and Units in the University. Big appreciation to the VC – Prof. Bamire – for seeing this through.
- **Chair**, Scientific Committee, Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies(CGSPS) Biennial Conference, 2019
- **Chair**, Faculty of Social Sciences Fundraising Committee
- **Student Adviser**, Undergraduate Programs
- **Coordinator**, Departmental Postgraduate Studies Committee
- **Coordinator**, Master in Industrial and Labor Relations (MILR)
- **Coordinator**, Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work (PGDSW)

Contributions to National Development

- **Chair**, National Technical Committee (NTC), Nigeria's Country Report on Trafficking-in-Persons, United Nations (UN)/Federal Government of Nigeria, 2025
- **Member/Consultant**, National Technical/Steering Committee (NT/SC), 2nd Corruption Survey in Nigeria, United Nations (UN)/Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), 2019
- **Member/Consultant**, National Technical/Steering Committee (NT/SC), 3rd Corruption Survey in Nigeria, United Nations (UN)/Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), 2024
- **Member/Consultant**, National Technical Committee (NTC), Nigeria's Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants (SOM), United Nations (UN)/Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), 2022
- **Member/Consultant**, National Technical Committee (NTC), Compendium of Good Practices of States Taskforces in Combating Trafficking-in-Persons in Nigeria, United

- Nations (UN)/National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), 2022
- **National Research Consultant**, Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment-Nigeria (TOCTA-Nigeria), United Nations (UN)/National Institute for Security Studies (NISS), 2021
 - **Member/Senior Research Consultant**, 1st Nigeria Corruption Index (NCI) Survey, Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC)/Anti-Corruption Academy of Nigeria (ACAN)/Department for International Development (DFID), 2020
 - **Member/National Research Consultant**, National Steering Committee, Gender and Corruption Survey in Nigeria, United Nations (UN)/National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2020
 - **Project Lead**, Quality Assurance Monitoring (QAM), 2nd Corruption Survey in Nigeria, 2nd Corruption Survey in Nigeria, United Nations (UN)/Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), 2019
 - **Field Coordinator**, World Bank/Nigeria Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Program (SURE-P), 2013

Contributions to International Development

- **Chief of Policy**, Society for Peace Studies and Practice (SPSP), 2025
- **Nigerian Delegate**, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Project on Gender and Trade, Abuja, 2024
- **Nigerian Delegate**, Conference of Parties Meeting for the adoption of The United Nations (UN) Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)'s Smuggling of Migrants Protocol, Austria, October, 2023
- **Nigerian Delegate**, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Global Research Meeting, Austria, October, 2023

- **Rapporteur**, United Nations (UN) 75 Dialogue (UN75) on Conflict and Violence, 2020
- **Nigerian Delegate**, International Science Council (ISC) Meeting on Security and Equality for Sustainable Future, Japan, 2018
- **External Expert**, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), Norway, 2015-Date
- **Reader**, International Research Exchanges Board (IREX) Reading Committee Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, United States, 2013-Date
- **Scientific Facilitator**, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Meeting on Climate Change and Human Development, Benin Republic, 2010
- **Scientific Facilitator**, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Meeting on Regional Development in West Africa, 2010
- **Nigerian Delegate**, Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), Greece, 2009

Publications, Presentations and Publishing

- I have published over 120 peer-reviewed journal articles, books, book chapters, book reviews and policy briefs with specific focus on dynamics of African migrations within the global contexts. My publishers include Palgrave Macmillan, Springer, Wiley-Blackwell, Sage Publications, Routledge, Taylor and Francis, Indiana University Press, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Policy Press, Greenwood Press amongst other leading global publishers.
- I have made more than 125 research and policy presentations at distinguished academic and policy fora (conferences, workshops, symposiums, seminars and trainings) in more than 60 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America between 2005 and 2025.
- I have served as an editor for Wiley-Blackwell in 2012
- I have been an author for Palgrave Macmillan since 2012
- I have been an author, editor and research reviewer for CODESRIA since 2012

- For more than a decade, I have been functioning as a reviewer for Critical Sociology (Sage), International Migration (Wiley), Evaluation Review (Sage), The Oriental Anthropologist (Sage), Gender and Society (Sage), Journal of International Migration and Integration (Springer), Canadian Journal of African Studies (Routledge), Ethnic and Racial Studies (Taylor and Francis), African Identities (Taylor and Francis), Journal of Borderlands Studies (Taylor and Francis), Africa Today (Indiana University Press), The Journal of Modern African Studies (Cambridge University Press), Environmental Justice (University of Illinois), International Journal of Cyber Criminology, East Asian Integration Studies, and lately *Africana Studia* (University of Porto).

