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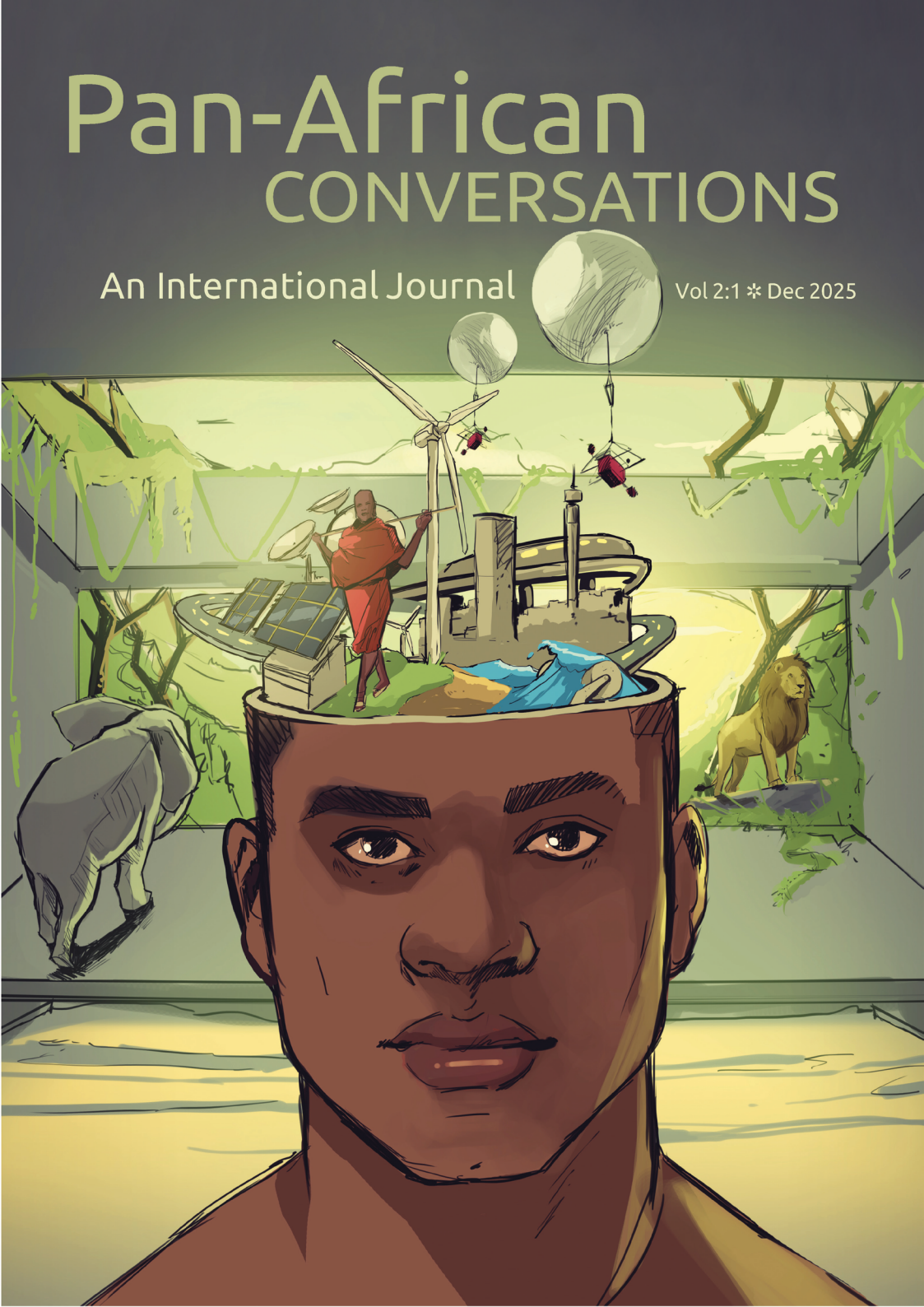

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Prevalence, Patterns, and Push Factors of Migration in Southern and Western Africa

A Comparison of South Africa and Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examines the prevalence, patterns, and push factors of international migration in Southern and Western Africa, taking South Africa and Nigeria, respectively, as comparative examples. Scant studies have been conducted that compare the migration phenomenon between these two prominent African countries. This is the gap this study fills. The study employs an explanatory research design and a document analysis approach, relying on secondary data. Data was analysed using discourse analysis. Among other findings, it was shown that while international emigration is prevalent in Nigeria, there is a greater influx of international immigration into South Africa than emigration. The study concludes that the prevalence, patterns and push factors of international migration in South Africa and Nigeria differ significantly.

Keywords: Migration, Push Factor, Migration Patterns, South Africa, Nigeria

Introduction

This study examines the prevalence, patterns, and push factors of international migration in Southern and Western Africa, taking South Africa and Nigeria from

a comparative perspective. Migration – the movement of people from one destination to another (whether within or outside the territories of a state)- is a global phenomenon, as it is not peculiar to any part of the world, gender, race or tribe. The migration of people is as old as humanity and society itself, as man has been migrating from time immemorial for diverse reasons. With specific reference to Africa, Okunade and Awosusi (2023) trace the mass expansion of regular and irregular migration in Africa to the last two decades. It is pertinent to state, however, that while migration is a global phenomenon, the rate at which people move across their national territories to other territories differs significantly. In recent years, Africa has witnessed a surge in migration of people outside the continent, often in search of greener pastures and a better life (Africa-Europe Foundation, 2022). While migration could be internal, that is, migration from an area within a geographic entity to another, international migration, the movement of people across geographical territories, has been at an escalating rate over the years (Hatton 2021). According to data from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM 2020), there are approximately 281 million people who have moved across their national boundaries and are living elsewhere worldwide.

According to Kurunova (2013), international migration takes place for several reasons, ranging from political instability in the home country, search for better job opportunities elsewhere, absence of, or poor social security in the home country, and low level of, or total loss of confidence in the home country, among others. For other scholars, international migration occurs as a result of one's search for a better quality of life, education, economic, family, medical, political or career reasons (Okafor and Chimereze 2020). With specific reference to Africa and developing and underdeveloped countries, it is evident that there is a strong desire for many of the youthful population (irrespective of job or education status) to emigrate to developed countries (Lemmermann and Riphahn 2018). This is not far-fetched from the economic and social hardships that are rampant in Africa, as well as other developing and underdeveloped countries. For instance, Liu, Deng and Song (2018) observed that the general perception of both young and old, illiterates and literates, is that a good and better life is a possibility outside of Nigeria, and this remains a strong push factor among many Nigerian emigrants.

Indeed, Africa and developing countries continue to bear the brunt of international migration. This is a result of the continent's continuous brain drain, in the form of human capital flight, occurring in large numbers. Hence,

the assertion by Oluwaseyi and Oluyemi (2022, 4) that "human capital flight remains a major concern in developing countries" with respect to international migration. The fact that Africa, and indeed, other developing countries, are characterised by poor human development means that the movement of people (especially the best brains) out of the continent will bring more trouble for the continent, as it translates into further suppression of the continent (Ita 2020; Kirwin and Anderson 2018).

Therefore, this study seeks to interrogate the patterns and push factors driving international migration in Southern and Western Africa, taking South Africa and Nigeria in comparative perspective. Nigeria and South Africa are chosen for this study for several reasons. First, both countries could be safely regarded as the economic and political leaders of the Western and Southern African sub-regions, respectively. Secondly, while evidence shows that international migration out of Nigeria is rampant (e.g. Oluwaseyi and Oluyemi 2022; Liu et al. 2018), it appears international immigration into South Africa is more rampant (Facchini, Mayda and Mendola 2013; Friebel, Gallego and Mendola 2013). This, therefore, triggers the interest and curiosity to investigate the reasons for this discrepancy in the international migration pattern in these two prominent African countries. Thirdly, it is important to unravel the various push factors common to, and peculiar to, the two countries, with respect to international migration.

No doubt that several studies exist on international migration in Nigeria (e.g. Oluwaseyi and Oluyemi 2022; Dimkpa 2019; Okafor and Chimereze 2020), and South Africa (e.g. Anjofui 2018; Facchini et al. 2013; Friebel et al. 2013), they have, however, focused predominantly on internal migration within the countries, pull factors and implications of international migration for the development of sending countries, and have studied the countries separately. There is, therefore, a dearth of studies which comparatively examine the subject matter of prevalence, patterns, and push factors of international migration between these two prominent countries in Africa. Following the introduction, the next section presents a literature review on migration at both global and continental levels, and the next presents the theoretical framework. The subsequent sections provide an analysis of migration in Southern Africa, with specific reference to South Africa, and then an analysis of migration in West Africa, using Nigeria's case study. Lastly, a comparative analysis of the patterns and push factors of migration in Nigeria and South Africa is made, followed by the conclusion.

Literature Review – Migration from a Global and African Perspective

Migration refers to the movement of people and things from one geographical area to another. It has been defined as the movement of people from their home region to another region, either from one country to another, or from one geographical area of a country to another area within the country (Anene, Njoku and Iyala 2019, 61). Migration is the "movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a state" (IOM 2024). According to Bashorun (2023), migration can be categorised into two classes: emigration and immigration. While the former refers to movement outside of a geographical area into another, the latter refers to the movement into a geographical area from another.

Regarding the push factors of migration globally, Betts (2013) noted that non-economic factors drive migration, which she refers to as "survival migration." This implies that while economic factors may drive the desire of many to migrate, there are certain non-economic factors that could also play a similar role. For instance, refugees outside their home countries are fleeing home from dangers and threats/fear of persecution, and civil wars. Others flee their home countries from what Betts (2013, 3) refers to as "state incompetence" – food insecurity, climate change, and violence.

Black, Adger, Arnell, Dercon and Thomas (2011) also identified certain migration push factors as political, environmental, demographic, social, and economic drivers of migration. In this case, environmental drivers refer to land productivity and weather conditions; economic drivers refer to lack of employment opportunities (Neumann, Sietz, Hilderink, Janssen and van Dijk 2015). Political push factors refer to political conflicts or ethno-religious conflicts (Black et al. 2011; Neumann et al. 2015), and infrastructural decadence (Parrish, Colbourn, Lauriola, Leonardi and Zeka 2020). Also, Bhandari and Chaudhry (2016) found that job discrimination, favouritism, dissatisfaction among employees who are assigned roles that did not align with their expertise, and lack of growth opportunities could push migrants out of their countries in search of a better life.

With specific reference to Africa, scholars have studied the patterns of migration and the push factors of migration in Africa. For Collier (2013), African migration has taken on a 'South-North' pattern, which is largely driven by poverty, underdevelopment, and income gaps. Hence, Bakewell (2008)

critiques South-North migration because of development failures. These assertions imply that the major push factors influencing African migration to the North are poverty, income gaps, and underdevelopment in Africa. While earlier studies had emphasised the point that African migration is directed towards Europe, more recent studies show that most African migrations are directed towards other African countries, rather than Europe (Flahaux and De Haas 2016; Schoumaker, Flahaux, Schans, Beauchemin, Mazzucato and Sakho 2018). Others also reveal that African migration is not only tilted towards Europe, but also towards the Americas and the Gulf countries (Bakewell and De Haas 2007). According to Schoumaker et al. (2018) and Bakewell and Jonsson (2011), most Africans migrate for the purpose of study, work and/or family.

In his study, Nwajiuba (2005) found that economic and educational factors accounted for 80 per cent and 18 per cent of migration push and pull factors from Nigeria, respectively. For Adepoju (2011), the major driving forces of migration in Sub-Saharan Africa are increasing population, unstable political and economic environment, and poverty. Weda (2012) investigated the push factors of Zimbabwean teachers to South Africa. The study found that the quest for a better standard of life and better conditions of work/social prestige were the major factors which motivate Zimbabwean teachers to migrate from their home country to South Africa. Furthermore, Anjofui (2018) studied the push factors of migrants from Cameroon and Congo into South Africa. The study revealed that exposure and aspirations were the push factors; however, migrants' expectations of migrating were not eventually met.

In another study, Kirwin and Anderson (2018) examined the factors responsible for international migration in West Africa. The study found that patriotism towards country and family were the only factors which prompted people to remain in their countries and not migrate, while literate and skilled workers were more likely to migrate than unskilled and illiterate workers. Dimkpa (2019) studied the push factors which propel Nigerians to migrate using the Libya-Mediterranean route to Europe. Findings from the study show that political instability, corruption, terrorism, anti-homosexual laws, and economic instability are the push factors leading Nigerians through the Libya-Mediterranean route to Europe.

Data provided by the Africa-Europe Foundation (2022) reveal that only 3 per cent of Africans are living outside of the continent, compared to 8.5

per cent of Europeans living outside of Europe. Intra-African migration had increased by +43 per cent, compared to Africa-Europe migration at +26 per cent. The data also show that there are 40.6 million African migrants, representing 14.5 per cent of the global migrant population. This is lower when compared to Asia, with 41 per cent, and Europe (22.5 per cent). The Africa-Europe Foundation (2022) also revealed that less than 27.2 per cent of all African migrants live in Europe.

The figures below present some statistics on migration trends in Africa.

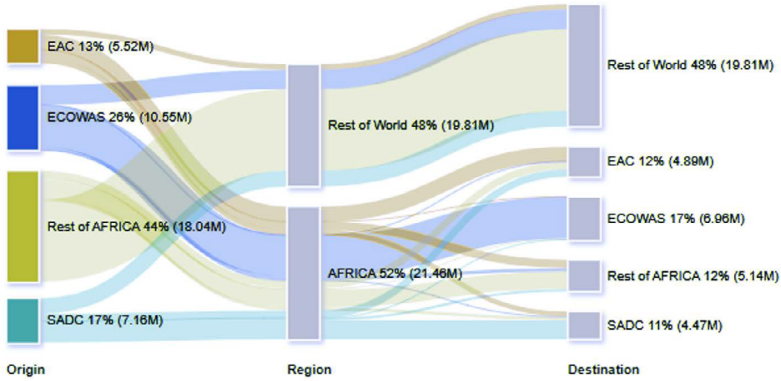


Figure 1: Migration Trends from Africa. Source: Mutava (2023, 8)

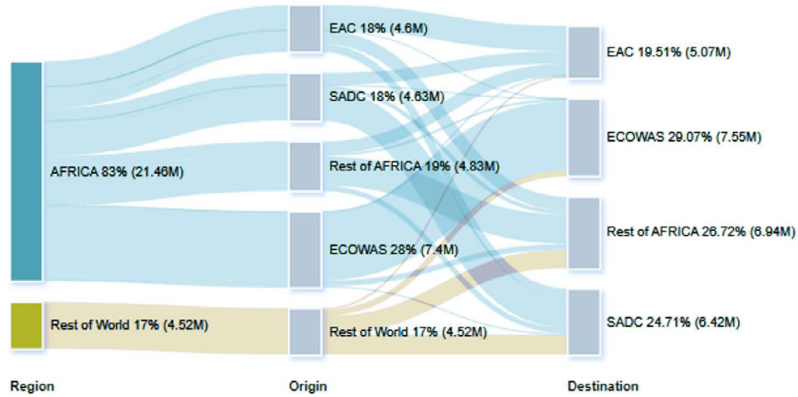


Figure 2: Migration Trends to Africa. Source: Mutava (2023, 9)

Table 1 below shows the intra-African migration as a proportion of African migration.

Table 1: Intra-African Migration as a Proportion of African Migration

	Migrant Population	%
Total African Emigrants	40,567,163	100
Emigrants to Africa	20,917,565	52
Emigrants outside Africa	19,649,598	48
Total African Immigrants	25,389,464	100
Immigrants from Africa	20,917,565	82
Immigrants from outside Africa	4,471,899	18

Source: Mutava (2023, 9)

Several push factors of migration in Africa have been identified by Anjofui (2018). These include political factors such as political instability, civil wars, and violence; economic factors epitomised by unemployment, limited job opportunities, economic instability, and inflation; social factors demonstrated by a lack of welfare packages for the people, a high level of social inequalities, poor standard of living, and healthcare facilities.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the push-pull models of migration as frameworks of analysis. The push-pull models of migration were propounded by Lee (1966). The theory is an offshoot of the Ravenstein theory of human migration. The major argument/assumption of Lee's push-pull models of migration is that there are certain push factors, such as unemployment, poverty, and harsh economic conditions, that compel people to move out of their home country into countries or regions with a better life and better opportunities. On the other hand, the individuals migrating out of their home countries are usually attracted (pulled) by those opportunities and facilities they lack in their home country, but are available in the destination country. These are referred to as the pull factors of migration. Even though social, economic and political factors look similar at home and destination countries, these factors are usually more favourable/pleasant in destination countries, and unfavourable/unpleasant in the home country of migrants (Stanojoska and Petrevski 2012).

Oluwaseyi and Oluyemi (2020, 9) describe the push-pull models as follows: "with the inability [of people] to continue coping with the harsh realities around them, people from developing countries where there are economic and socio-political opportunities." This assertion, therefore, implies, quite understandably, that push factors are associated with developing countries, while pull factors are associated with developed countries. Several push and pull factors have been identified in the literature. Some of the push factors include: unemployment, and/or job insecurity, poor health facilities, low/poor salaries, limited and/or poor social services and infrastructure, poor educational system, insecurity, violence and crime, and poor/low per capita income, among others (World Economic Forum and PwC 2017; El-Khawas 2004; Duru 2021, 185). Some of the pull factors include: high salaries and per capita income; safety/security, job opportunities, freedom; presence of advanced technologies; and other facilities; food security; high standard of living; better health care facilities; and high level of educational system, etc. (World Economic Forum 2017; Duru 2021, 185-186; El-Khawas 2004).

Despite the pull factors that encourage people to move to destination countries, Lee (1966) identified many intervening obstacles that may serve as a barrier to migration. These may include immigration policy, the cost of migration, strict border control, distance, and language barriers.

The push-pull models of migration have been criticised for being too static, by their failure to explain how "original structural conditions are influenced by migration" (Duru 2021, 185). The theory is also criticised for its failure to consider "other" individual motives of migration, beyond the push and pull factors. De Haas, Castle, and Miller (2020, 45) also criticised the push-pull models for not providing an explanation as to why some countries experience a high level of both immigration and emigration, why some persons under the same condition may choose to migrate, while others stay, and why some migrants may decide to return to their home country. Nevertheless, it is pertinent to state that the intervening variables highlighted by Lee may be able to provide further explanations for those issues. In spite of those criticisms, the push-pull model of migration is still the most suitable theory for understanding the push factors of migration in South Africa and Nigeria. This theory is thus relevant for the factors it has identified as influencing migration. The push factors of the push-pull models will thus be relevant for this study.

