Understanding Migration Motivations in West Africa: The Case of Nigerians in Ghana

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UNDERSTANDING MIGRATION MOTIVATIONS IN WEST AFRICA: THE CASE OF NIGERIANS IN GHANA

Thomas Antwi Bosiakoh¹

Abstract

Contemporary migration studies increasingly focus on intra-continental migration especially in Europe. In Africa, this interest has not been pursued even though evidence abounds in the literature to suggest the presence of intra-African migration. Explanations of the motivation for such migrations often employ the 'economic push-pull model'. This paper interrogates the 'economic push and pull' argument in the migration motivation literature. It presents a range of pull factors that do not follow this conventional approach. The paper first reconstructs Nigerian presence in, and connection with Ghana, and then explores the contemporary motivating factors for Nigerian migration to Ghana. The paper argues that, contemporary Nigerian migration to Ghana is motivated by multiple factors reflecting political, economic and historical considerations. The paper concludes by arguing that a multi-factoral migration motivation interpretation appears more adequate in explaining Nigerian migration to Ghana.

Introduction

Joe² was the first Nigerian friend I made during the five-month field study upon which this paper is based. Joe has been in Ghana for over 13 years. It was during a visit in 1995 on the invitation of his aunt who had been in Ghana for...

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This paper is an abridged version of a Master of Philosophy (MPhil) thesis submitted to the Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, Legon. In the fieldwork on which this paper is based, I used multiple ethnographic methods of in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and informal discussions to examine three (3) Nigerian migrant associations in Accra, Ghana. Fieldwork was conducted in 5 months, between December 2007 and April 2008 in Accra. In the process, contacts were established with the association executives and members, and officials of the Nigerian High commission in Accra. Some of these people, in particular the association executives, were only contacted for interviewing. Others whom I got to know better have and continue to be in constant communication with me. In this way, much of the conversations and interactions took place in informal ways, particularly in drinking spots, restaurants, and during family and friends' parties. Correspondence with the author can be done via bosiakoh@yahoo.com

² Original names of the study respondents have all been substituted with others to protect subject identities
two years at the time, that Joe first developed an interest in staying in Ghana. At the time, family demands that he complete his senior secondary education prevailed upon him to return to Nigeria. This, however, did not prevent Joe from achieving his desires. He returned to Ghana in 1999 with the reason that, he preferred Ghanaian tertiary education to Nigeria's. His reason for pursuing tertiary education in Ghana was simple; the Ghanaian educational institution at the tertiary level is well-structured with a definite beginning and end point to one's tertiary education. "You know when you enter and when you will leave". Eventually in 2002, Joe graduated from the University of Ghana with a BSc. Marketing. Joe has been working in Ghana since he completed his university education. He manages two retail shops – a computer hardware and accessories shop and a home video compact disks (CDs) shop. Joe decided to work in Ghana after his university education because of what he explains as 'the existence of peace, security and conducive business atmosphere in Ghana'. Joe is fluent in a number of Ghanaian languages. Though he communicates perfectly in English, Joe preferred to speak to me, on phone and in face-to-face conversations, in Twi.

Joe could even rhyme in Twi. In a couple of our usual meetings and exchanges, Joe taunted me that he could give a better formal speech in Twi than I could. I did not dare to put him to the test because Joe is near fluent in Twi; he uttered Twi proverbs on the spur of the moment, some of which I had no idea of. A number of friends I made later also showed great abilities in the use of Ghanaian languages such as Ewe and Ga. Most of them enjoyed Ghanaian hiplife songs and adored Ghanaian hiplife artistes. Bakasi enjoyed Sydney's African Money song and could even recite its lyrics. Both Joe and Bakasi are undoubtedly part of West Africa's pool of non-Ghanaians who know Ghana's culture and languages and are in love with Ghana. Indeed, their stories are shared by many Nigerians in Ghana.

Joe's story is particularly important for West African migration and general migration studies on two scores. Firstly, the story sheds light on intra-continental migration, and more specifically intra-West African migration, a phenomenon grounded in south-south movement. In many parts of the world, there has been a growing interest in intra-continental migration, and more specifically intra-West African migration, a phenomenon grounded in south-south movement. In many parts of the world, there has been a growing interest in intra-continental migration (Gould, 1974), i.e., the study of international migration that occurs

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1. Interview with Joe, (31 years) on March 3 2008, Adenta, Accra.
2. In Ghana, these home video compact disks (CDs) are commonly referred to as 'Nigerian Movies'. They feature quite often on primetime television.
3. African Money is a hiplife song with anti-corruption sentiments. It nags extravagant expense and was one of the best hits on the Ghanaian music market in late 2007. It became more popular in early and mid 2008 with radio and television commercials employing it as signature and background tunes.
within rather than between continental frontiers. This interest, according to Gould, has been most visible in Western Europe because increased labour mobility into and within the European Union has stimulated enormous thought and public concern. Interest in intra-West African migration and more generally intra-African migration has not been so high despite increased labour mobility across Africa and West Africa. Arthur (1991), for example, observes in the African case that there is strong evidence that labour is mobile, while Arhin (1978) takes the West African case and suggests that, international migration between the region and the rest of the continent dates back to time immemorial.