Contributions to Global Development of Postgraduate Studies

- I have successfully supervised and co-supervised more than 30 MSc and PhD theses and dissertations within and beyond OAU.
- I have served as external examiner for more than 70 PhD theses and dissertations within and beyond the shores of Nigeria.
- I have been a postgraduate research arbitrator at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa since 2020
- I am a research reviewer for the National Research Foundation (NRF), South Africa.
- I am as a postgraduate research reviewer with the National Research University, Russia.
- At OAU, virtual recruitment of postgraduate students was introduced in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology during my tenure as the Head (2022-2025).

Professorial Promotion Reviews

- Beside routine internal professorial assessments within the university, I have successfully undertaken 18 professorial reviews in other universities within and beyond Nigeria, such as University of Ibadan, University of Lagos, Lagos State University, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, and University of Pretoria

Professional Association Membership

- i. Member, International Sociological Association (ISA), Spain
- ii. Member, Canadian Association on Gerontology (CAG), Canada
- iii. Member, Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), Senegal
- iv. Member, American Sociological Association (ASA), USA
- v. Member, Utopian Studies Society (USS), Scotland
- vi. Member, Canadian Association of African Studies (CAAS), Canada
- vii. Research Coordinator, Migration and Development in Africa Monitors (MDAM), Nigeria
- viii. Member, International Network on Migration and Development (INMD), Mexico
- ix. Member, Chinese-in-Africa/Africans-in-China Network, USA
- x. Member, Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa (ASMEA), USA
- xi. Member, International Science Council (ICSU), France
- xii. Member, Coalition for Equitable Land Distribution in Africa (CELADA), Canada
- xiii. Member, Global Land Program (GLP), Germany
- xiv. Fellow, Society for Peace Studies and Practice (SPSP), Nigeria
- xv. Member, Institute of Chartered Mediators and Conciliators (ICMC), Nigeria



Burkina Faso, 2010, with Prof. Olutayo, my PhD Supervisor at an ECOWAS Meeting



Austria, 2023, at the UNODC Research Network Meeting



OAU, AICTOC, 2023, (from left) with Dr. Gerelene Jagganath, Prof. M.A.O. Aluko, Ms. Fola Adesanmi, Prof. Shanta Singh, DVC Admin-Prof. Yomi Daramola, VC-Prof. Simeon Bamire, Comptroller General, Nigerian Immigration Service-Mrs. Kemi Namdas and DVC-Academics-Prof. Adebola Babalola



Interview Session at AICTOC 2023



PhD Graduation Day at University of Ibadan, 2012



Morocco, 2012 with Late. Prof. Ademola Babalola



Canada, 2012, with Colleagues at York University, Toronto

Recommendations

1. Urgent need to rebrand the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) to reflect its true structure and responsibilities

It should be noted that the pre-1958 operations of the ‘Immigration Department’ as an integral unit of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) focused largely on in-ward management of individuals into the country since out-ward pattern was never of particular interest because it was limited. NIS does more than this as of present. In essence, ‘immigration’ data management represents just an aspect of what NIS does. Border security, emigration, policy projection and implementation, advisory service, consular service and passport control (not necessarily issuance) are among its other statutory responsibilities. To this extent, among the urgent reforms needed to enhance the functionality of the NIS as the flagship body for border security and migration management in the country, its name has to be restructured in line with its constitutionally assigned tasks. The following names are recommended for consideration: Nigerian Migration and Border Service (NMBS) or Nigeria Migration and Border Security (NMBS). This is apparently extant, and of course,

the starting point of the drive towards efficient migration system in the country.

2. Mainstreaming Migration-related Agencies into the NIS Operations

A major challenge on the path of efficient and safe migration management in Nigeria has been undue proliferation of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) whose functions are not only overlapping, but often time, unexplainable. The responsibilities of NCFRMI, for example, should be restructured for the work of a Unit/Department of Internal Migration under the umbrella of NIS. It will just require further strengthening of NIS, in terms of capacity building, equipment and funding for optimal performance to be enabled.