The South African Case Study

This section examines the prevalence, pattern and push factors of international migration in South Africa. International migration in South Africa has been ongoing since time immemorial, as Cross (2000) traces it to the 19th century, when the whites settled in the country and established colonial rule. Through this experience, Europeans, up to the tune of hundreds of thousands, permanently migrated into South Africa (Dinbabo and Nyasulu 2015). Afterwards, the emergence of large sugar cane farms in Natal and the establishment of gold and diamond mines in Kimberly and the Witwatersrand attracted several immigrants into South Africa, especially from India, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho (Dinbabo and Nyasulu 2015, 29). Hence, from the late 19th and early 20th century, South Africa had begun to attract immigrants into the country. At the emergence of the apartheid rule in South Africa, the migration policy became stricter and favoured mostly white immigrants into South Africa, to the detriment of the blacks (Peberdy and Crush 2001). Several decades later, not much has changed in migration patterns in South Africa, as the country continues to attract more immigrants from outside the continent and neighbouring states (Mutava 2023; Anjofui 2018; Dinbabo and Nyasulu 2015).

Despite the immigration policy during post-apartheid South Africa, immigrants continue to flow into the country in search of economic and job opportunities. Dinbabo and Nyasulu (2015) posit that this continuous inflow of immigrants into South Africa has often drawn the ire of largely uneducated and unemployed South Africans, which has often resulted in xenophobic attacks against non-South African immigrants. Xenophobic attacks in South Africa are triggered by mass immigration into the country, and have often taken the form of violent attacks and killings of immigrants in the country (Isijola and Idowu, 2024). According to Bond, Ngwane and Amisi (2010: 4), factors such as poverty, employment issues including immigrants' acceptance of cheap labour, and taking over employment opportunities from South Africans, hatred, laziness among South Africans to work, jealousy, immigrants' relationship or marriage to South African women, increasing number of migrants into South Africa, crimes often committed by immigrants, greed, illiteracy, insecure feelings among South Africans, etc. are responsible for xenophobic attacks in South Africa. The fact that South Africa is the most industrialised country in Africa makes the country one of the most common

destinations for emigrants across Africa, especially the less developed countries (Isijola and Idowu, 2024).

Many such immigrants in South Africa, thus, seek to escape the poverty, war, economic crises, and government persecution in their home country (Hussein and Hitomi, 2013). Gumedel (2015) avers that xenophobic attacks in South Africa have risen drastically since 1994, especially in areas such as the Western Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Free State. It is also evident that xenophobic attacks against migrants in South Africa are carried out by black South Africans, and often against black African migrants. Between 1994 and 2024, xenophobic attacks in South Africa had recorded 1.096 incidents, 128,158 total displacements, 5,328 shops looted, and 674 deaths (Xenowatch, 2024).

Immigrants into South Africa have been categorised into three, viz: labour migrants, permanent migrants, and refugees (Kok, Gelderblom and van Zyl 2006). Employment opportunities, good healthcare facilities, and GDP per capita are some of the "pull" factors attracting immigrants into South Africa (Dinbabo and Nyasulu 2015).

Another prominent migration pattern in South Africa is the movement of South Africans from rural areas to urban centres (Mokoene and Khunou 2022). The fact that the majority of young South Africans lack the requisite skills and education required for employment means that many of them remain unemployed – a situation which creates the space and opportunity for immigrants to take up the jobs (Mokoene and Khunou 2022). Swaziland, Mozambique, Lesotho, and Malawi citizens have dominated the immigrant population in South Africa (Adepoju 2006; Mokoene and Khunou 2022).

Data on the prevalence and pattern of migration in South Africa show that the immigration between 1990 and 2020 increased by 146 per cent, and the emigration also increased by 197 per cent (Mutava 2023). In 2020, the number of immigrants dropped significantly from its previous annual increase, a situation which Mutava (2023) ascribed to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the restriction of human mobility across the globe. The South African immigrant population climbed to its peak in 2015, when the country housed 3.2 million immigrants. Also, the emigrant population rose to its peak in 2015 at 5.83 per cent, from 3.2 per cent in 1990, and experienced a decline in 2020 at 4.82 per cent (Mutava 2023; UNDESA 2020). In a nutshell, according to data from UNDESA (2020), South Africa

had a total of 914,901 emigrants in 2020, where 90 per cent emigrated out of the continent. Regarding immigration into South Africa in 2020, South Africa housed 2.9 million immigrants (65 per cent from Africa and 35 per cent from outside Africa) (UNDESA 2020; Mutava 2023). While Mozambique tops the list of countries South Africans immigrate to, Zimbabwe tops the list of countries whose citizens immigrate to South Africa (Statistics South Africa 2024; Mutava 2023).

Figure 3: Pattern of Emigration in South Africa. Source: Mutava (2023: 34)

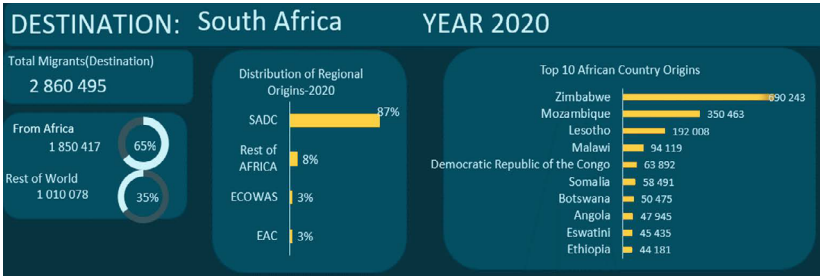
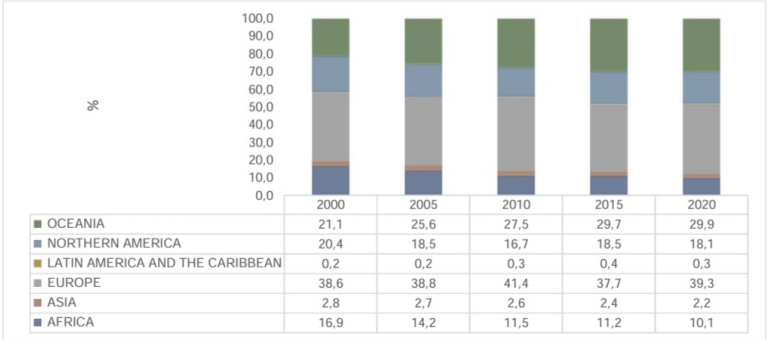


Figure 4: Pattern of Immigration in South Africa. Source: Mutava (2023: 34)

In 2022, the total number of immigrants into South Africa was 2.3 million (Statistics South Africa 2024). From the 2001, 2011 and 2022 South African censuses, the data show that while there was a total of 1,025,077 immigrants in South Africa in 2001, there were 2.1 million in 2011, and 2.3 million in 2022 (Statistics South Africa 2024). Furthermore, among every ten total immigrants into the Southern African region, more than nine immigrate into South Africa; and among the total 4.5 million immigrants into the region, 4.2 million live in South Africa (Maunganidze, Reitig and Fakhry 2019, 7).

On the other hand, data provided by Statistics South Africa (2024) show that in 2000, the number of South African emigrants was 501,600, in 2005, it rose to 550,462, by 2010, it further increased to 743,807, in 2015, the number rose to 786,554, and in 2020, the number reached 914,909. In terms of the destination of South African emigrants in the year 2000, 38.6 per cent of the total South African emigrants were resident in Europe; 20.4 per cent in North America; 21.1 per cent in Oceania; 16.9 per cent in Africa; 2.8 per cent in Asia; and 0.2 per cent in Latin America (Statistics South Africa 2024).

In 2005, 38.8 per cent of South African emigrants lived in Europe; 14.2 per cent in Africa; 18.5 per cent in North America; 25.6 per cent in Oceania; 2.7 per cent in Asia; and 0.2 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2010, 41.4 per cent of South African emigrants lived in Europe; 11.5 per cent in Africa; 16.7 per cent in North America; 27.5 per cent in Oceania; 2.6 per cent in Asia; and 0.3 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2015, 37.7 per cent of South African emigrants were resident in Europe; 11.2 per cent in Africa; 18.5 per cent in North America; 29.7 per cent in Oceania; 2.4 per cent in Asia; and 0.4 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean. By the year 2020, 39.3 per cent of South African emigrants lived in Europe; 10.1 per cent in Africa; 18.1 per cent in North America; 29.9 per cent in Oceania; 2.2 per cent in Asia; and 0.3 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean (Statistics South Africa 2024).



	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
OCEANIA	21,1	25,6	27,5	29,7	29,9
NORTHERN AMERICA	20,4	18,5	16,7	18,5	18,1
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN	0,2	0,2	0,3	0,4	0,3
EUROPE	38,6	38,8	41,4	37,7	39,3
ASIA	2,8	2,7	2,6	2,4	2,2
AFRICA	16,9	14,2	11,5	11,2	10,1

Figure 5: Percentage Distribution of Region of Residence of South African Citizens Living Abroad (2000-2020). Source: Statistics South Africa (2024, 59)

It becomes important to interrogate the push factors responsible for South African emigration within Africa. Bezuidenhout, Joubert, Hiemstra and

Struwig (2009) averred that the declining state of the public education system in South Africa is one major push factor for South African professionals out of the country. Dinbabo and Nyasulu (2015) argued that this is so because the public education system in South Africa has experienced a rapid decline over the years, now worse than some less developed countries on the continent. Some South Africans are 'forced' to enrol in schools abroad because the South African public education system is now being characterised by low/poor quality, reduced pass rates, weak/poor management, and unqualified/under-qualified teachers (SACSIS 2009). Moreover, widespread scepticism about the prospects of governance under Black majority rule, coupled with rising crime rates, served as major push factors driving South African emigration in the years preceding and immediately after the end of apartheid in 1994 (Harsch 2001).

Adepoju (2006) observed that professionals such as engineers, medical doctors, and accountants were pushed out of South Africa by low wages. The fear of being overshadowed and suppressed by the land appropriation by Zimbabweans in South Africa also pushed white South African farmers to emigrate out of the country (Adepoju 2006, 41). Among health practitioners in South Africa, Moodley (2017) posits that the dissatisfaction with the poor work environment, poor pay, ineffectiveness in providing access to care, excessive workload, and exposure to HIV/AIDS are push factors that make health practitioners leave South Africa. Bezuidenhout et al. (2009) also identified high crime rates and violence as push factors among South African emigrants. These identified push factors resonate with the assumptions of the push model of migration upon which this study is built, as several push factors outlined by the theory align with many of the factors associated with South African emigrants.

The Nigerian Case Study

This section examines the prevalence, patterns, and push factors of migration in Nigeria. The establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975, and the adoption of the Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment, meant that the migration of people within the West African region experienced a significant increase (Quartey, Setrana and Tagoe 2020). Migration in West Africa is characterised by 'mixed migration' – the "cross-border movements of people, including

refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking, and people seeking better lives and opportunities" (Mixed Migration Centre 2021, 2).

In Nigeria, the discovery of crude oil and its exploration began to attract migrants predominantly from the West African region into the country (Quartey et al. 2020). At the same time, pre-colonial and immediate post-colonial periods witnessed a high influx of immigrants into Nigeria, from the later periods of post-independence. As a matter of fact, given this migration trend in the country in the 1980s, the Nigerian government had to evict some migrants due to excessive influx of migrants, especially from neighbouring West African countries. One prominent example of such migrant evictions was the famous 'Ghana must go' that was targeted specifically at Ghanaian migrants by President Sheun Shagari's government in 1983, which saw the deportation of over two million migrants, including one million Ghanaians (Daly, 2022). Nevertheless, over the years, there has been a drastic decline in immigrants into the country, with an increased level of emigration (Afolayan, Ikwuyatum and Olumuyiwa 2008). Owing to this fact, Nigeria has been tagged as the country with the highest number of emigrants (Migration Policy Institute (MPI) 2020). Furthermore, the emigrants' population of Nigeria has surpassed, in no small measure, the number of immigrants attracted into the country in recent times – a situation which has resulted in a negative net migration rate for the country (Oluwaseyi and Oluyemi 2022).

As a matter of fact, Adedokun and Karzanov (2019, 208) submitted quite accurately that "indeed, it is the healthiest, most educated and most potentially economically active men and women who are leaving the country [Nigeria]." They further posit that Nigerian emigrants abroad consist of highly skilled professionals like medical doctors, nurses, IT professionals, and lecturers, who are predominant in the United States, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and South Africa. Also, in the category of emigrants from Nigeria are low or no-skilled workers who struggle to make a living as hairdressers, cleaners, construction labourers, retailers, automobile repairers, etc. (Adedokun and Karzanov 2019, 208). Others are students who are predominantly found in Algeria, Russia, and Hungary (Adedokun and Karzanov 2019), and the United Kingdom and the United States. In terms of gender, males have always outnumbered female migrants in Nigeria, with males constituting 55 per cent of the total Nigerian migrants' population in 2020 (Mutava 2023).

International migration patterns in Nigeria include diaspora migration, immigration, asylum seekers, irregular migration (e.g., human trafficking, displaced refugees, etc.) (Arhin-Sam 2023). Outside the African continent, the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US), Germany, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Belgium, Ireland, and Spain constitute the most prominent destinations among Nigerian emigrants (Arhin-Sam 2023). While many highly skilled migrants are in the US and Canada, most low-skilled Nigerian migrants are in the UK and Europe (OECD 2019).

Another pattern of migration in Nigeria is that of human trafficking (the transportation of people over national territories by means of coercion, abduction and deception, etc., for the sole aim of exploitation) (UNICEF 2005; Afolayan et al. 2008). According to Afolayan et al. (2008, 17), "Nigeria is a major source, transit, and destination country of trafficked persons, inclusive of children." Victims of human trafficking in Nigeria are predominantly young girls resident in Edo, Lagos, Ogun, Cross River, and Osun States (Frontex 2018; IOM 2017).

On the prevalence of migration in Nigeria, the immigrant population in Nigeria increased between 1990 and 2020 by 187 per cent; likewise, the number of people leaving the country doubled by 274 per cent within the same period (Mutava 2023). Data from UNDESA (2020) and Mutava (2023) show that in 2020, Nigeria had 1.7 million emigrants who left the country. Among this number, only 42percent moved to other parts of Africa, while others moved outside the continent. In Africa, Cameroon constitutes the country with the largest number of Nigerian emigrants (169,602), with the lowest emigrant population resident in the Chad Republic (13,033) (Mutava 2023; UNDESA 2020). Of the immigrants into Nigeria from Africa, the Benin Republic contributes the largest immigrants, with 377,169 immigrants, while Sierra Leone contributes the lowest immigrants, with 4,363 immigrants.

In 2022, Nigeria hosted 82,513 refugees and 1,570 asylum seekers (UNHCR 2022). Nigeria has the lowest rate of immigrants to its population, and ECOWAS citizens make up the largest number of immigrants in Nigeria (predominantly Ghana, Benin, Togo, and the Niger Republic) (UNDESA 2020; Arhin-Sam 2023). Cumulatively, the net migration rate per 1,000 population within the period of 2015-2020 was 0.3 (IOM 2022). With respect to emigration, education has topped the aim for Nigerians' emigration decision, especially to the United Kingdom and the United States (Arhin-Sam 2023; Okunade and

Awosusi 2023). At the completion of their education, many Nigerian migrants in the UK and the US decide to stay for work. For instance, as of June 2022, the UK government granted 486,869 study visas, among which Nigeria ranked third with the largest number of applicants after India and China, with 65,929 visa applicants (Okunade and Awosusi 2023).

In terms of immigrants, as of 2020, Nigeria had a total of 1.3 million immigrants living in the country, with 90 per cent of them originating from other African countries, while only 10 per cent are from outside the continent.

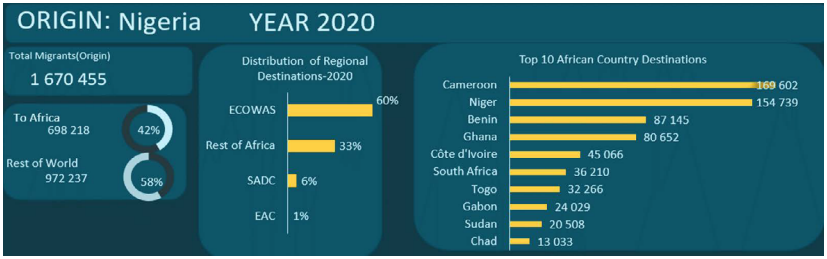


Figure 6: Pattern of Emigration in Nigeria. Source: Mutava (2023, 20)

Figure 7: Pattern of Immigration in Nigeria. Source: Mutava (2023, 20)

In recent times, the emigration of Nigeria's youthful population has taken a drastic and alarming increasing rate, which has now been colloquially tagged as 'japa' (the fast and increasing trend of emigration by any means – legal or illegal, of Nigerians to Europe and elsewhere) among the populace (Okunade and Awosusi 2023).

Many factors could be held responsible concerning the push factors responsible for emigration, With respect to youth mass exodus from the country, Okunade and Awosusi (2023, 2 & 12) observed that unemployment, poverty, desire for greener pastures, poor economic conditions, poor human

development index, the EndSARs youth protest of October 2021, and the resultant Toll Gate killings, poor education standard, lingering security issues, and exhaustion, etc. are the push factors responsible for the recent mass emigration of youth from Nigeria. The low level of development in Nigeria is also a push factor for international emigration in the country (Afolayan et al. 2008).

Also, violence (Connor and Gonzalez-Barrera 2019), poor state of health, rising insecurity and poverty, and high levels of unemployment (Oluwaseyi and Oluyemi 2020) are push factors in Nigeria. Reduced income earnings, dictatorship, political corruption, under-employment, failed leadership, tribal discriminations, political disturbances, and inadequate and poor research facilities (Kabalu, Mustapha and Suwaid 2017) are also push factors pushing Nigerians out of the country. With specific reference to the emigration of nurses and medical practitioners out of Nigeria, push factors like poor/limited educational opportunities, little progress in medical technology advancement, insufficient study leave, armed conflict, inadequate job opportunities, dissatisfaction with living conditions/standard in Nigeria, poor pay, and inconsistent education system, etc. are identified (Okafor and Chimereze 2020; Yarhere and Adeboye 2023, 111).