Available evidence of intra-West African migratory movement dates back to the 15th century (Rouch 1954). Also, as shown in Table 1 below, as far back as the 1920s, Nigerian migration to Ghana was significantly high. Indeed, Twum-Baah (2005:60) observes that, Nigerians are the major participants in Ghanaian international migration. According to Manuh (2006), the total number of Nigerians in Ghana stood at 8,891 in 1999. This figure increased to 28,489 in year 2000 before peaking at 44,929 in 2001. It, however, plummeted to 24,718 in 2002. Currently, the Nigerian High Commission puts the number of Nigerians in Ghana at over 2 million. Why this huge discrepancy? Part of the explanation could be as a result of irregular, illegal and or informal migration, particularly within the context of free movement in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Since 1975 when ECOWAS was established, the community's protocol on free movement of people and goods has led to movements of people in several ways.

Table 1:
Foreign Africans in Ghana by Origin: 1921, 1931 & 1960 Census Years (000s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1960</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dahomey (Benin)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivory Coast</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>190.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>280.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Volta</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>194.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other West Africans</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>199.1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Africans</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>289.2</td>
<td>811.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Conversation with a Minister at the Nigerian High Commission on the 26 March 2008, the High Commission's Roman Ridge premises, Accra
Joe's story is also important because it represents broadly, contemporary Nigerian migrants in Ghana in many ways particularly in terms of their migration motivations. For some Nigerians in Ghana, parts of Joe's story are accurate representations of their motivations to stay in Ghana. For some others, this story is a bit different from their own. Taken together, Joe's story challenges the popular 'economic push and pull' arguments underlining much of migration decision-making literature.

In general terms, much of the migration decision-making literature is grounded in the economic push-pull framework, a framework first postulated by Ravenstein in 1889. In his work on *The Laws of Migration*, Ravenstein (1889) concluded that unfavourable conditions in one place 'push' people out and favourable conditions in an external location 'pull' them. These conditions, according to Ravenstein are mainly economic in nature. Since then, many studies have supported Ravenstein's argument. Datta (2004) for instance explores factors that account for undocumented migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal, and argues that, economic factors underlie much of it. The economic factors that drive people to leave Bangladesh, according to Datta (2004) are related to instability and economic depression, poverty, lack of employment opportunity, struggle for livelihood, forced seizure of landed property from minority groups, and lack of industrialization in Bangladesh. In Africa, van Dalen et al (2005) have argued that, the perceived economic benefits in migration drive people to move out of the continent. Accordingly, they argue, classical push factors like unemployment and poverty are present in the emigration decision-making process of Africans. This study finds evidence which challenge the economic push-pull argument in the migration motivation literature.

Although Nigerian migration to Ghana has been well documented, the factors underlying this migratory pattern have received little attention. This study fills this lacuna. The paper traces the historical connection between Nigeria and Ghana using migration as a point of reference and the motivating factors that explain this migration in contemporary times.

**Ghanaian Migration in Context**

Ghanaian migration history pre-dates colonial times. Initially, much of Ghanaian migration was internal. It involved different ethnic groups moving into other regions in search of security during the period of interneceine warfare, and for new land safe for settlement and fertile for farming (Boahen 1975). During colonial times, colonial recruitment and

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development policies led to the movement of some people from their natal villages, mainly from the north of Ghana to the south. As a result, some studies have explained the north-south pattern of migration in Ghana to be partly due to spatial inequalities in levels of development brought about by a combination of colonial and post-independence government economic policies. Other studies identify rural-to-urban migration to be the major type of all movements within Ghana particularly in the aftermath of Ghana's independence (Addo 1968; Caldwell 1968; De Graft-Johnson 1974).

