

International Migration & Security Concerns

The latter part of this year has been saddled with substantial political debate on migration and border management. This comes on the heels of the recent arrest of an Austrian Citizen of Ghanaian descent, Naa Ayele Ametepe (with aliases) at the Heathrow Airport, having embarked on her journey from Accra. These circumstances create a need and a valuable opportunity to examine how transnational migration management strategies relate to border security and immigration reform, and how transnational security concerns segue into national development policies. This is because despite migration being an old phenomenon yet it is fraught with ever growing suspicions.

The 18th December has been set aside as a global migration day. The day aims at acknowledging the important role of migration as the fulcrum around which the convergence of the global community is being made possible. In effect, the centrality of the diversity of the global community and the significance of the need for gaining a cosmopolitan outlook to be guaranteed a stake as a global citizen has been advanced largely due to the melting pot paradigm, inspired to a greater extent by international migration.

Transnational migration has thus bridged the gap amongst the varieties of cultures on the global scene, while leaving in its wake populist conceptions in receiving countries for which right-wing politicians have profited, ascribing to migrants the responsibility – directly or indirectly – for unemployment, security concerns or a lack of social cohesion, among others (IOM, 2011).

In developed countries, for instance, perceptions that international migration and migrant communities are more or less substantial threats to the security situation of the recipient countries are prevalent. The recent xenophobic attacks on African immigrants in South Africa with the potential for intra-societal violence readily come to mind. In Ghana and on the broader Africa continent the brouhaha of Chinese immigrants breaking the frontiers of

domestic economic activities resulted in the deportation of thousands of Chinese from Ghana.

Thus, despite the remnants of the globalized world including demands for the circulation of investment capital and products, the accompanying flow of human beings has been met with sundry concerns.

The issue of migration intersects with transnational crime, because of its cross border dimensions. How migration relates to security issues is, however, a multi-dimensional subject and has direct implication on migration policy, including: border management, national security, the *multikultur* agenda, and citizenship. The rippling effect has strongly influenced the highly interwoven discourses on national security and development policies.

Suffice to say, the migration dilemma is a *human security* one. Kofi Annan once referred to human security as an issue of human rights, good governance, access to education and health care and being sure that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfil his or her potential. Devoid of these human expectations, people will be compelled to migrate to centres of attraction where these opportunities are perceived to be met.

This brings to the fore a broader consideration of migration as an effect of the policy decisions of both sending and receiving countries and the need for the global development stakeholders to demystify international migration by creating conduits for diaspora communities in their “national” development agenda consultations.

Globally, diaspora communities have proved themselves worthwhile in their home country advancement. The Irish, Indian, Australian, Moldovan, Chinese, Lebanese, Israeli and Filipino diaspora usw., have created an enviable niche for themselves in their home countries. The African diaspora is no exception. In Ghana, the socioeconomic engagement of the diaspora community has seen significant strides in the housing, education, healthcare and community

development sectors. Indeed, this has been achieved without any clearly spelt out incentivised policy outlay. Thus, a conscious policy targeting the resourcefulness of the diaspora community stands as a competitive option to the aid and dependency trap.

On the security front, it is understandable that governments are concerned about the risks posed by security breaches and the capacity of drug cartels to exploit weaknesses in immigration management and border controls but deploying one or more biometric verification techniques, information exchange, and stakeholder cooperation, immigration officials are able to improve their ability to curtail the criminal aspects of migration.

Conclusively, to understand the key role of intercontinental migration and its repercussions on processes of community formation, social and cultural change is fundamental for whittling future perspectives on population mobility and public opinion about migrants. Given the global recognition that migration is one of the key forces of social transformation in the contemporary world, migration research must seek to transcend internal and regional migration in order to gain an understanding of the broader migratory picture and its characteristics to inform policy responses targeted at processes of settlement and societal change as well as the challenges that result from these process.

At the local level, Ghana must prioritise and hasten the passage of the National Migration Policy to provide an amalgamated front in migration management and ensure a convergence of data management concerns to overcome the security challenges that emanate from international migration.

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