Furthermore, the dissatisfaction with democracy, lack of trust in the Police, inability of the government to fight terrorism, and poor and/or lack of access to water facilities have been identified as push factors for Nigerians out of the country (Kirwin and Anderson 2018). On the push factors that force Nigerians to emigrate through the dangerous Libya-Mediterranean route, factors like insecurity, terrorism, harsh laws against same-sex relationships and marriage, political instability, and economic crisis are prevalent in Nigeria (Dimkpa 2019). Poverty, unsustainable livelihood, crop failure and/or food insecurity, conflicts and/or threats, inadequate/limited urban services, low salaries and per capita income, lack of progress in career, limited chances of self-development, and poor conditions of services, etc., are also push factors responsible for international emigration from Nigeria (Duru 2021: 187). High-skilled youths in Nigeria emigrated out of the country due to an inadequate educational system, unemployment, uncertainty, and insecurity (Bashorun 2023, 21-26). Unfavourable and inconsistent exchange rates between the Nigerian Naira and other foreign currencies, widespread human rights violations by the defunct Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), and a lack of

social and economic programmes for the youths (Inegbedion 2022) are other forms of push factors identified with the Nigerian youth population.

The push factors presented by the push model explain the predominantly economic push factors like unemployment, poverty, poor pay, and low standard of living, etc., associated with Nigerian emigrants.

Findings: A Comparative Perspective

The tables below present a highlight of the main findings on the prevalence, patterns, and push factors of international migration in South Africa and Nigeria, on a comparative basis.

Conclusion

The study has been able to examine the prevalence, patterns comparatively, and push factors of international migration in South Africa and Nigeria - in a bid to fill the knowledge gap in international migration literature. The findings show that international migration occurs in both South Africa and Nigeria, and that the phenomenon is on the rise in both countries. International migration is more prevalent in Nigeria than in South Africa. On the patterns of migration, the study found that both countries are characterised by regular and irregular migration, study migration, diaspora migration, immigration, and asylum seekers, albeit in different degrees. For both countries, the male gender dominates international migration, while high, middle and low-skilled workers are migrating in South Africa and Nigeria. In terms of migration patterns, Nigeria records higher levels of human trafficking and educational migration, and exhibits a net emigration trend, with significantly more emigration than immigration.

Findings also revealed that more Nigerians move outside Africa than their South African counterparts. On the push factors driving international migration in South Africa and Nigeria, the study finds factors similar to and peculiar to both countries. While push factors such as low wages/per capita income, poor education system, and dissatisfaction with the work environment, etc., are similar factors in both countries, South Africa has peculiar push factors like excessive workload, exposure to HIV/AIDS, and high scepticism of prospects, and Nigeria has peculiar factors like unemployment, poverty, and dissatisfaction with democracy. In a nutshell, the prevalence,

Table 2: Prevalence and Patterns of International Migration in South Africa and Nigeria

	Similarities	Differences
PREVALENCE	International migration occurs in both countries International migration is on the rise in both countries	International migration is more prevalent in Nigeria than in South Africa Nigeria has the lowest rate of immigrants to the population, while South Africa has a higher number of immigrants
PATTERNS	Both are characterised by regular and irregular study, diaspora migrations, and immigration, asylum seekers Both have the male gender as the highest gender involved in international migration High, middle and low-skilled workers are involved in migration in both countries Emigrants from both countries are predominantly highly skilled and professionals	Nigeria experiences more human trafficking migrants than South Africa Nigeria experiences more study emigrants than South Africa South Africa has more immigrants than Nigeria Nigeria has a higher level of emigrants than South Africa While South Africa has more immigrants than emigrants, Nigeria has more emigrants than immigrants South Africans migrate more within the African continent than outside, while Nigerians migrate more outside the continent than within the continent Nigeria produces more student migrants than South Africa More Nigerians emigrate to South Africa than South Africans emigrate to Nigeria Migration through the dangerous Libya-Mediterranean route is rampant in Nigeria, but not in South Africa

Source: The Author (2025)

Table 3: Push Factors of International Migration in South Africa and Nigeria

Push Factors are Similar in both Countries	Push Factors Peculiar to South Africa	Push Factors Peculiar to Nigeria
Poor education system; high crime rates; low wages/per capita income; dissatisfaction with poor work environment; inadequate or ineffective access to healthcare practitioners' leave; violence; insecurity; and desire for greener pastures	High scepticism of prospects, especially under black majority rule; fear of being overshadowed by land appropriation by neighbouring nationals in the country; excessive workload; and exposure to HIV/AIDS	Unemployment, poverty, poor economic conditions; poor human development index; EndSARS youth protest of October 2021 and the resultant Toll Gate killings; exhaustion; low level of development; poor state of health; dictatorship; tribal discriminations; political disturbances; inadequate and poor research facilities; little progress in medical technology advancement; armed conflict; dissatisfaction with living conditions/standards; dissatisfaction with democracy; lack of trust in the Police; inability of government to fight terrorism; poor and/or lack of access to water facilities; harsh laws against same sex relationships and marriages; political instability; rural poverty; unsustainable livelihood; crop failure/food insecurity; inadequate/poor urban services; lack of progress in career; limited chance of self-development; poor conditions of services; uncertainty; unfavourable exchange rates between the Nigerian Naira and other foreign currencies; widespread human rights violation by SARS; and lack of economic and social programmes for youths

Source: The Author (2025)

patterns, and push factors of international migration in South Africa and Nigeria differ significantly.

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The Convergence of Economic Inequality and Illegal Migration

Security Implications for South Africa

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Abstract

This study explores how economic disparities across Africa, particularly the perception of South Africa as a post-1994 economic haven, drive illegal migration. Widespread poverty and inequality contribute to irregular migration, often met with rights violations by law enforcement and immigration officials. These include unlawful arrests, detentions, and deportations that contravene South Africa's constitutional protections. While some link immigrants to crime, recent data shows that residents commit most crimes. This highlights the need for nuanced policy discussions. The research examines the socioeconomic roots of illegal migration, its implications for national and human security. It offers policy recommendations to address the intertwined issues of migration, poverty, and social instability.

Keywords: illegal migration, poverty, crime, economic disparities

Introduction

The economic landscape of South Africa, compared to other African nations, has been identified as a significant driver of illegal migration. This phenomenon is largely attributed to the pervasive poverty and high levels of inequality prevalent across the continent, with South Africa often viewed as an economic beacon following the 1994 elections. However, the unfortunate reality is that law enforcement and immigration officials are frequently found

to be disregarding the rights of foreign nationals, including routine violations of immigrant and employment laws. These breaches, encompassing arrest, detention, and deportation procedures established by immigration acts, result in the infringement of migrant rights as enshrined in South Africa's constitution, which emphasises principles of human dignity and privacy.

Consequently, many immigrants enter South Africa through illegal channels, which presents significant challenges for social integration and law enforcement efforts. While the relationship between immigration and crime is complex and multifaceted, some studies suggest that certain immigrant populations may become involved in criminal activities, including drug trafficking, gun-running, prostitution, and human trafficking. However, it is essential to acknowledge that recent statistics from the Police Ministry (April 2024) indicate that residents, rather than immigrants, commit a significant proportion of crimes. This underscores the need for nuanced discussions and policies that address crime in a broader socio-economic context, recognising that both immigrants and local populations can be affected by the underlying issues of poverty, unemployment, and social disorganisation that contribute to violence in South Africa.

Migration has been a defining feature of South Africa's history, with significant waves dating back to the 1980s, spurred by the discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand and diamonds in the Orange Free State. As Ngomane (2010:1) observes, the mining industry's demand for cheap contract labour during the apartheid era fuelled migration from neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe, Namibia, Mozambique, Swaziland, and Lesotho. This historical context underscores the intricate interplay between South Africa's political economy, population dynamics, and patterns of settlement and migration. The transition to democracy in 1994 marked a pivotal moment in South Africa's migration landscape. Crush et al (2005:1-2) and the International Labour Office (1998:8) note that this period witnessed significant shifts in migration patterns. This was driven by several key events, including the end of apartheid and the emergence of majority rule, South Africa's integration into the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the country's reintegration into the global economy.

As a result of its stable democracy and relatively advanced economy, South Africa hosts the largest immigrant population on the continent of Africa. Approximately 2.9 to 3.9 million documented immigrants reside in the

country, accounting for about 5% to 6% of its 60 million residents (UNOCHA, 2021; Africa Check, 2023). However, this figure is likely an underestimate due to the significant presence of undocumented immigrants, especially from neighbouring countries. Concurrently, rising rural and urban poverty and unemployment levels contributed to a surge in both legal and illegal cross-border movements.

However, the high number of undocumented immigrants, both legal and illegal, has not been without challenges. As Ngomane (2010:12-13) highlights, estimates suggest an annual influx of around 80,000 illegal immigrants, though obtaining accurate statistics proves challenging due to the clandestine nature of undocumented migration. The historical precedent of illegal migration predates the post-apartheid era, with companies historically recruiting labour from neighbouring countries, often facilitating illegal migration. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to delve into the multifaceted relationship between undocumented immigrants' migration and crime in South Africa. Specifically, it aims to investigate the nexus between migration and criminal activities, assess the socioeconomic impact of migration-related crime on the South African economy, and explore the underlying factors driving undocumented immigrants to migrate to South Africa. By shedding light on these interconnected dynamics, this study endeavours to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex challenges posed by migration and crime in South Africa.

Theoretical framework

Criminology scholars have extensively developed, tested, and applied theories within the realm of migration and crime. This theoretical framework aims to explore the concepts of securitisation in migration theory and the economic theory of crime from a criminological perspective. This section is structured into two segments: the first provides an overview of the background of these theories, while the second delves into how these theories intersect with the phenomenon of crime under examination.

Securitisation of Migration Theory

The securitisation of migration theory, articulated by Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde, provides a valuable lens through which to examine the interplay between economic disparities and illegal migration in South Africa.

This theory posits that migration can be framed as a security issue by state actors, whereby the movement of people across borders is perceived as a threat to national security, social cohesion, and public order (Buzan et al., 1998). In the context of South Africa, the significant economic disparities compared to other African nations not only drive migration but also shape the political and social narratives surrounding it. As economic hardship, poverty, and political instability compel individuals to seek refuge in South Africa, these migrants are often perceived as potential threats to the nation's social fabric and security. This framing can lead to heightened tensions between local communities and migrants, contributing to a perception of insecurity and disorder. The securitisation of migration theory emphasises that such narratives can mobilise public support for restrictive immigration policies and law enforcement practices that disproportionately target foreign nationals (Bigo, 2002).

Moreover, this theory highlights the consequences of this securitisation process, as migrants may face increased scrutiny and suspicion from law enforcement, exacerbating their vulnerabilities and marginalisation within society. The security implications are profound, as state responses to migration focus on control and enforcement, the human rights of migrants can be compromised, leading to a cycle of criminalisation and exclusion. In South Africa, the application of securitisation theory to migration allows for an understanding of how economic disparities not only drive migration but also shape the state's response to it. The framing of migrants as security threats can lead to policies and practices that further marginalise already vulnerable populations, ultimately affecting community safety and cohesion. This theoretical framework offers a robust foundation for analysing the implications of economic disparities on illegal migration and the resulting security concerns in South Africa.

The economic theory of crime

The economic theory of crime, initially articulated by Becker (1968) and Ehrlich (1973), provides insight into the potential correlation between immigration and criminal activity. This theory operates on the premise that individuals migrate based on perceived benefits, suggesting that decisions regarding criminal behaviour arise when the expected gains outweigh potential costs. Becker (1968) contends that criminals are not fundamentally different from

law-abiding citizens; rather, they evaluate the costs and benefits of their actions differently. Recent literature has further developed this understanding by examining how economic disparities, job scarcity, and policy changes influence these calculations in a contemporary context (Cohen & Felson, 2020; Hjalmarsson et al., 2021). According to the economic theory, individuals choose between criminal activities and legal employment based on perceived returns from each option. For migrants, this often translates to seeking employment opportunities that may not adequately support their families. Consequently, some may resort to criminal activities such as prostitution, human trafficking, and drug trafficking to meet their financial needs (Sullivan, 2018). Moreover, migrant workers frequently face exploitation and low wages due to the lack of protection for their labour rights in foreign countries, further exacerbating their vulnerabilities (Cholewinski, 2021).

Delays in obtaining work permits intensify the financial strain on immigrants in South Africa. Bureaucratic hurdles in acquiring these permits often leave migrants without sufficient means to support themselves and their families. Research indicates that many asylum seekers endure lengthy waits for decisions regarding their status, with significant portions waiting for years (Kälin & Künzli, 2018). This prolonged uncertainty can lead some migrants to engage in criminal behaviour as a means of maintaining their livelihoods and social status. Thus, the economic theory of crime argues that individuals may turn to criminal activities because they perceive them as beneficial for sustaining themselves and their families, particularly when faced with economic hardships and bureaucratic obstacles in a foreign land.

Methodology

This study employs a desktop research methodology, conducted between December 2023 and April 2024, to investigate the nexus between migration and crime in South Africa. Desktop research involves gathering and analysing existing data and literature to inform the research objectives. In this study, data were collected from various sources, including journal articles, theses, dissertations, and books. The primary goal of this literature review was to examine previous research on the topic, identify gaps in the existing literature, and determine areas of migration and crime that warrant further investigation. All sources of information were readily accessible and comprehensible. However, the main challenge encountered during the

research process was the abundance of literature focusing on the treatment of undocumented migrants in host countries, with limited emphasis on the impact of illegal immigration on the host countries themselves. Thus, efforts were made to navigate through the available literature to gather relevant data pertaining to the influence of undocumented migrants on the countries they enter unlawfully.

Literature review

Causes of migration

Push factors

The South African political economy has long been shaped by the dynamics of population settlement and migration. Historically, the mining and industrial centres of South Africa have attracted substantial labour migration, both from rural areas within the country and from neighbouring nations (Charman & Piper, 2020). This trend escalated notably following the 1994 elections, necessitating legislative measures to manage migration effectively within the country. The year 1998 marked a significant milestone with the enactment of South Africa's inaugural refugee legislation (Crush, 2001), followed by the Immigration Act 19 of 2004. These legislative actions aimed to regulate migration flows, safeguard the rights of foreign nationals, and address issues pertaining to temporary and permanent residence permits while also stimulating economic growth through the strategic employment of skilled foreign workers (Sibanda, 2022).

Since the mid-1990s, South Africa has witnessed a notable surge in the movement of foreign nationals (Newfarmer & Sztajerowska, 2012). Interestingly, many individuals opt to become labour migrants but express a preference for settling permanently in regions where they find employment (Kalitanyi & Visser, 2020). Various factors propel foreign nationals to migrate to South Africa, including population pressures, low living standards, limited economic opportunities, and political unrest (Dube et al., 2023). Recent studies have identified additional push factors, such as climate change and environmental degradation, which have increasingly influenced migration patterns (Mastrorillo et al., 2021). For instance, Nghia (2022) notes that adverse conditions such as food insecurity and inadequate living standards in

the migrants' home countries compel individuals to seek better opportunities elsewhere. As a result, a significant influx of immigrants may settle permanently in their destination, leading to the formation of burgeoning minority communities within the host state (Twala, 2022).

Pull factors

Pull factors represent the array of incentives that entice individuals to relocate from their current residence to a new destination (Twala, 2012:9). Chief among these is the availability of employment opportunities, which serves as a magnet attracting migrants to new areas (Higgins, 2008:2). Gedder (2003:5) highlights that natural disasters can intensify migration flows driven by poverty, further underscoring the role of environmental factors as pull factors. Since Zimbabwe's political crisis in 2008, the country's economy has remained stagnant, offering few to no opportunities for its citizens. In response, the South African government introduced the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit (ZEP) to help address the migration pressures caused by this economic downturn. Limited employment prospects in Zimbabwe have driven many citizens to seek work abroad, particularly in South Africa, where migrants hope for better job opportunities, even if it means taking up low-paying or informal sector jobs (Mukumbang & Ambe, 2020). This migration pattern is further exacerbated by Zimbabwe's high unemployment rate and lack of sustainable livelihoods. Additionally, education emerges as a significant pull factor, with the pursuit of higher education being motivated by the expectation of improved economic and social status for graduates (Twala, 2012:10).

Economic considerations play a pivotal role in driving international migration, as articulated by the traditional neoclassical approach (Cinini, 2015:48). This perspective posits that individuals migrate to countries where the disparity in real income between their home country and the destination is favourable. In the context of South Africa, the allure of better salaries, particularly for African migrants, serves as a potent motivator for migration (Cinini, 2015:48). Straubhaar (1986) outlines two prerequisites for contemporary international migration; (i) a demand for foreign labour in the destination country and; (ii) the absence of immigration restrictions that impede the influx of foreign workers. Furthermore, neoclassical approaches underscore the rational decision-making process of migrants, who weigh the relative costs and benefits of relocating (Cinini, 2015:48)

Political instability frequently serves as a primary driver of migration, often due to widespread human rights violations (Gibney et al., 1996). For instance, in Nigeria, the activities of groups like Boko Haram, driven by a desire for power and control, have led to significant violence and forced many Nigerians to seek refuge in other countries. Similarly, in Zimbabwe, migration to South Africa has been fuelled by the oppressive regime under President Robert Mugabe. Political instability remains a significant driver of migration due to widespread human rights violations (Gibney et al., 1996). For example, in Nigeria, groups like Boko Haram, motivated by power and control, have caused significant violence, forcing many Nigerians to seek refuge in other countries. Similarly, migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa was initially fueled by the oppressive regime of President Robert Mugabe, under whom many citizens faced economic hardship and political repression (Raftopoulos, 2009). However, the political situation has largely remained unchanged, if not worsened, since Mugabe's departure. The most recent elections in Zimbabwe were marred by opposition repression and disputed results, resulting in a continued influx of Zimbabweans seeking better opportunities in South Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020; International Crisis Group, 2023).