Despite the apparent dominance of internal migration in Ghana, evidence of international migration also exists in Ghanaian migration literature. This is classified into two – the presence of foreign nationals in Ghana, and Ghanaian out-migration. On the presence of foreign nationals, Rouch (1954) provides evidence of the presence of Wangara migrants in Ghana in the 15th and 16th centuries. Peil (1974) also argues that, between 1870 and 1939, the development of cocoa farming, mines and railways in Ghana also attracted a number of foreign nationals into the country. At one period, observes Peil (1974: 368), 'British boats stopped regularly on the Kru coast of Liberia to pick up workers for the Gold Coast harbours and mines'. After independence, Ghana's relative affluence compared to her neighbours continued to attract migrants. The country's migrant-receiving status was further reinforced by Nkrumah's foreign policy which, among other things, sought to promote pan-Africanism. Ghana's first governing party, the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) also maintained a liberal immigration policy given its pan-Africanist ideological orientation (Dzorgbo 1998). The result was that, a number of African freedom fighters and pan-Africanists entered the country, describing it as 'a haven' and, with her country-wide policy of universal primary education, this made Ghana gain an early reputation as a civilized country' (Brydon 1985: 569). In Ghana's 1960 population census, immigrants accounted for 12 per cent

8 An example of these studies is J. Songsore and A. Denkabe, Challenging Rural Poverty in Northern Ghana: The Case of the Upper West Region, Universitetet Trondheim, Trondheim, 1995.

9 The author is clearly aware of the non existence of Ghana as a country at the time. The use of it here is a matter of convenience. It covers the various nationalities that existed before colonialism such as Wass, Ga, Fante, Ashanti etc and the territorial entities called Gold Coast and British Togoland that existed before independence.

of the enumerated population with migrants from other African countries constituting 98 per cent of the foreign population (Anarfi et al., 2000; Anarfi et al. 2003). In 1969, when many foreigners were expelled, Ghana's alien community was about 2 million out of a population of about 8.4 million. ¹¹

Ghanaian out-migration started in the 1960s and 1970s and involved few people, mostly students and professionals. Most of these Ghanaians migrated to the United Kingdom as a result of colonial ties (Anarfi, et al 2000; Anarfi et al 2003; Kabki 2007) and other English-speaking countries such as Canada (Owusu 2000) for greener pastures. Ghanaian out-migration was further strengthened, with invitation by some African countries (such as Uganda, Botswana, Nigeria and Zambia) to assist with their national development after their independence (Anarfi et al 2000; cf. Anarfi et al 2003: 6).

This Ghanaian out-migration took a 'mass turn' in the 1980s. Ghana's economy was put under 'commandist' policies in the 1970s by the National Redemption Council and the Supreme Military Council (1972-1978). In addition, Ghana experienced frequent changes in government as well as the non-continuity of policies within this period (Addo 1981). These factors created economic decline in Ghana. According to Dzorgbo (1998: 207) the country's inflation, unemployment and underemployment figures increased; and the national currency was demonetized. Consequently, migration emerged as a strategy for dealing with the weakening economic and social conditions (Manuh 2001: 19), setting the stage for large-scale emigration of Ghanaians.

Peil (1995) has estimated that, at least one-tenth of the Ghanaian population lives abroad, leading to a large Ghanaian diaspora that spans Europe, North America and elsewhere (Higazi, 2005). For Van Hear (1998), Ghana is one of the ten countries in the world that have produced, and are involved in producing a 'new diaspora' in recent times.

Tracing Nigerian Presence in Ghana
While migration of Nigerians to different parts of the world is not new, it has been found that Nigerian migrants largely move to destinations to which they could adjust rapidly in terms of culture (Komolafe undated). This is generally to help secure gainful employment, reunite with family and friends and or associate with other people of their kind. Historical factors such as common colonial heritage and long standing trade and other commercial ties with Ghana, language, general appearance, socio-cultural similarities et cetera are a few of the reasons why Ghana has become a popular destination for Nigerian migrants.

The exact point at which Nigerians began to move to Ghana is difficult to pinpoint. What is certain, however, according to Anarfi et al (2003) is that Nigerians were established in Ghana at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and that, their connection with the country goes as far back as the period of the caravan trade (Anarfi et al 2003). Brydon (1985: 564) observes that, Nigerian traders (Hausa and Yoruba), have for many years, indeed before the turn of the twentieth century, been living and working in Ghana (see also Table 1 above). They have maintained their cultural foci and identity over several generations by regular visits to and exchange of information with their home communities and by marrying members of their own ethnic groups. Cardinall (1931) has also estimated that, by the second quarter of the twentieth century, Nigerians constituted the largest single group (96%) of immigrants from other British West African colonies resident in Ghana.