3. Cross-border and Transnational Migration should be transformed into an Industry

With the capacity of earnings from both cross-border and transnational migrations to contribute impactfully to the gross national income (GNI)/gross domestic product (GDP) of the countries of low-income/middle-income countries, essential industry-level regulations are essential in migration management. Countries like Sri Lanka and the Philippines have successfully ingrained management of emigration of its citizens into its development plans. In 2022 for example, migrants' remittances accounted for 15% of the GDP of 25 countries according to the World Economic Forum (WEF), (2023). Ostensibly, a significant proportion of these countries are of South-Asian and South-East Asian regions. In this connect, migration will always imply a win-win-win scenario for all involved – migrants, government and destination countries.

4. Mitigating Spate of Economic Migration

There is no country that takes the challenge of economic migration with levity owing largely to its long-term negative planning and developmental outcomes. Inadequate socio-economic opportunities often spur the challenge of unstructured migration, which routinely

terminates as economic migration at the various points of destinations; even when approached through the education pathway, visitor's visa pathway or asylum pathway. What net migration rate (that is, number of immigrants minus (–) number of emigrants per year/total population) indicates determines extent of receptiveness of immigrants of all categories within the host societies. Why do you think that different countries (such as Canada, UK and the United Arab Emirates), keep changing their skilled immigrant work visa rules for Nigerians in particular? We over-supply, even skilled labors, though they are not enough back home, but they are never given opportunities. Why recent 'Nigerians must go' campaign in Ghana? Why intermittent 'xenophobic' attacks on Nigerian immigrants in South Africa? Because of economic considerations. Policies that will encourage Nigerians to realize their dreams in the country are imperative at this point. This is where the experts are needed.

5. Establishment of Migration Clinics should be prioritized

Stemming the tide of mostly irregular movements of migrants to, through and from Nigeria, it is high time a kind of migration clinic is facilitated across all of the 774 local government areas (LGAs) of the country with basic responsibilities of enlightening, counselling and monitoring prospective migrants, the youths in particular. This should be operationalized at the highest policy level and domesticated as appropriate. This has become more expedient for the fact that recruitments for irregular mobilities, which are routinely the springboards of 'migradusion', are undertaken at rural and local communities. Such migration clinic should be made accessible, free and friendly business-wise for all age and gender categories.

Future Research Plans

1. Center for Migration, Diaspora and Humanitarian Studies (CMDHS)

I plan to ensure that this University become the fulcrum for contemporary center for migration research and policy analysis in

Africa. This will be implemented via a ‘Center for Migration, Diaspora and Humanitarian Studies’ (CMDHS) whose proposal is presently undergoing review at relevant organs of the University. Amongst the projected partners of the Center are IOM, NIS, UNODC, Nigerian Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM) and the University of Porto, Portugal. I count on the usual support of the University authorities, especially our amiable VC and the larger University Council in seeing this into timeous fruition. The multiplier outcomes of such Center, in measures of visibility, partnership, revenue generation, policy impacts and good governance, are innumerable.

2. Observatory on Migration in Nigeria

It is of my concise intention to drive the establishment of the 1st Institution-based ‘Observatory on Migration’ in Nigeria in the University with basic goals of tracking imperative changes in human migratory trends and patterns within and beyond Nigeria. The Observatory will be largely virtual-based, though physical resources will serve as its compliments. Real time, up-to-date primary and secondary quantitative and qualitative data will be made available for policy and research purposes. It is planned to serve as the leading ‘open repository’ of migration-related contents on Nigeria in particular, and on Africa and the larger global space in general. With expanding crisis of displacement in the country, largely spurred by climate change and intergroup conflicts, a peace research content will be linked to the Observatory. As usual, I count on the support of the University authorities, especially the University Council and our amiable VC in seeing this through.

Appreciation and Acknowledgments

I am here today just because of the goodness of God Almighty; to whom I return all glory and adoration. I wonder all the time why the Lord so much love me despite my imperfections. He has always been faithful even when I am not. From total obscurity, He gave me absolute prominence; and brought me before you today (Proverbs 22:29).