Criminal activities that occur as a result of migration

Criminal activities stemming from migration present numerous challenges, including coerced involvement in drug trafficking, prostitution, and various forms of trafficking, notably human trafficking (Pinotti & Rozo, 2022). Obtaining accurate data on these activities proves difficult due to their clandestine nature. In South Africa, victims of human trafficking often refrain from disclosing their victimisation due to fear of deportation and a desire to protect their families. According to the 2022 Global Slavery Index, an estimated 250,000 people are living in conditions of modern slavery in South Africa, with a significant proportion being women and children (Walk Free Foundation, 2022). Research by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) indicates that a substantial number of trafficking victims in South Africa come from other African countries, with 87% of identified victims being women, primarily trafficked for sexual exploitation (UNODC, 2020). These victims often fall prey to trafficking while seeking employment opportunities, facing numerous challenges along the way that render them susceptible to exploitation. Moreover, a 2021 study by the South African Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) found that 29% of women in the

sex work industry are migrants, with many facing dire economic conditions that compel them into prostitution. These women are frequently exposed to violence and exploitation, further compromising their rights to human dignity and protection (HSRC, 2021). The lack of viable job prospects and meagre salaries pushes them into precarious situations, highlighting the urgent need for effective intervention strategies to protect vulnerable migrants from exploitation and trafficking.

Victimisation of foreign nationals by some government officials

Since 1994, South Africa has made strides in safeguarding the human rights of refugees, yet instances of abuse against foreign nationals persist at the hands of government officials. Kleinsmidt and Manicom (2010:173-174) highlight the infringement of immigration and employment laws by police and immigration officials, including breaches of lawful procedures for the arrest, detention, and deportation of undocumented foreigners, as established in the Immigration Act. Undocumented foreign nationals have reported facing police searches and harassment, often without due process, as highlighted in various media reports and studies (Amnesty International, 2020; Landau & Segatti, 2011). Additionally, delays in document issuance by the Department of Home Affairs exacerbate the situation, leaving many migrants vulnerable to exploitation and legal insecurity. However, some argue that undocumented migrants in South Africa experience fewer legal repercussions compared to other countries (Vigneswaran, 2013), highlighting the complexity of the issue. Evidence from the Refugee Council (2005) suggests lengthy delays in asylum decisions, with only a small fraction of asylum seekers receiving decisions within six months, while a third wait for years. There are reports of immigration officials soliciting bribes from foreign nationals in exchange for documents, undermining the protection of asylum seekers. Kleinsmidt and Manicom (2010:180) emphasise the lack of knowledge about the rights of asylum seekers and refugees among members of the South African Police Services and various government departments, leading to significant challenges for asylum seekers and refugees. Additionally, prejudiced and stereotypical views against undocumented immigrants persist, perpetuated by politicians, the press, and government departments, contributing to issues of xenophobia. Former Minister of Home Affairs, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, warned against competing for resources with “millions of aliens,” (Mlambo, Dlamini, Makgoba, & Mtshali,

(2023) which he believed would jeopardize South Africa's Reconstruction and Development Programme (Human Rights Watch 1998:20). Language barriers further exacerbate the victimization of foreign nationals, with government officials often failing to aid those who cannot communicate in English.

Failure of the government to protect immigrants' rights

The South African government's failure to uphold the constitutional rights of migrants not only contravenes international agreements, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Kleinsmidt and Manicom, 2010: 175), but also perpetuates systemic challenges for asylum seekers. Administrative hurdles and prolonged processing times for asylum claims expose asylum seekers to continual risks of unlawful arrest and deportation (Kleinsmidt & Manicom, 2010: 180). For example, since 2025, over 50,000 legitimate asylum applications have been received, yet only 900 have been successfully processed, highlighting significant delays in the system. This backlog exacerbates violations of migrants' rights to work and education, as many are left in legal limbo without proper documentation to access these basic services.

Corruption within government agencies further compounds these issues, leaving asylum seekers vulnerable to arrest, deportation, and denial of essential healthcare (Kleinsmidt and Manicom, 2010: 180). Moreover, a lack of awareness among law enforcement and various government departments regarding the rights and documentation requirements of asylum seekers exacerbates their plight, leading to a breakdown in the protection afforded to them (Kleinsmidt & Manicom, 2010: 180). For instance, a documented foreign national reported that, despite having all the correct documentation, they were still approached by officials from the Department of Home Affairs who demanded a bribe for processing their paperwork (Ngwenya, 2021). Additionally, cases have been documented where police officers detained individuals despite their valid asylum papers, illustrating the ongoing challenges faced by migrants in accessing their rights. Additionally, numerous reports have documented instances where police officers have detained individuals even when they presented valid asylum papers. For example, a 2019 report by the African Centre for Migration & Society highlighted a case where a group of asylum seekers was apprehended during a routine police

raid, despite showing their legal documentation. The officers claimed they were 'verifying their status' but ultimately detained them for several hours, causing significant distress and uncertainty about their legal rights (Kok et al., 2019). Such incidents illustrate the ongoing challenges faced by migrants in accessing their rights, as law enforcement personnel often lack adequate training on immigration policies and the rights of asylum seekers, leading to fear and vulnerability among these populations

While South Africa's membership in international migration conventions may suggest migrant-friendly policies, the reality often falls short (Sebola, 2017: 93). Undocumented immigrants, including asylum seekers, are allowed to work and study during the asylum application process. However, delays in processing often result in deportations due to the inability to produce required documentation promptly (Sebola, 2017: 93). This bureaucratic inefficiency not only compromises the rights of undocumented immigrants' but also contributes to increased criminal activities as less skilled individuals are marginalized in favour of attracting highly skilled immigrants (Sebola, 2017: 93). Consequently, this imbalance perpetuates social and economic challenges, ultimately fostering an environment conducive to rising crime rates within the country.

Discussion of findings

In this section, the findings derived from secondary data collected by the researcher to investigate the impact of undocumented immigration on crime in South Africa are discussed. As aforementioned, the research aimed to uncover the underlying reasons for migration to South Africa, examine the criminal activities associated with migration, assess the economic impact of migration-related crime, and propose government interventions to enhance safety and security for citizens. The study revealed that individuals migrate to South Africa due to a combination of push and pull factors, including poverty, better educational opportunities, higher salaries, and political instability in their home countries.

Migration poses various challenges for migrants, including exposure to drug trafficking, prostitution, and human trafficking. According to the Trafficking in Persons Report 2022 by the U.S. Department of State, South Africa is a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking, with significant numbers of victims being undocumented immigrants who are

lured by promises of employment and better living conditions. Data from the Southern Africa Human Security Network indicates that many migrants, particularly women and children, are at risk of being trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced labour, and domestic servitude. However, accurate and comprehensive data on these issues remain elusive, as underreporting is influenced by fear of retribution and concerns for the safety of their families.

Additionally, the research found that individuals often fall victim to human trafficking when seeking employment, leading to involvement in prostitution as a last resort. For instance, a study conducted by the Institute for Security Studies highlights specific cases where vulnerable migrants seeking work in urban areas were exploited by traffickers, ultimately resulting in their engagement in illicit activities to survive. These findings underline the urgent need for effective policies and interventions to protect migrants and combat trafficking, ensuring their rights and safety within South Africa. Undocumented immigrants in particular, are more likely to engage in extreme criminal activities such as drug dealing and human trafficking, often benefiting from their anonymity in unfamiliar environments. The securitisation of migration theory posits that migration can be framed as a security threat, leading to heightened scrutiny and criminalisation of migrants. This theory suggests that the perception of migrants as potential criminals can create an environment where foreign nationals feel marginalized and compelled to engage in illegal activities as a means of survival. As a result, the securitisation narrative may inadvertently contribute to the very criminal behaviours it seeks to control, as migrants, particularly those lacking legal status or protection, navigate a landscape where their vulnerabilities are exploited. This dynamic illustrates how systemic factors associated with migration policies and societal perceptions can drive individuals towards extreme criminal activities, highlighting the complex relationship between migration, security, and crime in South Africa.

Moreover, delays in obtaining work permits exacerbate the situation, prompting individuals to engage in criminal activities to support themselves and their families. The study also identified legislative shortcomings in recognising African migrants, fuelling xenophobic sentiments in South Africa. Despite xenophobic attacks, government action has been limited, with little progress made in addressing the underlying issues. To mitigate migration-related crime and xenophobic attacks, it is imperative to address these issues comprehensively. Government interventions should focus on improving

legislative frameworks, enhancing law enforcement efforts, and fostering social cohesion among citizens and migrants alike. By addressing these challenges, South Africa can create a more inclusive and peaceful environment for all residents, safeguarding its reputation on the global stage.

Conclusion

South Africa's economy stands out in comparison to other African nations, attracting a significant influx of undocumented immigrants over the years, particularly into its robust mining sector, which serves as a key magnet for labour. This migration is largely driven by a complex interplay of factors, including political instability, poverty, environmental degradation, and the allure of better employment opportunities. Despite the introduction of legislation, such as the refugee legislation and the Immigration Act of 2004, aimed at regulating undocumented immigration and safeguarding the rights of migrants, the country faces persistent challenges. The findings indicate that while South Africa has attempted to manage the influx of undocumented immigrants, these individuals often encounter barriers that hinder their integration into society and expose them to exploitation. Many resort to illicit activities—such as drug trafficking, prostitution, and human trafficking—out of desperation, illustrating a critical gap between policy intentions and on-the-ground realities. This disconnection highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive evaluation of existing immigration policies, ensuring they are not only enforceable but also responsive to the nuanced needs of migrants—the ongoing challenges related to undocumented immigration present complex socio-economic and legal dilemmas for South Africa. To effectively address these issues, a multifaceted approach is essential. This should include not only strengthening border control measures and enhancing the enforcement of immigration laws, but also addressing the root causes of migration. This might involve fostering regional development initiatives that tackle the socio-economic conditions driving individuals to leave their home countries. Furthermore, stakeholder collaboration among government agencies, civil society, and international organisations is crucial for creating sustainable solutions that respect the rights and dignity of all individuals involved. By adopting a holistic strategy that combines enforcement with compassion, South Africa can better navigate its immigration challenges, ultimately benefiting both its citizens and undocumented immigrants alike.

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Enhancing the AU-African Civil Society Relationship

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Abstract

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) provided a foundation for African state leaders to officially unite and collectively pursue a common interest in African independence. Subsequently, the African Union (AU) replaced the OAU with a similar vision of advancing an integrated Africa that is more prosperous, peaceful, and driven by its own people in the global arena. Despite its aspiration to maintain the African Unity agenda, the AU requires a more inclusive and cooperative approach to African regional governance, one that is based on the active participation of African civil society in its decision-making processes. This paper challenges the state-centred approach to African regional governance that has hitherto existed in the OAU by exploring how the AU can effectively engage its non-state actors, especially African civil society and NGOs, in enhancing global governance in Africa. It argues that while the creation of a globally recognised institution, such as the AU, continues to unite African states in building a common interest for the continent, the idea of enhancing the AU's relationship with African civil society groups is essential for promoting cooperation and global governance in Africa.

Keywords: African civil society, the African Union, Organisation of African Unity, Pan Africanism, Africa's global governance, AU regional norms

Introduction

The idea of 'African unity'[1] became very popular when many African states were seeking political independence, and their leaders had decided to collectively unite and pursue this common interest through the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). Primarily, African state leaders at the time were viewed as the primary drivers of Africa's socioeconomic and political development agendas. Some scholars even posit that it was an era in which African state leaders became "agenda-setters" in decision-making processes that were mostly geared towards the transformative and development objectives of the African continent (Hartmann, 2018; Saideman, 1994; Nyaxo, 2004; Blaauw, 2015).

The OAU, which was an important African regional organisation to be formed at the time, adopted a state-centred approach to governance and provided opportunities to African state leaders and elites. According to Welch (1991), the OAU was characterised as "a club of presidents, engaged in a tacit policy of not inquiring into each other's practices" (p.537). Essentially, the OAU continued to focus on the integration of formal political institutions and states rather than the integration of African peoples and civil society (Opuku Mensah, 2006). Recent research, however, suggests that the African Union (AU), which later replaced the OAU in 2001, has moved beyond the state-centred approach to governance while incorporating the role of African people, including civil society groups and NGOs, as actors for enhancing cooperation across Africa (Mickler and Sturman, 2021; Bischoff, 2021; Auwal and Aluaigba, 2021). The new AU is currently guided by its vision of "An integrated prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena" (African Union, 2024). Besides the AU's hopes of continuing the African unity agenda that it inherited from its predecessors (the OAU), it also holds a key objective of adopting a "people-centred" governance,

1 **African Unity** as difficult the concept may be to conceptualise is used here to describe the developments leading to the formation of the OAU and eventually the AU. Particularly, it refers to the period where 32 independent African states collectively united and decided to pursue a common interest of independence through the creation of an African regional organization, the OAU. Later in May 2001, the numbers grew from 32 to 53 African states uniting to form the AU as a substitute for the OAU. For more details on African unity, see Magliveras, Konstantinos D., and Gino J. Naldi. "The African Union—A New Dawn for Africa?." *International & Comparative Law Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (2002): 415-425.

contrary to the past OAU, which was predominantly state-focused (Muchie et al., 2006).

More recent literature on African regionalism further suggests that building strong global governance has centred on the existing relationships between NGOs and their international organisations (Scholte, 2012; Muldoon, 2018; Ahmed, 2010; Willets, 2010; Tallberg et. al., 2018). Therefore, the AU's role of maintaining closer relationships with its civil society groups can enhance integration and promote regional cooperation across the African continent (Söderbaum, 2016). This article primarily contributes to the literature on building effective African global governance through the role of African civil society and NGOs in the AU. Specifically, it addresses the key question of 'what is next after African unity?', by revisiting the role of African civil society in shaping African regional integration outcomes. It also seeks to understand how African civil society's engagement with the AU can contribute to a more inclusive approach to global governance in Africa.

The recent rise of globalisation suggests that international organisations (IOs) and NGOs are increasingly engaging with one another, allowing for greater freedom in interactions (Stroup, 2019; Ahmed, 2010; Barnett and Finnemore, 1999). Some NGOs, through their participation in regional organisation activities, have acquired more legitimacy, enabling them to operate within and beyond their spaces of influence (Reimann, 2006). According to Soderbaum (2007), NGOs, states, and multinational institutions have become constitutive of the sociocultural and political contexts of world regions. Other scholars of regionalism, such as Mittelman (2004) and Hettne (1999), have explored Karl Polanyi's work and suggested that NGOs are humanitarian bodies in the sense that they help protect economically disadvantaged citizens against exploitative market forces through advocacy, the promotion of democracy and the women's movement. Others also suggest that some NGOs command deference from various powerful audiences and are well-positioned to influence the practices of states and corporations (Stroup and Wong, 2017). Given these new developments, many have argued that NGO activities present a stronger force and a 'voice of the people' for global regimes (Falk, 2013; MacKenzie, 2012). At the same time, the opening up of spaces by international organisations and the granting of access to NGOs have broadly shaped and transformed global governance (Armstrong et al., 2011; Tallberg et al., 2013).

This paper argues that, in addition to the unity the AU aspires to maintain, it should also consider collective engagement efforts with African civil society that result in meaningful relationships and effective global governance in Africa. In this context, collective engagement refers to participatory efforts that involve sharing knowledge, norms, ideas, and activities, helping to inform decision-making processes and foster interactions among institutions and actors. Fundamentally, this study is important because the AU represents an international actor in global governance that symbolises Africa's response to globalisation (Edozie and Gottschalk, 2014). As the leading international organisation on the African continent (Tieku, 2017), the AU advances the tenets of a common African culture through the resuscitation of Pan-Africanism while constructing a shared African personality and identity through political mobilisation (Edozie and Gottschalk, 2014). Therefore, the goal of African unity continues to rest on the AU and how it conducts its affairs between African states and non-state actors. This study inspires confidence in the AU as an influential regional organisation in Africa that can provide political backing to both African states and non-state actors through various partnerships and institutionalised regional norms, thereby supporting African initiatives. As a result, providing a more empirical context to the dynamic relationship between the AU and African civil society is essential for understanding and promoting global governance in Africa.

This paper is structured as follows. The first part examines the concept of Africa's global governance through existing literature and demonstrates how multiple interactions among various actors collectively drive Africa's global governance. The second part of this paper discusses 'what is next after African unity' by revisiting the AU's institutional role as an African regional organisation that creates avenues for African civil society and NGOs to participate. Specifically, it evaluates the various participation mechanisms for African civil society and NGOs within the AU and how they can effectively contribute to global governance in Africa. The third part further highlights the importance of upholding the AU's regional norms in enhancing global governance in Africa. Overall, this paper concludes that, with regard to the AU, what follows 'African unity' is a collective engagement approach that is purposely driven by multiple stakeholders and state actors – one that moves beyond a state-centred approach to also embracing African non-state actors and the AU's institutionalised regional norms.

Africa's Global Governance

The term 'global governance' is a dynamic, complex, and increasingly important aspect of international politics. While there is no universally accepted definition of the concept, it denotes collective action among state governments to identify, understand, or address global problems that go beyond the capacities of individual states to solve (Weiss, 2012). Global governance is often achieved through interaction, engagement, and cooperation with formal and informal networks of actors on the global stage (Thomas, 2012; Rosenau, 2021). Recently, the interactions between international organisations (IOs) and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) at the intersection of the societal sphere and government have become a model for the emergence of 'global governance' and an inclusive cooperative approach to steering political affairs and the global economy (Scholte 2012; Steffek, 2013; Clark 1995).

The global governance debate dates back to 1989, during the post-Cold War era, when national politics underwent a significant transformation due to globalisation (Knight, 2009; Edozie and Gottschalk, 2014). The power of states began to diminish due to the increasingly global age, and states became more subject to huge political, economic, and cultural processes of change (Held, 2004). According to Rosenau et. al. (1992), global governance is more inclusive than state government relations as it embraces "governmental institutions and informal, non-government mechanisms whereby needs and wants are fulfilled" (p.4). In other words, it is a response to the global nature of the markets and communication networks, which requires not only intergovernmental responses, such as those carried out by the United Nations (UN) system, but also a response from NGOs and voluntary organisations operating at a regional and international level (Fernando and Heston, 1997). Some scholars observe that the discourse around global governance has followed a series of developments: initially focusing on the emergence of international governance regimes and norm setting within regimes, then the growth in the number of international regimes in the 1980s and 1990s, and finally research on the influence of the regimes on policies pursued by nation-states (Biermann et al., 2017). Nonetheless, most studies in global governance often point to whether and how non-state influences are growing in importance vis-à-vis states (Bernstein, 2011; Arts, 2006).