These observations by Cardinall (1931) and Brydon (1985) are further corroborated by other studies. Adepoju (2005a) argues for example that, until the 1960s, Ghana's relative affluence made her the 'gold coast' for thousands of immigrants from West Africa, particularly Nigeria, Togo and Burkina Faso. Other available evidence suggests that large numbers of Nigerian nationals and others from the West African sub-region were migrants in Ghana until the 1970s, when Nigeria's oil boom made it a major migrant receiving country (Adepoju 1984, 2005b).

In the process, many foreigners occupied positions of economic supremacy in trade and commerce in the country (Peil 1974: 368). Peil (1974) further argues that, Nigerians were deeply involved in diamond digging and yam selling as well as butchering in the immediate post independence Ghana. Nigerian migrants (particularly the Yoruba and Hausa traders) in Ghana also controlled the market place, whilst other foreigners occupied many of the skilled posts in industry (Gould 1974). They dominated the indigenous sector of the diamond-mining enterprise, the waterfront stores at Winneba, and the Fadama motor-parts market of Accra (Stepleton 1979). Also, about 40 per cent of the female vendors in the Kumasi market were said to be of Yoruba ethnic extraction from Nigeria (Skinner 1963).

Consequently, in the mid 1960s, the migrant stock of Ghana's population (comprising both Africans and non-Africans), became a concern for indigenous Ghanaians. Native Ghanaians mounted pressure for increased participation in national affairs and opportunities for citizens at the expense of non-citizens (Gould 1974: 356). By the mid 1960s, the Ghanaian economy had been flattened by mounting unemployment (Peil 1974). Migrants became first count scapegoats (Adepoju 1984, 2005;
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Brydon 1985), and were quickly accused of posing a threat to the economic survival of the country (Adamako-Sarfoh 1974).12

Following this development, a number of intervention measures were devised to deal with the increasing number of migrants in the country. The Aliens Compliance Order of November 1969 was one of such measures. The Order required all foreigners in Ghana to be in possession of a residence permit if they did not already have one or to obtain it within two weeks. Though the Order affected some migrants from Ghana's immediate neighbours - Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso and Togolese nationals, the majority of its victims were traders of the Yoruba ethnic group from Nigeria (Hundsalz 1972, Cf. Gould 1974. See also Brydon 1985). The Order affected over 100,000 aliens (Gould 1974), and was described at the end by some Ghanaians as 'a patriotic move to garner jobs for Ghanaians and to rid the country of crime' (Brydon 1985:569). Consequently, the Order was described as the best known of all the legislative measures adopted in West Africa (Gould 1974:357), though it may have been a contentious piece of legislation, especially for the international audience. In later years, the Order was popularly perceived as an expulsion measure.

Swapping Emigration/Immigration Statuses: The Case of Ghana and Nigeria

After the devastation of the Biafran War in Nigeria throughout the 1970s, (particularly in the early 1970s) the Nigerian economy improved (Brydon 1985). The boom in that country's oil industry spawned abundant jobs in different areas of the economy (Adepoju 1984). The attendant prospects of rising incomes exerted substantial pull on a number of West African labour migrants (Haas 2006). As would be expected, Nigerians developed a disinterest in emigration because local working conditions were attractive. This attracted nationals of some West African countries including Ghana, making Nigeria an important migrant receiving country. In addition, it made Nigeria complete a reverse migration process from a net emigration country to a net immigration country. Statistics in the early 1980s for instance, put the average number of Ghanaians who migrated into Nigeria to 300 per day and in December 1980, an estimated number of about 150,000 Ghanaians had registered with the Ghana High Commission in Lagos (Anarfi 1982, cf. Anarfi et al 2003: 7).

Soon after Nigeria's oil-led economic boom, however, the country experienced a sharp decline in oil revenue. This resulted in a rapid

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12 The economic malaise and the fact that aliens became scapegoats were noted in the popular press (see, for example, Brydon 1985 for details).
deterioration in living and working conditions, wage freezes, a devalued national currency, declining real incomes and authoritarian military rule, all in the 1980s (Adepoju 2005a). These conditions fuelled large-scale emigration, especially of skilled people, driving several professionals to sell their skills internationally, thus making Nigeria undergo her second migration transition process. In this second migration process, Nigeria swung from being a net immigration country to a net emigration country.

In 1983, the government of Nigeria revoked the ECOWAS Protocol on free movement of persons to expel, among others, about 1 million Ghanaians (Arthur 1991: 74; Adepoju 2005a: 32). In 1985, about 200,000 Ghanaians were again expelled as Nigeria's economic crisis deepened following the implementation of the structural adjustment programme (Adepoju 2005a: 32). According to Brydon, the official estimate for expelled Ghanaians from Nigeria is somewhere in the range 900,000 to 1.2 million.1

What Drives Nigerians Out?
Understanding the Motivation for Nigerian Migration to Ghana
The fact that there is Nigerian presence in Ghana is in no doubt now. What remains to be known is the underlining reason. In times past, economic reasons informed Nigerian migration to Ghana. Ghanaian mines, and the cocoa industry were the main attractions (Peil 1974; Beals and Menezes 1970). Hill (1970) for instance has observed that, much of the migration to Ghana prior to the 1970s was economically motivated. Most of the migrants were in rural Ghana as farmers, fishermen, labourers, and traders. In recent times, however, the motivation for Nigerian migration to Ghana is far from being economic.