The impacts of my late parents: Pa Ogedengbe Adeniran and Princess Ade pate-Ibi Agbeke Adeniran remain indelible. You were, indeed, the most significant socializers. You were always there for me. In what way can I ever quantify the love of ‘Momoni’. She never had the opportunity of formal education, but always returned from the market with my newspapers. You gave me the best of everything in this life. My dearest wife, Tolulope and our children: Othniel, Ehud, Hadassah and Zuriel, you have been potent pillars of supports for me. Thank you for being my first line of editors of this Inaugural Lecture.

Big thanks to my teachers and colleagues at St. John’s School ‘A’, Iloro, Ilesa (1979-1984), C.A.C. Primary School ‘A’, Okesa, Ilesa (1984-1985), Ilesa Grammar School, Ilesa (1985-1991), University of Ilorin, Ilorin (1992-1994), Ondo State University, Ado-Ekiti (1995-1999), University of Lagos, Lagos (2004-2007), University of Ibadan, Ibadan (2008-2012), York University, Toronto, Canada (2011-Date), University of Oxford, Oxford, UK (2014), Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden (2015) and University of Porto, Portugal (2025-Date). To my Pastor at the All Souls Chapel, OAU, Revd. Dr. Segun Babalola and his family, I say thank for your supports all the time. So also, to all members of the All Souls Chapel, OAU; more notably distinguished members of the Men Christian Fellowship (MCF) I say a big thank you.

Much appreciations to my B.Sc. research supervisor – Prof. Olu-Olu Olufayo, my M.Sc. research supervisor – Dr. Michael Ekiran, Departmental Secretary at Unilag Sociology – Mrs. Janet Adegboyega, Prof. Omololu Soyombo, Prof. Iyiola Oni, Prof. Demola Omojola, and Prof. Franca Atoh. Of special mentioning is the pivotal role played by both Prof. Muiyiwa Omobowale and Prof. Lanre Olutayo – my mentors. Indeed, the information that brought me to OAU was provided to me by Prof. Omobowale while we were both at Unilag. He did not stop there. He gave me the money to come to Ife to submit my application for employment (about N10,000 in 2007). He connected me with my eventual PhD supervisor; though he equally acted as my *de facto* supervisor all through my stay at UI.

He did most of the literature search for me free of charges; he taught me how to publish. What a great benefactor! Prof. Olutayo was/is more than a PhD supervisor; more than a father. He took my PhD research as his personal project. He used to carry my documents around for signature, on my behalf, to give me greater concentration on my job at OAU. His doggedness ensured a record completion of my PhD studies (two and half years). He facilitated my first major research breakthrough (at regional level) with our trip to Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, where I presented my PhD work at an ECOWAS/EU meeting on Regional Development in October, 2010. The quality of supervision that I received from both Prof. Olutayo and Prof. Omobowale was responsible for the grant of CAD\$10,000, which I received from the Center for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), Waterloo, Canada for the completion of my PhD thesis at York University, Toronto, Canada from 2011 to 2012 (my 1st real international research breakthrough). In fact, I have been a Visiting Research Scholar at York ever since. Eventually, I received more than 60 international recognitions courtesy of my doctoral journey alone!

To our amiable Vice Chancellor, Prof. Simeon Bamire, I am most grateful for your mentorship and kindness towards me all the time. The Good Lord shall continue to be with you sir. To the immediate past Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academics, Prof. Olubola Babalola and the immediate past Deputy Vice Chancellor, Administration, Prof. Yomi Daramola, I remain eternally grateful. You were, indeed, God sent!

From Nigeria to Canada, I remain eternally grateful to the trio of Emeritus Prof. Pablo Idahosa, Emeritus Prof. Paul Lovejoy and Emeritus Prof. Alan Simmons – all of York University. They never met me physically, yet they worked assiduously to eventually make me a part of this great university via my doctoral, postdoctoral and professorial research expeditions. Emeritus Prof. Idahosa is always available to help me. He takes me out for launch; he buys textbooks for me, he accommodates me, he advises me; and more significantly, he connects me. Everything I needed and still needing, he has always