Africa's global governance is seen as evolving "through the sponsorship of states, through the efforts of actors other than states at the transnational or subnational levels, or through states and other types of actors jointly sponsoring the formation of rule systems" (Rosenau 2004, p.15). The new wave of Africa's global governance, in the form of international organisations (IOs) and NGO relationships, was stimulated in the post-1980s era. It was powerfully shaped by the strategies of state and non-state actors (Bach, 2015). Such a revolution, conditioned by an increased activism in IO-NGO relations and issues of global governance, expanded rapidly (Cogan et al., 2016). Despite these developments, there were criticisms levelled against Africa's global governance and its post-independent experiences as one that was largely informed by paternalism; a condition that allowed economic policies to be designed in the headquarters of the advanced capitalist economies without inputs from the supposed beneficiaries of such policies (Oloruntoba, 2020). However, recently, there has also been much discussion on building a more democratic global governance that focuses on the role of civil society and NGOs (Scholte, 2012).

Global governance in Africa can be challenging to explain and understand, particularly given the continent's extraordinary diversity, as exemplified by its varied religions, politics, economics, and sociocultural practices (Tieku and Gelot, 2017). Some have argued that the diversity in Africa makes it challenging to apply the concept of global governance, and may lead to a tendency of over-generalising, homogenising, and essentializing different views on the topic (Smith 2011; Mbembe 2001). Undoubtedly, Africa's global governance can be conceived in many ways. It may suggest a formal regulatory space that is highly hierarchical, structured, and interconnected, with diverse informal expressions of global and transnational networks and interconnections (Triandafyllidou 2017; Beswick and Hammerstad 2013). According to Martin Welz, global governance in Africa remains an important task that begins from examining an organisation's internal dynamics and scrutinising the conditions for common positions that lead to governance beyond borders (Welz, 2013). Others have argued that it is mainly about creating new economic, political, and socio-cultural circumstances that can serve to transform state powers (Held 2000; Zürn, 2010). Hence, it was this global context that birthed the creation of regional IOs in Africa, such as the AU. The AU, in turn, has helped to prepare the stage for the continent's symbolic response to globalisation and increased the political, economic, and cultural roles of African states, peoples,

and communities to utilise such institutions through collective action (Edozie and Gottschalk, 2017).

From a constructivist IR standpoint, Africa's global governance can be thought of as one significant enterprise among diverse attempts to construct ideas of an African identity and African political order that enables collective action and independence (Kanneh 2002; Ackah, 2016). A more relevant way to situate this idea is to point to the AU as "one way to grasp a transnational encounter, between traditional cultures and modernity, between particularism and universalism, and between Africa's regional transnational elite and the global environment" (Tieku and Gelot, 2017, p.120). The transformationalist globalisation[2] Perspective, for instance, suggests that in terms of global governance in Africa, regional organisations often possess a political role whereby African states, peoples, and communities utilise such institutions through collective action (Edozie, 2012; Held, 2004; Munck, 2005). This perspective describes global governance in Africa as having institutions of complex relationships; ones that seek to partner with while also superseding the regional, national, and subnational layers of a political society (Held, 2004).

Others also emphasise the need for a more relational approach to understanding Africa's global governance (Tieku and Gelot, 2017). Since the decision-making of any society is a collective endeavour and many African societies predominantly exhibit strong features of collectivist cultures (Ma and Schoeneman 1997; Stagner 1961), relationality (a mixture of individualism and collectivism in practices and decision making by political elites) becomes essential for building an enhanced agency in Africa's global governance (Fisher, 2018; Tieku 2012). In practising relational governance, the AU, for example, has the capacity to build a collective claim that prioritises group preferences over the specific interests of the states it represents at the global level, and a tendency to ensure group harmony and solidarity in dealing with issues pertaining to global governance. This allows national state members to voluntarily interject themselves into collective foreign policy networks of

2 The 'transformationalist globalization' is a perspective on globalization that was framed by global studies scholar David Held. The theory portends that globalization has a complex set of interconnecting relationships through which political power is exercised indirectly. For more on this perspective, see Held, D. (Ed.). (2004). *A globalizing world? culture, economics, politics.* Routledge.

regional cooperation that help them pursue new challenges emanating from globalisation (Scholte 1997).

Evidently, the understanding of Africa's global governance requires a more collective engagement effort; one that allows for multiple interactions among several actors and institutions, including African civil society and the AU. Since the African Union took over from the OAU, it has consistently pursued the vision of African unity in an effort to achieve a better life for the people of Africa and establish greater credibility in its relations across the globe (Oloruntoba and Falola, 2020; Agupusi, 2021). With its symbolic position as a transnational and collective action agent, what is next after African Unity is for the AU to encourage member states and African civil society groups to push for a more pragmatic common political space and positions for Africa in global governance.

What is next after "African Unity"?

Although conceptualizing the term 'African unity' remains challenging given the existing diversity among African states' interests and the recurring patterns of conflicts across Africa, the unification of 32 independent African state leaders on May 25, 1963, to establish a common regional organization that would pursue a common interest on behalf of all African states was the starting point of envisioning African unity (Demana, 1996; Edo and Olanrenwaju, 2012; Van Walraven, 2019). The formation of the OAU emerged from the Pan-African idea that African states should be strong and united against colonial subjugation and racism by working together to improve the lives of African people (Packer and Rukare, 2002; Falola, 2022). With this objective in mind, the structure of the OAU rested heavily on the individual sovereignty of African states rather than African civil society groups and NGOs (Austin, 1966).[3] Later, many African states achieved independence,

3 The principles of sovereignty were heavily embedded in the OAU's institutional structure. There were four 'principal institutions'; The Assembly of Heads of State and Government; The Council of Foreign Ministers; The General Secretariat; and The Commission of Mediation, Conciliation, and Arbitration. The OAU Charter had five main objectives: a) To promote unity and solidarity of the African states; b) To coordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa; c) To defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity and independence; d) To eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa, and e) To promote international cooperation, having due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

and their leaders saw that to maintain the unity, there was a need to refocus their attention from the fight for decolonisation and ridding the continent of colonialism and apartheid (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020), to increasing cooperation and integration among African leaders and civil society groups (Mule, 2001).

On May 26, 2001, 53 African leaders decided to form the AU, a new regional intergovernmental organisation that aspired to maintain African unity by bringing together several states on the continent.[4] The AU's objectives are intended to be realised mainly through its *African citizens* and the 15 structures and organs (Agupusi, 2021). Most important among them are the Assembly, the Executive Council, Permanent Representatives Committee, Peace and Security Council, Pan – African Parliament, Specialised Technical Committees, AU Commission, NEPAD/AU Development Agency, AU Foundation, Financial Institutions, Judicial, Human Rights and Legal Organs, Economic Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), African Peer Review Mechanism, Regional Economic Communities, Specialized Agencies and Institutions.[5] While the AU aspires to maintain African unity through the above institutions, it also aims to adopt a more cooperative approach to African regional governance- one that rests on the participation of the African people (Gelot and Söderbaum, 2024).

Following its creation, the AU, as a facilitative agent of global governance, has currently united 55 African member states under one common regional organisation. This, however, raises questions about what is next for the AU after it has maintained African unity through a common regional body. And how can this unity influence global governance in Africa? This paper considers two key propositions in response to these questions.

Proposition 1: *The collective engagement efforts by the AU and African civil society can promote unity and enhance global governance in Africa.*

Proposition 2: *African states and non-state actors can enhance global governance in Africa by upholding AU regional norms.*

The AU, as a regional international organisation, recognises the importance of engaging African civil society and NGOs in shaping its regional integration agenda on the African continent (AfriMap 2007). More recently, there has been a growing interest in the activities of NGOs within international

4 See the AU Handbook 2019, page 13 for more details

5 Refer to the AU website for full details about the organs and structures: https://au.int/en/overview

organisations and their increased participation in global initiatives (Willetts 2010; Princen et al., 2013; Keck and Sikkink 1998). Historically, NGOs became consultative parties in intergovernmental discussions after the Second World War, as Article 71 of the UN Charter established consultative status practices regarding NGOs (Caceres, 2012). Subsequently, international organisations no longer represented mere forums for inter-state collective action. Still, a large number of them formalised a sort of consultative or observer status with NGOs, giving them varying degrees of access to their meetings, negotiations, and the implementation of policies (Vabulas 2013; Rebasti 2008; Jönsson & Tallberg 2010). NGOs' formal status in international bodies, however limited it may be, helps to strengthen the effectiveness of their informal tactics and engagement (Schoener 1996).

While most literature on global governance tends to focus on theorising NGO access to international organisations and the concrete dynamics of their interplay (Rebasti, 2008; Tallberg, 2010; Betsil, 2001; Arts, 2004), research on how the AU, as an African intergovernmental body, can promote cooperation among its member states while enhancing global governance remains scarce. For instance, the rise of African NGOs is currently evident as local NGOs are establishing headquarters within Africa and routinely working with about 50% of their contributions derived from Africans or the African diaspora (Hearn 2007; Nzimakwe 2008; Vakil 1997; Bratton 1990). Nonetheless, it is uncertain how the AU can harness such opportunities to collectively engage with its African civil society and enhance global governance in Africa.

The *AU's Collective Engagement Effort with African Civil Society*

The AU ECOSOCC is an institution established to give African civil society organisations a voice in the AU's decision-making processes (Adejumobi, 2009; Mbaya, 2023). Since its inception, the AU ECOSOCC has made concerted efforts to foster partnerships between governments and all sectors of civil society, thereby strengthening solidarity and cohesion among the African people and the region (Moyo, 2008; Rai, 2024). The AU Constitutive Act, for instance, provides for an ECOSOCC that serves as "an advisory organ composed of different social and professional groups of the Member States of the Union". The objective of the ECOSOCC is to provide an opportunity for African Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to play an active role in contributing

to the AU's principles, policies and programmes.[6] Although its emergence is considered to have been delayed and described by many as politically motivated, it has become an opportunity for African civil society to shape its own future engagement with the AU before state governments get around to doing it for them (Sturman and Cilliers 2003, p. 72).

Besides ECOSOCC, the AU also has the Citizens and Diaspora Organisations Directorate (CIDO)[7] This is entrusted with the responsibility of implementing the AU's vision of a people-oriented and driven organisation based on a partnership between governments, civil society, and diasporas. The directorate comprises the civil society and diaspora divisions. While the civil society division is responsible for mainstreaming civil society engagement into the AU's processes and departments, the diaspora divisions help build a global African family by ensuring the participation of the African diaspora.[8] In the integration and development agenda of the continent. Essentially, the AU recognises the key role of the African Diaspora and their collective contribution to the continent's development. This is enshrined in Article 3 of the Protocol on Amendments to the Constitutive Act of the AU, which invites states to encourage the full participation of the African Diaspora as an integral part of the Continent in building the African Union.

Furthermore, there exists the African Commission on Human Rights and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). This institution was established in 1986 in accordance with the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and works to protect and promote the rights set out in the Charter (Murray, 2019). The ACHPR allows African and international human rights organisations and NGOs to obtain observer statuses as they engage with the AU. Once they are granted such statuses, they can submit documentation and contribute at the Commission's sessions (Musila, 2013). Most of the key documents adopted by the Commission are also drafted with the assistance and support of human rights NGOs. These are all institutional mechanisms set out by the AU to collectively engage with its African civil society and NGOs.

6 Refer to the AU Constitutive Act Article 22 for more details.

7 https://au.int/en/diaspora-civil-society-engagement

8 "The African Diaspora consists of peoples of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and building of the African Union." Read more at: https://au.int/en/diaspora-civil-society-engagement

Notably, the AU ECOSOCC and CIDO, along with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), are among the institutional structures within the AU that provide various participatory mechanisms for African civil society groups and NGOs. The AU allows non-state actors to keep oversight and accountability of their work as they participate in the decision-making processes (Bekele 2006). Despite the structures that the AU offers as opportunities for engagement, a key question that remains is whether African NGOs and civil society groups have effectively adopted such a pathway to enhance interactions and strengthen global governance in Africa. The AU can provide home-based credibility and legitimacy to African civil society groups seeking to participate in and engage with its activities.

Enhancing global governance in Africa requires substantial efforts from African civil society and NGOs. In fact, state sovereignty must no longer take precedence over regional integration goals, especially in terms of interactions between states and non-state actors across the continent (Kodero, 2023; Soulé, 2020; Houghton, 2008). It is also important to emphasise that the current global economic landscape leaves Africa with little choice but to decisively consolidate and collectively build its regional organisation. African state leaders must realise that true collective engagement efforts require them to think beyond the state level and embrace participation from all sources of networks and actors. There are good reasons for African NGOs to engage with the AU. It is the premier inter-governmental organisation for the African continent, and the body responsible for the realisation of African unity and political and economic integration. The AU also helps to promote Africa's social, political, economic, and cultural development (Houghton 2005; Oxfam and AfriMap 2010). Above all, it is the principal organisation for promoting Africa's global governance, its image, and the interests of its citizens. While the AU is now well-positioned to enter a phase of accelerated and more durable economic growth, the next phase is to consider deepening its engagement with African civil society, through which it can enhance global governance in Africa.

Upholding *AU Regional Norms: Implications for Africa's Global Governance*

Regional norms[9] that are established by regional IOs for member states and relevant actors can enhance global governance (Leininger, 2014; Nash, 2021; Witt, 2019). Over the past two decades, the African continent has witnessed the evolution of a whole range of regional norms and institutions in the areas of peace, security, and democratic governance that set new standards for and help monitor developments within African states (Engel and Porto, 2010; Legler and Tieku, 2010). According to Nash (2021), norm creation in Africa took a different form, where African independence-era leaders did not simply localise international norms but rather chose existing norms and adapted other norms in ways that would best protect the sovereignty of independent African states. Essentially, regional norms in Africa evolved based on the experiences of African people and for their own purposes. The African Union in contemporary African regionalism is a norm entrepreneur that creates regional norms intended to shape the behaviour of both state and non-state actors on the continent.

Mumford (2021) argues that regionally bound norms can help to structure the politics amongst relevant actors and shape the development of regional organisations. They also create normative traps that make states and non-state actors converge on a particular institutional outcome. Despite the existing plethora of regional norms in Africa, Fagbayibo (2019) observes that there has been a high degree of non-compliance with these norms by member states and other non-state actors at both sub-regional and continental levels. Nonetheless, African civil society groups can effectively enhance Africa's global governance by adhering to and upholding existing regional norms on the continent.

As Africa's largest continental organisation, the AU advances the upholding of certain standards of behaviour that are binding on all its member states and non-state actors, aiming to foster a sense of collective belonging and unity. Some scholars even maintain that African international actors are locked in a Pan African rhetorical trap – "a normative environment on the continent in which certain outcomes become irresistible for a variety of actors because they accord unambiguously with the norms of the African community" (Mumford,

9 For a broader definition of norms, refer to Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 'International norm dynamics and political change', International Organization 52, 4 (1998), pp. 891–893.

2021, p.6). It is therefore essential to consider the implications of these norms and how they can effectively enable African civil society to engage with the AU and enhance global governance across the continent.

Generally, the AU regional norms were largely shaped by interpretations of pan-Africanist ideas and regional interests (Nash, 2021; Witt, 2019). Therefore, many consider them to be Pan-African norms, which are described as standards of appropriate behaviour that privilege the (imagined) African community and its institutions and emphasise collective African action to develop or strengthen that community (Mumford, 2021). Two of such AU regional norms that African NGOs can adopt to enhance their global governance are: the *'African solutions to African problems'* norms and the *Pan African solidarity norm*. The former suggests that home-grown solutions based on African experiences and driven by African actors should be privileged as a means of strengthening African self-determination (Ani, 2019; Dersso, 2012). The latter also stipulates that African leaders must not publicly criticise each other but rather take a consensus-based approach to decision-making (Tieku, 2012).

The notion of 'African solutions to African problems' provides a remedy for Africa's regional security issues. This norm reflects Africa's shared values and the mission to embody them in addressing the continent's challenges. In the context of the AU and its global governance agenda, such a norm can help instil in African civil society groups a sense of belonging and a commitment for African individuals to work closely together with the AU (Chirisa et al., 2014; Franke, 2007). Such a norm may also 'conjure amalgamating politics with action, emphasizing pride, indigeneity, self-reliance, and taking ownership and responsibility' (Nathan 2013, p.48). The AU has the capacity to collectively uphold such norms in collaboration with African civil society and explore how African practices and principles can help address pertinent issues facing the continent at the global level.

The *Pan African solidarity norm* also aspires for relevant state actors and non-state actors to achieve solidarity among themselves. The norm evolved from the actions of post-independence African state leaders who led a popular campaign for Africa's independence and freedom from colonial rule. According to Bareebe (2018), the contemporary Pan-African solidarity norm enforces "the idea of solidarity with, and support for, African populations

facing dire threat from famine and epidemic diseases, terrorist groups, rebel movements, and their own repressive regimes" (p. 78).

Others suggest that the norm can help African civil society groups to collaborate with the AU as a more influential collective actor in global governance (Glas and Balogun, 2020). The Pan African solidarity norm is imperative for African civil society, as it fosters collective engagement and an independent pathway to the prosperity and economic well-being of the African people. In the drafting of the AU Constitutive Act, African leaders were influenced by the Pan African solidarity norm to build a partnership between governments and all segments of civil society to take up the multifaceted challenges that confront Africa and its people while considering the social, economic, and political changes taking place in the world (Dirar 2015; Murithi and Ndinga-Muvamba, 2005; Opuku-Mensah 2007).

Conclusion

While the AU seeks to maintain the African unity agenda that it inherited from its predecessor (the OAU), it is also committed to establishing the necessary conditions that will enable Africa to play its rightful role in global governance. The state-centred approach to African regionalism that previously existed in the former OAU has collapsed, paving the way for a more people-oriented approach to governance in the AU. This paper highlights the need to contextualise and understand the implications of African unity by exploring global governance in Africa from the perspective of the AU and the relationship between African civil society and the AU.