Nigerian migration to Ghana in contemporary times is predicated on much more complex issues. According to the Nigerian High Commission in Accra, 'the average Nigerian has fond memories of Ghana'.14 They cherish what they hear on radio and watch on television about Ghana. Much of what goes on in Ghana is also reported by Nigerians in Ghana in phone discussions with relatives in Nigeria, or during visits to Nigeria. Nigerians are often told of the calm social atmosphere in Ghana, the law-abiding nature of Ghanaians, the prevalence of democracy over dictatorial tendencies, etc. These factors undoubtedly explain much of Nigerian migration to Ghana in contemporary times. In simple terms, Nigerian migration to Ghana is motivated by several factors. These

1Brydon gives the composition of official estimate for dispelled Ghanaians from Nigeria as follows: Asante region 32%, Eastern Region 18%, while Central, Western and Greater Accra Regions together accounted for 32% of the returnees. Official estimate for other regions include Brong Ahafo and Volta Regions, 7% each, and Northern and Upper Regions, 2% each (Brydon, 1985).

14Personal communication with a minister at the Nigerian High Commission in Accra.
Factors, however, can be put into three categories of political (democratic culture and security), economic and historical.

**Political Factors for Nigerian Migration to Ghana**

*Democratic culture in Ghana*

To understand the contemporary motivations for Nigerian presence in Ghana, one needs to recognize that a multi-factorial interpretation of the migration decision is possible. Indeed for some respondents of this study, Nigerian migration to Ghana is predicated on multiple factors as reflected in the dialogue below:

**Researcher:** What reasons account for Nigerian migration to Ghana in recent times?

**Official:** I think several factors explain the reason for Nigerian migration into Ghana now.

**Researcher:** Can you please elaborate?

**Official:** Yes I can. For instance, eighteen senators of the Federal Republic of Nigeria are in Ghana [Labadi Beach Hotel] now to study the health system in Ghana and make recommendation to the Federal Government of Nigeria for possible modeling. Systems and institutions in Ghana generally work better than they do in Nigeria. This is why Nigerians find Ghana a safe destination when they want to migrate. Also, many Nigerians feel that instead of going to Europe or America or Japan to study, the logic of geographical proximity, cost minimization and sometimes language clarity make Ghana a preferred destination ... if we talk of local governance, democracy, election, and civic education, Nigeria sees Ghana as a model. If for instance you [referring to Ghana] have an electoral commission that has conducted presidential and parliamentary elections for four (4) times and it is acclaimed internationally to have done creditably well, why do we have to go to far places to learn about electoral procedure and election monitoring especially with language difficulties in some parts of Europe?

In effect, Nigerians are generally thrilled by Ghana's relative success on the democratic front. For most respondents of this study, Ghana's five democratic elections since the early 1990s are issues of great significance. They mentioned these events with delight. And compared to Nigeria, most respondents argued that Nigeria would need a decade-long period or more to match Ghana's feat. In very many cases then, the decision to move to Ghana was facilitated by Ghana's democratic credentials. Drawing on the democratic credentials of Ghana, some respondents observed that they find the current political freedom and exercise of civil liberties in the country by Ghanaians heartwarming. Accordingly, they argued, democracy and free exercise of civil liberties have led to institutional growth. Respondents were quick to mention specific cases to emphasize the fact that, democratic
practice has helped nurture the growth of some critical institutions in Ghana (see the dialogue above). For most respondents, this cannot be said of Nigeria.

Peace and Security in Ghana
Further to the fact that democratic practice has helped nurture growth of some critical institutions in Ghana, respondents also intimated that, this same factor also played significant role in the relative peace and security Ghanaians enjoy. In a sense, democracy reinforces security directly. The decision of most respondents to move to Ghana was therefore facilitated by the fact that, in Ghana, democratic practice has helped nurture security and peace.