been glad to give me. You were, and still, more than a teacher and a supervisor. What a great mentor I have in you, sir! Emeritus Prof. Lovejoy, words cannot be sufficient to express my gratitude to you. You were more than a teacher and a supervisor. You brought me to your private residence from my rented apartment at York Village to live with you. My sister came visiting from Ireland, you also accommodated her. You bought my first ‘external drive’ for me. You, even offered me a job at the completion of my studies in 2012 in Canada! Your footprints on my career trajectory remain indelible. To my amiable research partner – Prof. Shanta Baglobind Singh (University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa) – I remain indebted to you for your love and kindness since we met in Uppsala, Sweden in 2015. Thanks for adding glamour to AICTOC held at OAU in 2023 with Dr. Gerelene Jagganath. Your presence at OAU was, indeed, treasured. To Prof. Kabran Arisitide Djane, my Ivorian research partner, your cooperation since we jointly won the CODESRIA Comparative Research Network (CRN) Grant of US\$25,000 in 2012 is much valued.

From OAU to the UN and the State House, I express my profound gratitude to Elisabeth Bayer, Oliver Stope, Cheikh Toure, Princess Aruoriwoh-Esmer, Danjuma Mshella, Queen Kanu, Abimbola Adewumi, Aishat Braimah, Margaret Eheli, and Joshua Yinagba, all of UNODC for the strategic roles you played in my coming and stay in the UN system. Many thanks to Prince Adeyemi Adeniran (Statistician-General of the Federation) and Prof. Sola Akinrinade for facilitating my engagement with The British Council and the ICPC after our meeting at the Presidential Villa, Abuja in December, 2019. Big thanks to the late Prof. Ademola Babalola who was the Head of the Department when I was employed in September, 2007 as a Graduate Assistant. He insisted that ‘whoever is qualified will be employed, even if he is from Sokoto’. He lived and died for objectivity! The kindness of both Mrs. Modupe Adebajo and Mrs. Funke Adagunodo to me remain indelible. Much appreciation to Prof. M.A.O. Aluko for his fatherly role ever since I joined the University. You are much appreciated sir. Thanks to Prof. Joseph Fabayo, Prof. Supo Ogunjuyigbe, Prof. Philip Olomola, Prof.

Theophilus Odekunle, Prof. Aderemi Adediji, Prof. Toba Elegbeleye, Dr. Sikiru Adedokun, Prof. James Ayodele, Prof. Lanre Ikuteyijo, Dr. Ijeoma Kowe (my first PhD product), Mr. Nuraini Yusuf (my current PhD student) and Mr. Damilare Agbabiaka (my current MSc student). Much appreciation to Mrs. Elizabeth Ayanbimpe, Mrs. Abosede Olashege and Mrs. Iyabo Ojo (non-academic staff) at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

May I also use this opportunity to thank the team of medical experts that attended to me during the surgeries I had at the Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital Complex (OAUTHC), Ile-Ife in 2022: Dr. Oluseye Okunola, Prof. Alatise, Prof. Adewale Adisa, Dr. Joseph Olanrewaju, Prof. Salako, Dr. Wuraola and others. I remain eternally grateful for your love, kindness and unparalleled professionalism. You demonstrated hope for this country. In spite of obvious operational encumbrances with which you work, you remain resolute in giving hope to the hopeless. God will continue to bless you all!

Big appreciation to my beautiful sisters: Mrs. Eunice Oladunni Jegede, Ms. Arinola Janet Fapounda, Mrs. Aderonke Adeniran-Obembe, Mrs. Adekemi Akintunde, Mrs. Adenike Olowoyo, Mrs. Folasade Abiodun and Ms. Sola Jegede, for always being there for me. I also appreciate my brothers: late Mr. Muiyiwa Fagbamila, Mr. Timothy Adeniran, Mr. Debo Fagbamila, Mr. Akinwumi Fagbamila, Dr. Olumide Fagbamila, Mr. Seyi Jegede and Mr. Dotun Afolabi for all of the roles you played in getting me this far. Thanks to Prince Adeniran Aluko (Junior), Asipa Ayodeji Ogundana, Mrs. Fola Adesanmi, Mr. Wale Olaoeye and Mr. Ayo Olaoeye for the great reception given to me in the UK when I visited in February/March, 2025. To my all-time able Personal Assistant, Mr. Taiwo Akande, I really appreciate your dedication and utmost reliability.

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