The AU institution is committed to facilitating the continued and structured "participation of African peoples in the activities of the Union" (AU CA, Art. 3 (c)). At the same time, it is expected to foster the networking of civil society groups by encouraging them to launch joint campaigns, uphold regional norms, present their experiences and influence decision-making. This paper has demonstrated that, with the help of certain institutions, such as the AU ECOSOCC and CIDO, along with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), African civil society groups can gain access to spaces within the AU and work collectively to enhance global governance in Africa.

The African Union is best equipped to represent Africa's interests at the global stage, given that it adopts a more inclusive approach that is less elitist, less state-driven and closer to its citizens (Adejumobi, 2009). This will

further help in maintaining unity and addressing its problems continentally and beyond. Overall, the AU's attempt to engage African civil society rests heavily on the participatory mechanisms of knowledge sharing, norms, ideas, and activities by multiple states and non-state actors. This practice can help establish common positions for pursuing global governance in Africa.

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Forging UAE's Civil Service Model with BRICS countries to accelerate Agenda 2063 in Africa

From Egypt to South Africa

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Abstract[1]

This article examines how elements of the UAE's civil service model, including the reform experiences from BRICS members Egypt and South Africa, can strengthen the implementation of Agenda 2063, particularly Aspiration 3 on good governance and capable institutions. Despite progress in both countries, persistent institutional weaknesses, accountability gaps, and post-COVID fiscal pressures continue to undermine citizen-centred service delivery. Drawing on polycentric governance theory and the "Leave No One Behind" principle, the study analyses civil service reforms undertaken between 2019 and 2024 and synthesises emerging practices that enhance responsive, transparent, and human-capital-driven public institutions. It identifies areas for practical

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cooperation with the UAE and offers recommendations for advancing civil service excellence across African states.

Keywords: Polycentric Governance, Civil Service, International Cooperation, BRICS, Egypt, and South Africa

Introduction

The African Union (AU) Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want envisages advancing socio-economic and political unity throughout the African continent. Aspiration/Moonshot three of the referred agenda precisely aim to promote good governance, rule of law and respect for human rights in Africa. This aspiration aligns with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which is dedicated to enhancing effective institutions and a peaceful society; however, it recorded the lowest progress amongst all Agenda 2063 aspirations, with an overall performance of 42% across the continent, according to the evaluation of the First Ten Year Implementation (FTYIP) of Agenda 2063 (African Union, 2023). The evaluation equally referenced significant institutional deficiencies in civil service delivery across African countries, particularly with issues pertinent to fighting corruption, empowering responsive and agile public institutions, and investing in human capital (AU Commission, 2023).

In this context, Egypt and South Africa, as prominent member states of the AU, have persistently championed continental integration and emphasised the need for governance changes to enhance economic and political solidarity with nations in the Global South. Over the last five years, both nations have made notable advancements in public service delivery. Nonetheless, the repercussions of COVID-19 on African economies, coupled with other budgetary obstacles, hindered their capacities to improve civil service delivery.

The 2024 Mo Ibrahim Index of Africa Governance[2] elevated Egypt's overall governance score to 51.0 out of 100.0, reflecting notable advancements in human development and economic prospects. Conversely, South Africa scored 65.9 out of 100.0 in overall governance (Mo Ibrahim Index, 2024). Notwithstanding variations, both nations face significant challenges, including bureaucratic corruption in several spheres and a deficiency of accountability

2 Mo Ibrahim Governance Index (2024): Egypt Profile. Available on https://iiag.online/locations/eg.html.

that aggravates service delivery inadequacies. Egypt and South Africa are currently members of the BRICS, along with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which has been involved in several continental programs to disseminate its transformational civil service model. The UAE has launched various initiatives, including the Government Exchange Program[3] to enhance economic and political connections with African nations.

This article highlights the current reforms implemented by Egypt and South Africa to promote citizen-centric policies and improve public service delivery. It aims to adhere to the *Leave no one behind* principle, in conjunction with the UAE model. The study seeks to interrogate the extent to which the UAE civil service model could be leveraged to promote citizen-centric civil reforms in Egypt and South Africa. Thus, the article explores the key drivers of civil service reforms in BRICS countries, including the UAE, Egypt, and South Africa, through the lens of polycentric governance theory. Furthermore, it synthesises recent initiatives and action-oriented policies to leverage an inclusive civil service, especially in the three countries following the COVID-19 crisis. Finally, it explores opportunities for mutual collaboration and offers recommendations for civil service excellence amongst the selected countries.

The study is structured into three sections. The first presents polycentric governance, a conceptual framework and an analytical framework based on the "Leave No One Behind" principle of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. The article also highlights the methods and methodology. The third examines the civil service reforms in the UAE, Egypt, and South Africa from 2019 to 2024 and discusses the major empirical findings. The final section concludes and makes recommendations for forging the UAE's public service model in Africa.

Polycentric Governance: Conceptual Framework, Grounds, and Application

Polycentric governance (PG) is a system in which multiple governing bodies interact to create and enforce policies within a multi-level framework. It is increasingly used to understand global challenges like climate change, resource management, and social equity. PG involves multiple independent

3 https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/digital-uae/digital-transformation/cooperation-and-collaboration/the-uae-s-regional-and-international-cooperation-in-digital-transformation/the-government-experience-exchange-programme.

decision-making centres working together to achieve specific goals (McGinnis, 2021), especially when a single-layered governance structure falls apart to meet citizens' needs. Elinor Ostrom introduces PG as structures where multiple governing bodies operate simultaneously, allowing for coordinated and flexible responses to governance issues. PG offers several benefits for environmental policy changes (Ostrom, 2010), including:

1. Flexibility and Innovation: Different governance units can experiment with various approaches to find effective solutions tailored to specific contexts.
2. Local Knowledge and Participation: Local stakeholders can contribute their knowledge and engage in decision-making, leading to more relevant and actionable policies.

He also outlined the necessary conditions for effective polycentric governance. These include clear boundaries and rights for resource users, ways to settle disagreements, and chances to learn and change.

Carlisle and Gruby (2017) proposed a theoretical model for polycentric governance, which offers a systematic framework for understanding interactions among authorities and stakeholders in resource governance. They argue that polycentric systems offer advantages like flexibility, adaptability, and the ability for stakeholders to experiment with tailored governance solutions.

Other researchers characterise PG as "multiple and semi-autonomous decision-making centres operating within a fragmented governance system" (Ekim, 2022; Carlisle, 2017). This framework asserts that decision-making involves multiple participants who face difficulties with coordination, institutional structures, infrastructural connections, and self-organised groups (Gatignon, A.L.C., 2020). The authors elaborated on the initial conceptualisation of PG, which is reinforced in the Figure below. Consequently, a polycentric governance framework encompasses two characteristics: multiple, overlapping decision-making centres possessing a degree of autonomy and an inclination to act in consideration of others through mechanisms of cooperation, competition, conflict, and conflict resolution (Gatignon, 2020: 6–7).

The first noted that the decision-making centres in a polycentric governance system are not limited to formal governmental bodies; legislative

officials, administrative agencies, and other public bodies can also be significant candidates for decision-making centre status. The second attribute highlights that decision-making centres, even if they are formally independent of one another, base their decisions partly on the actions, inactions, or experiences of other members of the system. Taking one another into account, decision-making centres, and other supporting actors in governance.

Thiel (2023) also referred to the normatively defensible polycentric governance that offers three criteria. First, it is crucial for actors to express their concerns about the inadequacy of polycentric governance arrangements in providing collective goods for citizens, a concept known as voice. Second, members of any organisation should push to change the polycentric governance arrangement to serve citizens, which is called the criterion of exit. Third, members of a collective body who are aiming for better services should have the capacity to reformulate institutional settings that adequately meet their needs. This is the criterion for self-organisation. Together, these three criteria cater to orderly contestation (McGinnis 2019; McGinnis et al. 2020).

Table 1. Theoretical Model of a Functional Polycentric Governance System for the Commons

Attribute	Enabling Condition	Advantage: Enhanced Adaptive Capacity	Advantage: Good Institutional Fit	Advantage: Risk Mitigation/ Redundancy
Multiple, overlapping decision-making centers with some degree of autonomy		X	X	X
	Decision-making centers employ diverse institutions	X	X	X
	Decision-making centers exist at different levels and across political jurisdictions		X	X
	The jurisdiction or scope of authority of decision-making centers is coterminous with the boundaries of the problem being addressed		X	
Choosing to act in ways that take account of others through processes of cooperation, competition, conflict, and conflict resolution		X	X	
	Generally applicable rules and norms structure actions and behaviors within the system	X		
	Decision-making centers participate in cross-scale linkages or other mechanisms for deliberation and learning	X	X	
	Mechanisms for accountability exist within the governance system	X		
	A variety of formal and informal mechanisms for conflict resolution exist within the system	X		

Acton, Gruby, and Nakachic highlighted the importance of aligning polycentric governance systems with social dynamics, particularly in large-scale contexts. They argued that effective governance must be socially fit, meaning it should reflect the values and needs of stakeholders, rather than relying solely on structural design. They identified challenges in large-scale governance, including managing diverse stakeholder interests, ensuring effective communication, and addressing power dynamics. They stressed the necessity of assessing social contexts in governance strategy design and promoting stakeholder engagement to enhance ownership and commitment (Acton.L, Gruby.R, Nakachic, 2021).

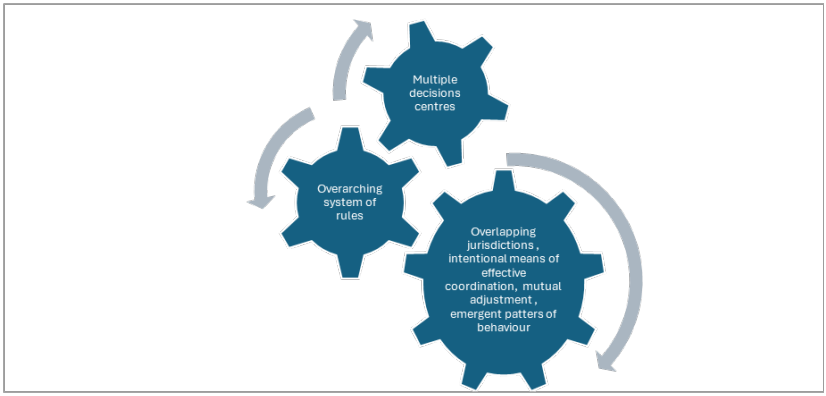


Figure 1: Definition of Polycentric Governance (Source: Author based on provided literature)

Indeed, key principles of PG can be identified from the screened literature including the existence of multiple centers of decision-making, vertical and horizontal coherence, Interconnectedness and inter-dependence of organizations, collaboration and effective communication, decentralization of power between the decision-making centers, adaptability, robustness and resilience: A polycentric approach can better withstand shocks and changes, as multiple governing layers can provide alternative solutions and support.

Leaving no one behind, is also a relevant and imperative principle associated with the polycentric social fit and citizen-centric civil service. LNOB addresses inequity both vertically, amongst individuals and households, and horizontally, through group-based discrimination. This principle focuses on reaching those furthest behind across the SDGs, including ending extreme

poverty (SDG #1), reducing inequalities (SDG #10), ending group-based discrimination, promoting the rule of law and advancing good governance practice (SDG #16). LNOB, with social equity at its core, includes not only reducing disparities across income and wealth but also increasing access to basic services such as education, health, clean water and social protection programs (UNDP, 2018)[4].

Figure 2: Challenges for LNOB in Africa (source: SDGCA, 2022)

Methodology: Analytical framework and methods of data collection

The article adopts an exploratory method to examine the key drivers of change in the civil service and the anticipated outcomes in the UAE, Egypt, and South Africa using a polycentric governance theory. It provides an analytical framework for polycentric governance based on a citizen-oriented approach. We offer an analytical framework. It suggests an analytical framework inspired

4 https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Discussion_Paper_LNOB_EN_lres.pdf.

by Holscher et al. (2019) and adapted by the author as shown in the Figure below, on governance capacities and other scholars.

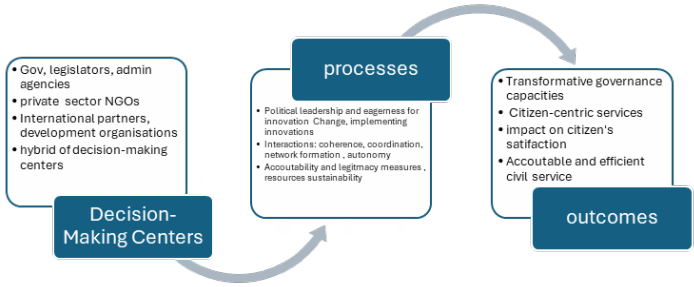


Figure 3: Analytical framework of Polycentric Governance for Civil Service. Source: Author's Compilation

The study contributes to the African literature on public service delivery through an interpretive case study approach. The study employs a combination of qualitative methods, which includes a review of government documents, reports, and regulations on civil service changes in the nations from 2020 to 2024. Semi-structured interviews with national institutions in both nations will enrich this policy-oriented paper's conclusions and proposals.

Guided by the proposed analytical framework, the paper leverages on primary and secondary data to answer the key guiding question and its associated sub-questions. The proposed research methods for this study are listed as follows:

1. **Secondary sources**: this includes thematic analysis of the current literature on the civil service model of the three selected countries, including the recent initiatives taken by the UAE, Egypt, and South Africa to boost public reforms. This includes scanning official reports, articles, national visions, political statements, and high-level engagements at the UAE and AU levels, including the World Government Summit (2024).
2. **Primary sources**: the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 experts in the case study countries, particularly Egypt and South Africa. Three officials from Egyptian institutions, two key academic staff members, three officials from the Government of South Africa, and two representatives from think tanks and civil society. Also, two officials from AU institutions were included.

3. **Participatory observation**: This method is insightful for synthesising interactions amongst a hybrid of decision-making centres during high-level engagements at the African Union level and at the UAE, including the World Government Summit (2024).

The following matrix succinctly explains the application of the research methods:

Table 1: Research questions and applied methods

Question	Source	Method	Who
What are the key drivers of civil service reforms/vision in the UAE, Egypt and South Africa?	Academic articles, Official reports, national visions i.e National Development Plan, UAE Vision 2031, Egypt 2030, NDP 2030 of South Africa Academic articles, books	Content analysis of official documents Thematic analysis (codes and generated themes) from the Interviews Participatory observations	National officials Development partners
How have the existing institutional and coordination mechanisms – which includes Government entities, legislative branch and administration agencies collaborate to implement civil service reforms?	Interviews Official statements Publications on AU organs and continental reports (institutional reform and integration report 2023) Academic chapters, papers and articles on the APRM and AU Field experience	Thematic analysis (codes and generated themes) from the Interviews and survey Content analysis of official documents Participant observation	Key experts National officials
To what extent has the UAE model can be leveraged to benefit other BRICs countries? what could be the enabling conditions to foster collaboration with Egypt and South Africa?	Interviews Official continental reports Civil society publications	thematic analysis (codes and generated themes) from the Interviews Discourse / content analysis Survey findings Participant observation	Member states representatives, APRM National structures, youth, CSOs and academia

BRICS countries' Experiences in Civil Service

United Arab Emirates

Building on an extensive review of literature and official documents, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has taken positive strides to modernise its civil service and delivery model. The UAE was ranked seventh (7th) globally in the IDM World Competitiveness Ranking 2024, issued by the World Competitiveness Centre of the International Institute for Management Development (IMD).[5] For the eighth consecutive year, the UAE ranked first in the Middle East and North Africa region and fourth in government efficiency.[6]

The United Arab Emirates is a constitutional federation that consists of seven emirates: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ras Al Khaimah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain, and Fujairah. The seven emirates practice autonomous, decentralised planning models. According to the Constitution, the federation shall guarantee all UAE citizens equal rights and opportunities, safety and security, and social justice (UAE Gov, 2023).

The public administration reforms (PARs) in the UAE, and particularly Dubai, the most influential emirate alongside Abu Dhabi, date to the 1990s during a global transition towards globalisation and market-oriented policies worldwide. Diversification of the economy represents a critical element of Dubai's economic survival strategy by expanding non-oil sectors, including business, construction, international trade, finance, and tourism (Koji: 3). Further, global partnerships as well as state leadership are classified amongst key drivers of PARs in the UAE (Sharker, & Al-Athmay, 2019).

5 IMD is an international survey aims to assess the capacity and readiness of an economy to adopt and explore digital technologies as a key driver for economic transformation in business, government, and wider society. https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/uae-competitiveness/imd-world-competitiveness-yearbook/the-uae-performance.

6 UAE Ranking. Available at https://imd.widen.net/content/zfxullm2dk/pdf/AE1page_WCY_2024.pdf.

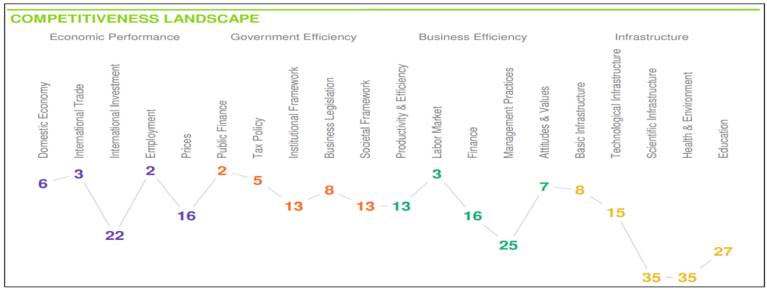


Figure 5: Competitiveness Ranking of UAE. Source: IMD, 2024.

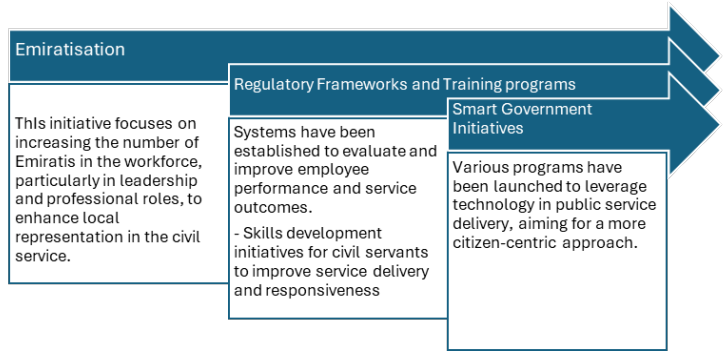
Political Vision for Civil Service Excellence is reinforced.