To start with, it is important to recollect memories of a weekend visit to La Palm Royal Beach Hotel as part of the reconnaissance study. At La Palm Royal Beach Hotel, I came across some Nigerian immigrants in an euphoric mood. Having succeeded in drawing my attention to the heavy accented outburst of jokes in their native Yoruba language, I engaged them in some conversation. In this conversation, I was reminded of the peaceful nature of Ghana and how free Ghanaians are:

Some of us came to Ghana because of what we were told about Ghana, especially the peace Ghanaians enjoy. Here in Accra, as we have come to know ourselves, one can party all day long. Even night parties don’t attract restrictions. One can do so till 3:00 am and still drive through the Liberation and Ring Roads without any fear of attacks from social marginals. One of the most striking differences between these two West African countries is the peace in Ghana. One interviewee observed that, there is protection not only of 'life and limb' but also of property in Ghana. 'You can close your two eyes to sleep if you want to'. This level of security is said to be absent in Nigeria. 'Guaranteeing human safety is something one cannot guarantee in Nigeria'. There is constant fear for one's life. This aside, there is a higher level of crime in Nigeria.

The combined effect of all these is that, for those who can afford, migrating outside of Nigeria and specifically to Ghana for security becomes an obvious choice as explained below:

The security system in Ghana can not be faulted. Ghanaians do not feel scared if their visitors arrive home at 2am. Some Ghanaian taxi drivers operate 24 hours daily and yet there is less report of armed robbery. It is also amazing that, there is freedom of movement day and night without any harassment.

15 Conversation with Jude (29 years) 15 October 2007, La Palm Royal Beach Hotel, Accra.
16 Conversation with Okafor (38 years) on 15 March 2008 at Madina, Accra.
by the police.\textsuperscript{18}

The Ghanaian public has long called for proper working of their police force to ensure guaranteed protection of citizens. Complacency, logistical constraints, excessive application of force, low wages leading to all sorts of extortions and corrupt practices etc are but a few of the problems the Ghanaian police force faces. These problems, in the estimation of most respondents, do not match those experienced by the Nigerian police. In a sense, Nigerians find the Ghanaian police better than the Nigerian police in terms of meeting the needs of citizens, especially in guaranteeing their safety. For these Nigerian migrants in Ghana, this state of affairs can be attributed to the peace, security and democratic culture Ghanaians have been cultivating since 1992.

Ghana's relative peace, security and democratic practice were also cited to have helped nurture institutional growth in Ghana. Some respondents of this study identified the functioning educational system and a relative professional police force in Ghana to have facilitated their migration to Ghana. To start with, available statistics from the University of Ghana indicate that Nigerian students constitute the biggest chunk of the University's international students' population (University of Ghana, 2004; 2005). Part of the explanation for this state of affairs is provided by what some respondents identified to be well-functioning educational system.

The reason is that, the educational systems in Ghana work in definite terms and better than those in Nigeria. You know when you enter, and you know when you will leave. As we speak now, the University Teachers' Association in Nigeria is threatening to go on strike. This definitely does not make for stability and predictive academic work. Ghana is a country where the education system functions almost perfectly, albeit it has its own peculiar challenges.\textsuperscript{19}

Further to this is the phenomenon of occultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This phenomenon was observed by some respondents\textsuperscript{20} as a factor that drives away children of some affluent families in southern Nigeria where occultism is mostly practised.\textsuperscript{21} As a result, families that can afford international education for their children opt for Ghanaian education. In the Ghanaian education system\textsuperscript{22} and tertiary education in particular, most Nigerians find elements of

\textsuperscript{18}Interview with Mrs. Bakasi (29 years) on 6 February 2008, Abeka Lapaz, Accra.
\textsuperscript{19}Interview with Joe, (31 years) on March 3 2008, Adenta, Accra.
\textsuperscript{20}Personal communication with a minister at the Nigerian High Commission in Accra.
\textsuperscript{21}Occultism is not so pronounced in northern Nigeria because of the influence of Islam.
\textsuperscript{22}Huge numbers of Nigerian students are also found in other public universities and private universities in Ghana. There are other Nigerian students at other levels of Ghanaian education institutions, including senior high, polytechnic and a host of diploma awarding and professional institutions.
predictiveness and definiteness as defining features. 'In general, one comes to Ghana from Nigeria to meet a society where things relatively work better'.

Power supply in Ghana was one more issue respondents cited. For example, one interviewee who migrated to Ghana in 1999 observed that there is no way power supply in Nigeria can be compared to what pertains in Ghana. Even though this observation has been rooted in the daily experiences of this interviewee for the past eight (8) years of stay in Ghana, the event of the day of interview helped capture his sentiments. At the time of interview, Peace FM, a local FM station in Accra carried a mid-morning announcement from the Electricity Company of Ghana to the effect that, areas around Madina, Adenta, East Legon, etc would experience a power cut the next day. On hearing this, Fred, the interviewee offered this on the question of why some Nigerians have migrated to Ghana:

\[\text{Just listen to this! An announcement on power cut tomorrow and the power supply company sends this announcement around. This is something one will find difficult to identify with the system in Nigeria. Power cuts are done without any regard for the effects it will bring to the public.}\]

In simple terms, the relative peace and security in Ghana worked in two ways. First, it acted as an attraction for some Nigerian migrants in Ghana. Secondly, it offered a platform for institutional growth, which also provided favourable 'turf' for some Nigerians to migrate to Ghana. Together with the democratic culture in Ghana, the peace and security argument helps explain the political factor for Nigerian migration to Ghana.

**Economic Factors for Nigerian Migration to Ghana**

Motivations for Nigerian migration to Ghana also have economic undertones. However, unlike the mainstream economic argument underlying much of the migration motivation literature (where migration is explained as an attempt to seek pastures that are greener, (see for e.g. van Dalen et al 2005), the economic undertone of the motivation for Nigerian migration to Ghana is broadly in the area of investments in the Ghanaian economy. The banking sector of the Ghanaian economy has for instance experienced mergers, takeovers and new entrants in recent years. These have been influenced by Charles Soludo’s banks recapitalisation policy in Nigeria. Charles Soludo, Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria and a leading member of the country’s economic-reform team, ordered Nigerian banks in 2004 to raise their minimum capital base twelve-fold to 25 billion naira ($190m), within 18 months or face being banned from

\[\text{Interview with Fred (56 years) on 17 March 2008, Madina, Accra.}\]
holding public-sector deposits and participating in the foreign-exchange markets. Soludo's directive was intended to spur on a consolidation of Nigeria's overcrowded banking sector, mainly through mergers. The aim was eventually to reduce the number of banks from close to ninety (90) to about twenty-five (25). Following the implementation of this policy, some banks which fell short of the expected minimum capital base relocated to Ghana. As a result, a relatively high presence of Nigerians has been created in Ghana, particularly in the Ghanaian banking sector, a fact that banking industry watchers have observed for some time now. In addition, Nigeria's mobile communication giant, Globacom also secured license in June 2008 to operate as Ghana's sixth mobile communication operator. In recent times, some Nigerian movie actors and producers have also taken up residence in Ghana.

An explanation for the presence of these Nigerians in Ghana clearly has some economic undertones. However, respondents of this study explained the motivation first to be the stable political platform that Ghana offered within the broad West African space. They, however, did not discount the conducive atmosphere in Ghana for business. A participant in one focus group discussion observed as follows:

The country is peaceful and conducive for business. Its economy is also resourceful, growing and resurgent in nature. In a country with such business atmosphere, and an economy like we find in Ghana, you will need the right type of people to work with to make profit. This, one can find in Ghana.

The possibility for making dividends on invested capital is high in Ghana compared to other West African countries. The Ghana Stock Exchange (GSE) has for a number of years now been performing well. The result of this has been that, Ghana is preferred by Nigerian businesses for locating foreign branches and/or establishing foreign businesses. One also needs to recognize that there are other Nigerians in Ghanaian retail and trade as well as other sub-sectors of the Ghanaian economy. This finding challenges the popular 'economic push-pull argument' around which migration motivation explanations have been made. It is, however, consistent with part of the existing knowledge on what drives people to migrate to Ghana. For instance, Essuman-Johnson (2006) has argued that while the current poor economic situation of Ghana induces emigration to other countries, the political stability of the country attracts other migrants from within and outside.

The following are but few of the present existing Nigerian banks in Ghana: United Bank for Africa (UBA), Zenith Bank Ghana Limited, Intercontinental Bank, Standard Trust Bank, Bank PHB and the Guaranty Trust Bank (GTBank).
Africa who, with the financial means, are able to create thriving businesses in Ghana.

**Historical Factors for Nigerian Migration to Ghana**

Contemporary Nigerian migration to Ghana is also influenced by historical reasons. Historically, Ghana and Nigeria have had both economic and political exchanges. Anarfi et al (2003), for instance, trace the connection between Ghana and Nigeria to the period of the caravan trade. Other scholars have acknowledged the historical connection between Ghana and Nigeria (for example, Adepoju 2005a, 2005b; Beals and Menezes 1970; Brydon 1985; Cardinall 1931; Peil 1974). This historical connection between Ghana and Nigeria informs much of the reasoning that underlies the decision to move to Ghana. Indeed '...if there is any West African country that Nigeria looked, and continues to look up to, it definitely was and continues to be Ghana'.