Mohamed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai, conceived a transformative political vision to galvanise the city's transformation to be a global icon for business and tourism in the Middle East. He adopted the 2015 Dubai Strategic Plan.[7] Which aimed 'to establish a universal understanding of Dubai's vision among the various government entities and to ensure a common framework for the operations of these entities' [Government of Dubai, 2007: 9]. The Plan was developed based on five key sectors with core strategic targets: (1) economic development; (2) social development; (3) infrastructure, land, and environment; (4) security, justice, and safety; and (5) government excellence (Government of Dubai 2007: 9- P.16).

Reforms of the civil service were introduced as part of the economic modernisation package. To localise the public civil service and enhance administration procedures, key initiatives are adopted by the federal Government of UAE as explained in the figure below.

7 https://www.arabruleoflaw.org/compendium/Files/UAE/94.pdf.

Table 2: Key Initiatives adopted by the UAE to promote efficient Civil Service model



Source: Author's compilation

E-government constitutes a fundamental administrative transformation. The 'e-Government' concept, initiated in 2001, facilitated the establishment and promotion of websites for various governmental entities, resulting in the computerisation of all administrative operations and services. This program markedly enhanced the online service rate in Dubai City, achieving 90%. Recently, the Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA) established the UAE Digital Government Online Service Index (DGOSI)[8] to assess the quality of digital services offered by federal government agencies. It also seeks to evaluate the advancement of digital engagement and open data inside these bodies.

The transfer of knowledge and investment in human resources have consistently been essential for the UAE's competence in public service delivery. The Mohammed Bin Rashid Program for Leadership Development[9] aims to enhance the capabilities of future leaders and government officials in the UAE. The establishment of the Mohammed Bin Rashes School of Government aims to enhance research on public policies in the UAE and the Arab world, in conjunction with the Department of Government Enablement[10] in Abu Dhabi, which seeks to facilitate the registration of government employees as

8 https://dgov.tdra.gov.ae/en/publications/uae-digital-government-online-services-index.
9 https://www.mbrcld.ae/en/.
10 https://www.dge.gov.ae/en/what-we-do/programs.

learners and to maintain precise records of their course completions, awards, and certifications.

The leaders and administrations of the UAE, both federal and municipal, have incorporated the notion of leaving no one behind into the UAE 2031 vision, which aligns with the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The vision is directed by four fundamental pillars; 1) Forward Society for prosperity; 2) Forward Economy – reflecting the UAE's belief in the importance of human capital as the main driver of the next 10-year development plan ; 3) Forward Diplomacy to strengthen the UAE's influence and soft power; 4) Forward Ecosystem to enhance the government performance and the UAE's technological methods including the development of digital infrastructure.

To achieve this vision, the Government set key indicators as follows:

1. one of the top 10 countries globally in the Human Development Index[11]
2. one of the top 10 countries globally in the quality of healthcare
3. position the Emirati cities among the best 10 cities globally in terms of quality of life

Recently, the government launched a unified portal for digital services called "Sharik.ae", which means in Arabic "participate" to receive queries and reflections from citizens and residents in the UAE concerning life in the UAE. Under this portal, there is a specific section pertinent to the UAE's 2031 vision for justice, safety and law.[12]

Beyond the internal reforms, the UAE established different channels with the African Union to promote the exchange of knowledge and capacity building with African countries. The Government Experience Exchange Office was established in 2018 to endorse a knowledge-sharing platform and transfer the United Arab Emirates' experience and best practices in the field of government development and modernisation to other countries. Five African countries—Angola, Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, and South Africa—took part in an exchange program set up by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The goal was to promote the Government Excellence and Government Accelerators program, which gives cross-sectoral government teams a way to deal with problems and reach big goals quickly (Prime Minister's office, 2021).

11 https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI.

12 https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/justice-safety-and-the-law/justice-safety-and-we-the-uae-2031-vision.

On a bilateral note and as revealed in the Figure below, the UAE supported the Government of Egypt to promote the "Government Excellence" initiative to boost the capacities of civil servants within the new Administrative Reform Plan. They also offered training programs on digital transformation, human resources, and the code of ethics in civil service.

Figure 6: UAE Support Program for Egypt's Administrative Reforms. Source: UAE Prime Minister's Office, 2020

South Africa

South Africa, as a post-apartheid country, has been going through many transitions to enhance the civil service model and citizens satisfaction. As one of the most unequal countries worldwide, the government of South Africa has sought a myriad of drivers to boost a professional civil service model despite wicked problems like corruption and low efficiency of civil service. The National Development Plan (NDP) imagines the creation of a "capable and developmental state" for South Africa, guided by the East Asian states as ideal models to be emulated. (Ukwandu.C.D, 2019).

Many experts and reports acknowledged the South African Constitution as one of the most solid and comprehensive across the continent, aiming to promote constitutional democracy in the state. It establishes the principles governing public administration, including the need for a professional, impartial, and accountable civil service. The "Bill of Rights" in Chapter 9 of

the Constitution and the institutions that upheld it gave civil servants a lot of freedom. The Public Protector, the South African Human Rights Commission, the Commission for Gender Equity, the Auditor-General, and the Electoral Commission [1] are just a few of the institutions that have this freedom. These institutions are separate from the government and only have to follow the constitution and the law (APRM Review, 2022).

A Professional and Efficient Civil Service for a Developmental State

Political vision and eagerness for excellence as key drivers for civil service. According to the interviewees' reflections, the eagerness to establish a professional civil service in south Africa is grounded on a myriad of key drivers including the following:

1. To address the post-apartheid context of discrimination against Black South Africans and historical inequality, transformation policies focused on affirmative action and deployment equity.
2. The African National Congress (ANC), which has been the ruling party since 1994, aims to improve the government's responsiveness and efficiency in providing essential services, particularly to marginalised communities, while addressing service delivery.
3. In South Africa's government service, corruption and lack of accountability have been prevalent for decades. The goal was to increase anti-corruption efforts to restore public trust in government, including audits, ethics policies, and open procurement procedures.
4. Public sector professionalisation and capacity building aimed to enhance public servant competency, professionalism, and productivity. It focuses on capacity building and professional growth. Therefore, the government approved the long-awaited the National Framework Towards Professionalisation of the Public Sector[13] in October 2022, which seeks to replace the Public Service Act (1994) and the Public Service Regulations that set out the structure, functions, and management of the civil service. These laws aim to promote fairness, equity, and efficiency in the public sector.

13 https://www.thensg.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-FRAMEWORK-BOOKLET.pdf.

5. improving governance and aligning civil service objectives with South Africa's National Development Plan and the 2030 Vision for Sustainable Development. The district-development model highlights the need for better coordination among central government, provincial authorities, and municipalities.
6. Modernisation and digital transformation are crucial, as South Africa was an early adopter of access to information legislation and has introduced digital services to enhance efficiency, especially considering challenges from COVID-19. The civil service wage bill, which accounts for nearly 30% of the national budget, is deemed unsustainable, making reforms necessary for better resource allocation and cost-effective service delivery.
7. The promotion of public participation and social accountability aligns with South Africa's commitments to international frameworks such as the African Union Charter on Civil Service and the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 16, which emphasizes strong institutions and good governance. The Government of South Africa and the private sector view an efficient civil service as a mechanism for enhancing democracy and expanding democratic space.
8. The African presence and influence across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and dedication to the African Union governance prosses, including APRM[14] and Open Government Partnership (OGP), to enhance citizen participation and engagement in public administration reforms.
9. Last, necessity for fostering labour relations and collective bargaining. The government of South Africa acknowledges labour as a tool to improve industrial relations, productivity, and collective bargaining outcomes. One of the interviewees stated, "Here we try the reform process, trying to balance employee welfare with public service efficiency. We bring our own perspective and also align reforms with global best practices in governance and public administration."

14 https://thepresidency.gov.za/president-attend-african-peer-review-mechanism-20th-anniversary.

A hybrid of institutions and decision-making centres with less conflict provisions

Chapter Seven (7) of the South African Constitution highlighted that the local sphere of the government consists of municipalities, which must be established for the whole of the territory of the Republic. The executive and legislative authority of a municipality is vested in its Municipal Council. A municipality has the right to govern, on its own initiative, the local government affairs of its community, subject to national and provincial legislation, as provided for in the Constitution. The national or provincial government may not compromise or impede a municipality's ability or right to exercise its powers or perform its functions.[15]

Alongside the constitution, the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Batho Pele White Paper, No. 1459 of 1997) introduced a very clear policy framework and implementation strategy for the transformation of Public Service Delivery. The central component of the strategy is the eight Batho Pele "Citizen First" Principles, which concentrate on the consultative nature of civil service and openness and transparency.[16] The eight principles call for consultations with citizens for a better quality of civil service, accessibility of all citizens to the services to which they are entitled, openness and transparency of information, value for money, and redress.

The South African civil servants' total number is estimated at approximately 1.2 million persons, while the total population of the country is 60 million citizens. To improve coordination and collaboration at the civil service level, there are two levels of institutional coherence:

1. **Executive branch level:** As contained in the Figure below, the Presidency and the executive ensure proper follow-up between the presidency and different executive and legislative bodies involved in civil service delivery. The following chart illustrates different mechanisms established to coordinate and facilitate efficient communication at different levels of government.

15 https://www.justice.gov.za/constitution/SAConstitution-web-eng-07.pdf.

16 Civil Service Commission.

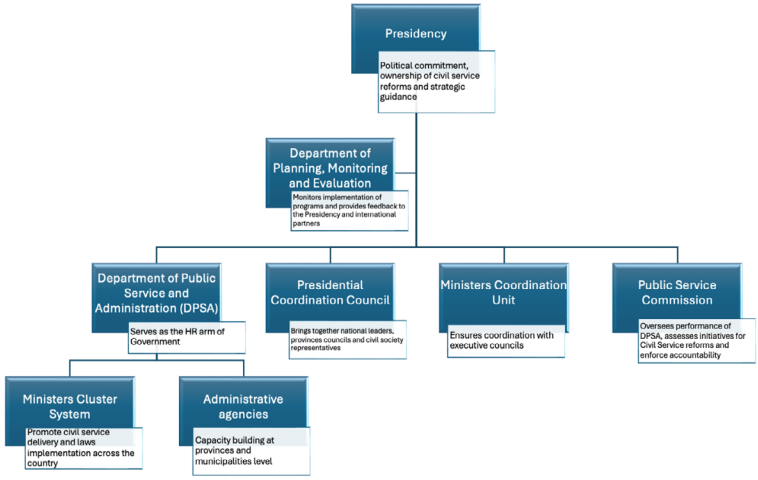


Figure 7: Institutional and Coordination Mechanisms for Civil Service in South Africa. Source: Author's compilation[17]

One of the innovative dialogues which is designated to promote leaving no one behind is the Forum of South Africa's Directors General (FSA), which aims to liaise cooperate between directors at national levels across the Government, listen carefully to their demands and try to address institutional and capacity-building gaps and performance management across the national bodies.

2. **Society and private sector level**: according to one of the interviewees, the Government of South Africa, given the historical inequalities dilemma, heavily concentrated on citizen engagement throughout the civil society role in promoting the rule of law and democratic provisions. The private sector, alongside trade unions and other associations, has been working closely with the Government through the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) to boost economic recovery and address developmental issues. Government, labour, business and community organisations, through this platform, established a social dialogue and annual summit to promote economic growth and exchange views on the national priorities through a wide citizenry approach.

17 Guided by the inputs of interviewees from South Africa

Collaboration with the UAE and civil service efficiency

Interviewees concurred that engagement with the UAE had increased significantly over the previous five years. Within the framework of the BRICs, South Africa has enhanced its economic and political relations with the UAE, particularly in key sectors such as infrastructure and digital transformation. Political leadership established a bilateral pact and a joint committee to improve bilateral relations. As a result of these initiatives, the UAE has emerged as a main economic partner within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), with commerce between the two states increasing by 45%.

The UAE has emerged as a principal importing partner for South Africa within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), accounting for 38% of imports from the region. South Africa is the UAE's second-largest trade partner in Africa, accounting for 8% of non-oil trade (UAE MOFA, 2024) .[18]

The strategic alignment between both countries positively contributes to their collaboration through BRICS, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77, and UN platforms. The interviewees highlighted several areas of collaboration that they found encouraging.

1. Institutional capacity and professionalism in merit-based recruitment appraisals
2. Enforcing rules and laws, combating corruption, and maintaining institutional integrity with the district-development model are all important aspects.
3. Promoting citizen-centred feedback systems in the civil service
4. Cybersecurity, digitisation exchange
5. Benchmarking the National School of Government with the Dubai School of Government for agile training programs.

Egypt

Egypt has a substantial civil service framework, comprising 25% of the total public sector. The evolution of Egypt's public governance reform encompasses multiple phases aimed at establishing a more effective and accountable administrative structure. Significant political turbulence characterised the period following the 2011 Revolution and its subsequent repercussions (El

18 https://natlex.ilo.org/dyn/natlex2/r/natlex/fe/details?p3_isn=27749

Baradei, 2021). Despite numerous initiatives aimed at decentralisation, most governmental efforts to modernise the civil service remain predominantly centralised and concentrated (Boex, 2011; Barsoum, 2018).

Similarly, the civil service reform in Egypt encountered numerous challenges, notably the disproportionately large bureaucracy, which comprised 6.37 million employees in 2014 (Al-Araby, 2014), presenting a significant strain on the state budget. Moreover, the entrenched corruption permeating the executive branch has developed into an institutional phenomenon within a multifaceted state structure. It has been challenging for public governance reforms to progress over the years due to persistent corruption, low public trust in civil service delivery, a lack of transparency, and the prevalence of nepotism (Ali, 2015). In 2015, Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Egypt 88th among 168 nations, with a score of 36 out of 100 reflecting perceived corruption levels.

Bold Political Leadership for Institutional Transformation

The Government of Egypt has adopted a bold vision for administrative reform since 2014. The overall coordinator of this portfolio from 2014 to 2019 was the Ministry of Planning, Economic Development, and Administrative Reform (MPED). Dr Ashraf Al-Araby, former Minister of MPED, oversaw the adoption of the 2016 Civil Service Law, which aims to make merit-based hiring official in the public sector. To do this, the law's recruitment processes, performance reviews, protections for youth and gender equality, digital transformation, and promotion standards need to be changed to ensure meritocracy.[19]

According to one of the interviewees and a lead expert in public administrative reforms, political leadership has been a strategic driver for administrative reform. In 2018, President Sisi emphasised the importance of human capacity building as part of the government's top sectors and national vision, which encompasses health, the economy, and human capital. Egypt's 2030 Vision for Sustainable Development.[20] Also incorporated the Administrative Reform Plan (ARP). The interviewee further stated that political commitment resulted in the allocation of specific financial resources and budget lines for the implementation of administrative reforms.

19 https://natlex.ilo.org/dyn/natlex2/r/natlex/fe/details?p3_isn=27749

20 https://mped.gov.eg/Files/Egypt_Vision_2030_EnglishDigitalUse.pdf.

Additionally, the president and the prime minister›s cabinet restructured the established institutional and coordination systems to provide strategic guidance and oversee the implementation and monitoring of the ARP. The purpose of that is to ensure that all parties are involved in this "institutional administrative transformation.» The interviewee also stated that «reform is not the responsibility of one organ or a person; it is a collective responsibility across different entities.»

Other experts from the government noted that another driver for administrative reforms is the low trust of citizens in government services, along with the downgrade of Egypt's assessment in most international reports regarding working labour conditions and civil service limitations, including corruption practices.

Formulation of Coordination and Institutional Mechanisms for Administrative Reforms

As far as the multiple centres of decision-making are concerned, it can be argued that, since 2019, critical structural adjustments have been applied to ensure adequate oversight of the administrative reform process. The 2019 Presidential Decree for assigning members of the Government Cabinet noted that the Prime Minister is appointed as the delegated Minister in charge of Administrative Reform, along with his duty as the Prime Minister.

Accordingly, the Prime Minister established the Supreme Committee for Administrative Reforms as a way to make sure that reforms are "institutionalised" and that administrative reforms are carried out across all levels of the government and ministerial entities. The Supreme Committee convenes twice a year, bringing together all relevant ministers involved in administrative reform, such as the Minister of Local Development, as well as representatives from technical experts and nongovernmental organisations.

The Central Agency for Organisation and Administration (CAOA) in Egypt, established in 1964, is responsible for reforming public services and focusing on the integrity and effectiveness of public service delivery monitoring, alongside other tasks such as recruitment, capacity building, training, and promotion. The referred decree assigned CAOA the role of rapporteur for the Supreme Committee for Administrative Reform, with its institutional mechanism presented in the figure below. The decree also established the Civil Service Commission as a technical arm, addressing issues related to

civil servants, promotions, and incentives. The CAOA has prioritised the establishment of an observatory for public services to develop a framework for measuring the performance and quality of citizen-centred public service (2024: 25).

The Egyptian Parliament also receives regular updates on the progress towards APR to ensure accountability and integrity of the reform process.

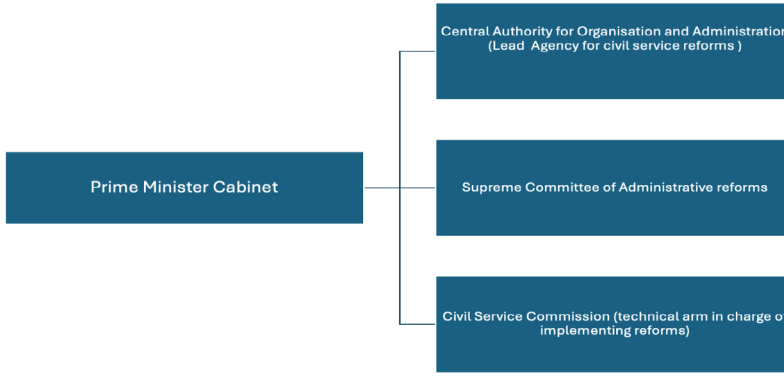


Figure 8: Institutional Mechanisms for Administrative Reform in Egypt Source: Authors Compilation

Impact of Administrative Reforms on Egypt's Service Delivery

Successful Initiatives echoed the positive outcomes of Administrative Reforms on Egypt's civil service delivery. The interviewees commended the outcomes of Administrative Reforms as they contribute to some of the following successful practices and initiatives:

The establishment of a merit-based recruitment Centre

CAOA initiated the establishment of a completely digitalised capability assessment and competition centre. As the government agency responsible for coordinating the APR implementation, the CAO established a single portal for all government job openings. According to rules, all government agencies shall adhere to an asymmetric and unified recruitment system and procedures

which enhance the integrity of the civil service and ensure equal access to job opportunities, as one of the interviewees alluded.[21]

Preparedness of Civil Servants for Transition to the New Administrative Capital

The government, through CAOA, launched a comprehensive training program to prepare public employees for the transition to the New Administrative Capital (NAC). As per the inputs from the former President of CAOA, Saleh El-Sheikh, "CAOA adopted a scientific methodology for the movement plan. A certain module was developed and circulated to all employees, which has been equally approved by the supreme committee. Oriented guidelines were introduced to civil servants to prepare them physically and physiologically for such a massive transition". CAOA has trained 50,000 employees who have moved to the NAC.