Some Nigerian migrants utilize this historical connection as resource, on the basis of which they migrated to Ghana.

Two themes that emerge from the historical capital argument are political and economic. One needs not restate the fact that, Ghana and Nigeria were former colonies of Britain and therefore have a common colonial heritage. The two countries have also had long standing political relations since independence. In addition, Nigeria and Ghana have had long standing relations in the economic sphere. These political and economic exchanges also constitute, in a certain sense, capital for some Nigerian migrants in Ghana. For some respondents, the existence of good political and economic relations between Ghana and Nigeria facilitated their movement to Ghana.

Within the historical relations argument, cultural similarities between Ghana and Nigeria were also observed. The cultural similarity between the two countries was also reflected in the answers to the question of 'what motivated respondents to settle on Ghana as their destination? Some studies on Nigerian migration suggest that, Nigerian migration is largely to destinations which offer platforms for quick adjustment in terms of culture (for e.g., Komolafe undated). Within this domain of cultural semblance, some respondents cited language as a factor that facilitated their movement to Ghana.

There is no language barrier. We feel there is easy access to the people of Ghana. If we compare Ghana to the two intervening countries between Ghana and Nigeria – Benin and Togo – Ghana is the most culturally conducive destination for Nigerian emigration. First is the common language – English.

But aside the issue of common

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Footnotes:

26 Personal communication with a minister at the Nigerian High Commission in Accra.

27 Charles Oluwade, (40 years) Abeka Lapaz - Accra
language, there are other similarities between Ghana and Nigeria that serve as a factor for Nigerian migration to Ghana. The following extract from one focus group discussion put the cultural factor in context. 'We are like Ghanaians in several ways – we have the same official language; we eat some common foods; we dress sometimes in similar ways and we engage in similar ceremonies. We see Nigerian companies and Nigerian home video films as regular spectacles on all Ghanaian television stations. These, we easily identify with'.

A participant in yet another focus group discussion noted, 'Take for instance the way funerals are organized in the two countries. Funerals are organized on weekends in both countries. Funerals are organized on weekends in both countries'.

One discussant also intimated that, 'similarities also exist in other cultural ceremonies such as outdooring and naming ceremonies as well as food staples' such that 'when we come to Ghana, we find things that we already do and food types we already are accustomed to'. This observation is significant especially when it is put within the 'cultural shock hypothesis' in the socio-cultural literature on migration. In Nigerian migration to Ghana, cultural similarities between the two countries work to mollify whatever potential shock there could be.

Concluding Remarks

A number of points are worth reiterating from the preceding discussions of Nigerian migration to Ghana. Firstly, Nigerian migration to Ghana is deeply rooted in history, dating back to the period of the caravan trade. Secondly, the presence of Nigerians in Ghana in the early post independence period appears to be the biggest factor that underlined Ghana's promulgation of the Aliens Compliance Order in 1969, an Order whose victims, according to Hundsalz were largely traders of the Yoruba ethnic group from Nigeria. Of course, Nigeria 'retaliated' in both 1983 and 1985.

In contemporary times, Nigerian migration to Ghana is explained by three main factors. These are political (democratic culture and security), economic and historical factors. I have illustrated in the analysis of this paper how these wider realities (political, economic and historical) are embedded in the concrete migration decision-making life worlds of Nigerian migrants in Ghana. The analysis renders support to multiple issues rather than a single economic factor. Though each factor explains the migration motivation and migration decision, both independently and in combination with others, multi-factoral interpretation of the migration

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28Prudence Oludayo (43 years), Achimota - Accra
29Emeka Olewade (32 years) Adenta - Accra
motivation appears more compelling. The contribution of this paper in its wider context is the challenge it presents to the common and most popular 'economic push-pull' arguments surrounding migration motivation explanations. Though economic undertone was evident in Nigerian migration to Ghana, this was far from simply a search for greener pastures.

Given the current socio-economic, political and security issues in Ghana and Nigeria, Nigerian migration to Ghana will see no decrease, at least not in the near future. It can only increase especially when Nigerian businesses (banking, insurance, telecommunication, etc) are establishing foreign branches in Ghana, and more importantly when Ghana has discovered oil in commercial quantity. This finding has important policy implications for Ghana. Ghanaian migration policy options should not be oriented toward 'wishing Nigerians out' of Ghana. At least history provides lessons in this regard. Expulsion of Nigerians obviously will be a mistaken policy direction and a fruitless exercise, with potential subregion-wide repercussions. Ghanaian migration policy options should rather be oriented in ways such that Nigerian migration to Ghana can be managed for the benefit of Ghana at least, or for the mutual benefit of both Ghana and Nigeria.

References


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