To oversee the overall movement process, a special committee was established under the leadership of the Prime Minister, with the participation of all relevant ministries and authorities. The committee used to meet every two weeks and make important decisions about the movement plan based on six transformations. These transformations include assessing and preserving old buildings, using digital infrastructure for the movement, managing human resources, setting the rules for moving employees, and offering incentives to employees, such as housing and transportation allowances, along with other subsidised services for education, transportation, etc. These efforts aimed to create a more efficient and sustainable urban environment. Furthermore, the committee emphasised the importance of public feedback, ensuring that the voices of citizens were heard and considered in the ongoing development of the movement plan.

The Ministry of Transportation also established a second technical committee to monitor the movement plan. Recently, the Ministry of Transportation launched a survey to assess the quality of services provided by the NAC and its efficiency in supporting the well-being of civil servants.

21 https://chandlergovernmentindex.com/country-stories/egypt-new-capital-new-culture-of-governance/.

Strengthening Training Capacities and Egypt's National Indicator to assess good governance

The National Institute of Governance and Sustainable Development exemplifies administrative transformation in Egypt. The NGSD is a governmental profit agency characterised by autonomy with the objective of enhancing Egypt's performance in governance indicators at global, regional, and local levels. The Institute serves as a monitoring entity for Egypt's performance in these indicators, providing policymakers with clear recommendations to improve Egypt's progress (Ezzat, 2023).

The Prime Minister designates an executive director to oversee the NGSD. The Minister of Planning and International Cooperation serves as the head of the Board of Trustees for the Institute in their professional capacity. The NGSD serves as the training division of the ministry, offering a variety of capacity-building programs and training focused on good governance and related topics.

The NGSD has created a national governance indicator to improve Egypt's position in international governance rankings and to enhance the quality of governance reporting at the national level. The government aims to conduct comprehensive evaluations that reflect the achievements of the Egyptian state across various governance dimensions and identify areas requiring improvement. While the figure below reveals national indicators, the Egyptian government does not regard this indicator as a replacement for international governance indicators. This tool serves as a self-diagnostic instrument that monitors the state of governance in Egypt, evaluates the efforts made for its implementation, and identifies potential areas for improvement. This also provides the government with a method to assess the effectiveness of its development programs' implementation (NIGSD, 2023)

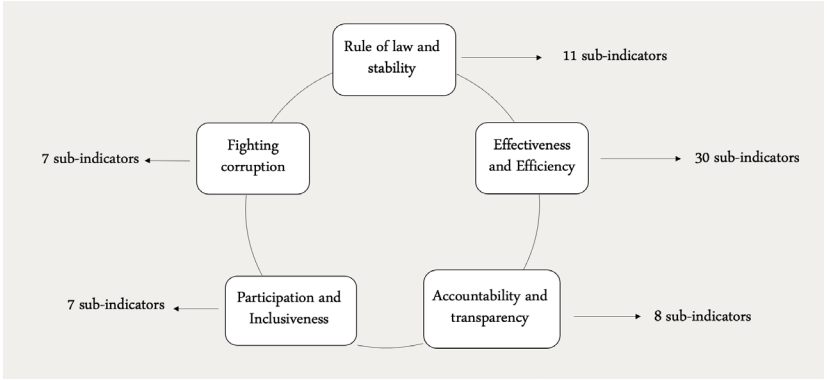


Figure 9: Thematic areas and Indicators of Egypt's National Governance Indicator. Source: NIGSD, 2024.

Building the Eco-System for Anti-Corruption reforms in Egypt

Corruption represents a persistent and deeply entrenched issue in Egypt. The intricate national framework of civil service, coupled with the expectations placed on the central government to deliver services, facilitated the spread of corruption among various entities and authorities throughout Egypt's 27 governorates. The Anti-Corruption Authority (ACA) and the Anti-Corruption Academy have initiated a significant transformation in the efforts to combat corruption in Egypt.

The adoption of the Anti-Corruption Strategy[22] Represents a significant milestone for the civil service reform agenda in Egypt. The strategy seeks to enhance the skills of government employees, strengthen integrity and transparency, and create a unified administrative framework that meets the needs of investors. Additionally, it aims to create a strong legislative and judicial framework to address corruption. It involves continuous amendments to laws that enhance anti-corruption efforts, along with judicial procedures and digital litigation. It includes capacity building for the judiciary members and personnel.

The Anti-Corruption Authority implemented the strategy by establishing a dedicated unit within each ministry and government entity to investigate corruption issues and report on violations. The units adhere to a standardised

22 https://aca.gov.eg/Media/News/2022/12/14/2022-638066209175469059-546.pdf.

reporting system for the ACA, recognised as an effective mechanism for monitoring the strategy's progress.

The Anti-Corruption Academy enhances this initiative by offering diverse training sessions aimed at increasing awareness of corruption practices and counterstrategies among civil servants. The Academy has expanded its training programs to support African nations, such as Sierra Leone, Namibia, and South Africa, as Egypt currently holds the chair of the Africa Association of Authorities 20-2025[23].

Interviewees assert that the anti-corruption strategy represents a "collective effort" undertaken by the anti-corruption authority, NIGSD, and the ministries of justice and economic planning, in conjunction with oversight institutions. Monitoring and evaluation present significant challenges in assessing the implementation of the overall Administrative Reform Plan across Egyptian governorates and within government bodies.

Interviewees suggested that CAOA requires further empowerment to engage effectively with various ministries and local municipalities for the implementation of the ARP. It is recommended that CAOA establish a semi-annual, citizen-oriented platform to raise awareness of the ARP, coordinate administrative reform efforts, and enhance monitoring and evaluation at subnational levels. This will facilitate the monitoring of outcomes and enhance public trust in government services.

The OECD's latest review of Egypt's civil service reforms identified several issues. Egypt must establish data governance protocols to ensure that government institutions can collect, utilise, and store public information consistently and logically. The implementation of the new guidelines for monitoring and evaluation is crucial (OECD, 2024) and essential for enhancing coordination between vertical and horizontal data collection and utilisation (Igrioglu, Ostry, and Allam, 2020).

Conclusion

The article has attempted to examine the application of the polycentric governance approach to promote a renewed civil service model in three BRIC countries. Further, it aimed to unlock opportunities for triangular or bilateral benchmarking and learning opportunities between these countries to enhance

23 https://aca.gov.eg/News/3132.aspx.

civil service delivery, citizen satisfaction and trust in their government. In spite of the differences between the three countries, they are clearly unique, and each has tried to create and use its own "modern civil service model" based on its own vision, national incentives, and available funds. The article made the following key findings and recommendations:

1. Egypt remains challenged by the heaviest bureaucracy compared to South Africa and the Emirates, considering the number of civil servants (150,000 in the UAE, 1.2 million in South Africa, and 6.7 million in Egypt). Despite various challenges, the primary data of the study noted a variety of reforms and affirmative actions taken by the governments of South Africa and Egypt to address the professionalisation of the public sector, enforcing the rule of law by fighting corruption, and promoting a code of ethics in the past few years.
2. The UAE and South Africa clearly have a hybrid system of different autonomous entities involved in decision-making and implementation of administrative reforms, while Egypt has a centralised approach to take these reforms into action. However, Egypt's citizens still need to see and acknowledge the results of transformative reforms. Therefore, we can extend the polycentric analytical framework and assumptions to more detailed research at the national level, which is quite useful.
3. All three countries acknowledge the need for political leadership and technical will to initiate reforms. The paper showed how the role of the ruler of Dubai was influential in reorienting the country's vision and digital transformation. On the other hand, President Al-Sisi of Egypt and President Ramaphosa of South Africa initiated effective administrative reforms, including fighting corruption and improving quality of services to citizens.
4. There are many lessons from the UAE that Egypt and South Africa can benefit from, including: i) the UAE's belief in building reliable human capital and respecting the citizens' expectations; ii) empowering youth and providing exposure to senior officials and young leaders to build a second generation of leaders across the public sector; iii) policy reorientation for digital transformation and ease of access to services; and iv) nurturing the mindset of excellence, the Edge of Government, and creating the national tools to measure efficiency, i.e., the efficiency index.

5. Egypt and South Africa are recommended to equally share their best practices, including i) establishing a self-assessment and competence centre for civil servants and promoting meritocracy; ii) application of digital services for a broad scale of citizens; iii) institutionalising Anti-corruption mechanisms and coordination units; and iv) investing in human capital through training programs and impactful initiatives.

Intensifying knowledge-sharing programs, including the exchange of civil servants and setting standards and benchmarking between the three countries' government schools and training institutes, can contribute to the efficiency and flexibility of the African civil service. This can be leveraged under the BRICS platform. The study's findings, such as collaboration, will positively boost an efficient and agile civil service in Africa.

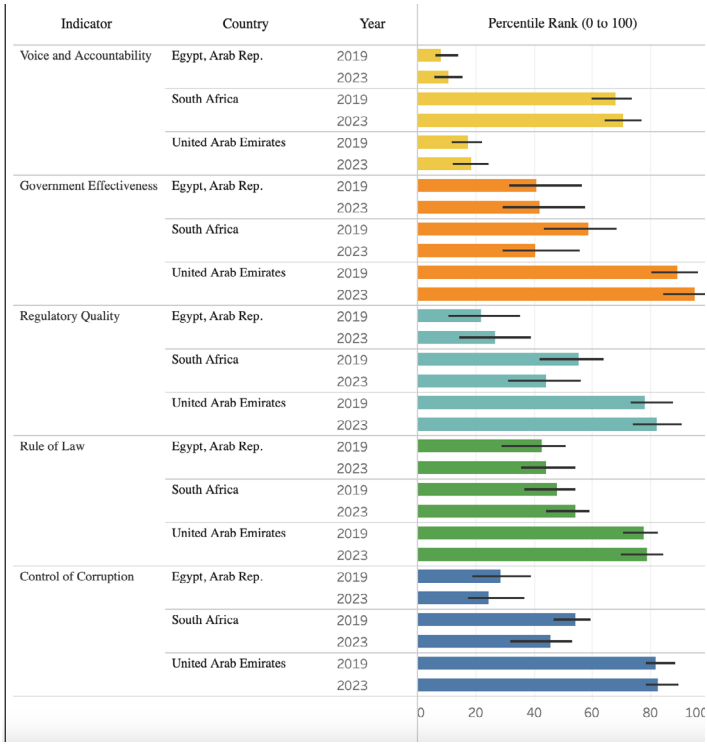


Figure 10: Governance Effectiveness indicators (Source: World Bank, 2024)

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Possibilities for African Women's Liberation in the 21st Century

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Abstract

The systemic underrepresentation of women in politics, gendered economic inequality, high rates of maternal mortality, gender-based violence and femicide are some of the manifestations of the structures of power that limit African women. In the face of these limitations that hinder African women, questions arise about what can be done. Therefore, this article interrogates the possibilities that Pan-Africanism and feminism hold for African women in the 21st century. Using a qualitative methodology and a critical analytical framework, this paper argues that these ideologies can serve as an entry point to engage in consciousness raising for African women to foster their increased representation in society. It recommends the embrace of a Pan-African feminist thinking to liberate African women from restrictive structures of power that inhibit them from full self-actualisation and gender equality.

Keywords: 21st Century, African Women, Feminism, Liberation, Pan-Africanism.

Introduction

Pan-Africanism in the 21st century would have to answer the 'woman' question that it ignored during the era of political decolonisation in Africa. Abbas and Mama (2014) note that the Pan-African struggle for liberation on the African continent treated the 'woman' question as divisive, which led to a

deliberate negligence of the oppression African women faced. The deliberate jettisoning of the woman question not only fuelled the continued oppression of women in Africa but also led to the non-recognition of notable women who were involved in the Pan-Africanist movement, including Olufunmilayo Ransome Kuti, Gambo Sawaba, Andree Blouin, Adelaide Casley-Hayford. One of the most decisive implications is the importation of the colonial legacy of excluding and subjugating African women from the polity, such that they are not participating in the public sphere in post-colonial Africa. Most of the African society is constructed on a patriarchal system that privileges male dominance in public and private decision-making spheres (Tamale 2020). This system is further maintained by religious and cultural norms, traditions that treat women as inferior or secondary in status, the consequence of which manifests across different sectors of society (Mama 2019). The exclusion and underrepresentation of African women from public decision-making is a manifestation of this system. The system upon which this exclusion propagates harmful and restrictive attitudes concerning the place of women in society, results in gender inequality (Olaitan 2023a).

Gender inequality is pervasive in Africa, represented by the underrepresentation of women in public decision-making, the endemic gendered violence women face, and the gendered pay gap. When we discuss the place of African women in politics, for instance, we often have to argue for their increased participation because they are not duly represented in political offices – as of 2024, the average for women's political representation is below 30% (Africa Barometer 2024). The widening gender pay gap on the continent is affecting the attainment of income equality between men and women workers in the labour sector (OECD 2021).

Several interventions to mitigate against the patriarchal system that inhibits the potential of African women have been implemented. Governments and international organisations have passed laws, adopted affirmative action measures, and ratified international conventions to advance women's increased participation in the public sphere. For instance, the African Union (AU) adopted the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa to ensure the full participation of women in the public sphere. In 2004, there was a Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality as part of the AU's commitment towards gender inequality in Africa. However, these measures are yet to yield the desired result due to several factors. For instance, even though African governments all agreed that there was a need

for women to participate in politics, only 45 African countries have targeted quota policies to facilitate this need (Olaitan 2023a). There is a disconnect between policy and action when it comes to addressing the exclusion that women face in Africa. This is because, as Horn (2020: para 1) notes, "systems of power want to stay in power, and they will make sure they stay in power using any means necessary."

Drawing from the above, it becomes imperative to acknowledge that Africa is faced with another liberation struggle – freedom from restrictive structures of power and for gender equality. This article examines the possibilities that Pan-Africanism and feminism hold for actualising this struggle, considering that these two ideological praxes are integral to engendering gender equality in Africa. By asking, what possibilities does Pan-Africanism and feminism hold for African women in the 21st century? This article engages the nuances that arise from the relationship between Pan-Africanism, feminism, and African women in the 21st century. It utilises a desktop qualitative method and a critical analytical framework as its approach of enquiry and engages Pan-Africanism as both an ideology and a liberation movement to understand how it can aid in achieving gender equality. It presents feminism as a necessary theory and praxis for the dismantling of oppressive structures that limit women as a solution for achieving equality. To look towards Pan-Africanism and feminism creates ground for acknowledging the need for theoretical and practical measures that can address the woes African women are battling

African Women in the 21st Century: Issues and Challenges

The African Gender Equality Index report (2024) notes that while gains have been made in the political and social dimensions towards closing the inequality gap in Africa, these gains are neutered by the regression in the economic and financial spheres. This is because women in Africa continue to face a variety of obstacles that hinder their equal participation across all sectors of society. Women's rights are frequently violated in both the public and private arenas and in a wide variety of ways (Olaitan and Taiwo 2025). Private violations, such as those involving family, property, and domestic abuse, for which customary law is the relevant legal system and which are frequently viewed as private concerns in which the state should not meddle (OHCHR 2016). The underrepresentation and low participation of women in society are obvious across different spheres of society.

There are high rates of maternal mortality and morbidity that can be attributable to both more distal factors, like gender inequality, and proximal factors, like haemorrhage, sepsis, and unsafe abortion. This includes denying women the autonomy to access sexual and reproductive health, denying them access to contraception, and denying them access to education, particularly sexual health education (OHCHR 2016). It is also tied to more general problems, such as a lack of access to water and sanitation, which are essential for maintaining good health, notably during pregnancy, as well as a lack of proper infrastructure to ensure that women can actually enjoy their health rights. The high rates of maternal mortality and morbidity are a result of weak health systems, gaps in quality of care, such as drug stockouts or insufficient human resources among health professionals. Even after women have access to health facilities, they may still experience issues and unwarranted delays. Due to specific stigmatisation, some populations are discouraged from seeking out sexual and reproductive health care (OHCHR 2016). Despite widespread epidemics in many countries, research has shown that young women are particularly vulnerable to HIV. Structural reasons, including stigma, discrimination, partnerships between young women and older men, which are linked to low condom usage, violence, and other human rights abuses that women experience, contribute to the high HIV incidence and prevalence among women and girls. In addition to making women more susceptible to contracting HIV, these human rights violations also discourage them from using HIV prevention, testing, and treatment services (OHCHR 2016).

Across the world, women's labour force participation is much lower than men's. Despite having similar qualifications, African women are less likely to get employment on the official job market (UN Women 2022). Across all educational levels, men tend to have more career opportunities than women in the workforce, as men outnumber women by 37% among people with a secondary education (UN Women 2022). Ojo and Olaitan (2024:10) contend that the low educational participation of girls in sectors like information and communication technologies, science, technology, engineering, and math, as well as their less frequent use of digital tools, may lead to wider gaps and higher inequality. Often, because of the assumption that technology is only for boys, which is expressed in restrictive societal narratives, girls are prevented from using it. The bulk of informal jobs in Africa are held by women, who also endure low productivity in the agricultural sector (Akpa et.al 2024). They argue that there are significant gender disparities in access to agrarian knowledge

and agricultural training, which impede women's participation in agricultural extension services (ibid:2).

The discussion of women and peacebuilding in Africa frequently centres on the underrepresentation of women in peace processes as well as their agency during conflict and peace. This serves as the foundation for the call for increased women's participation in peace and security. Olaitan (2023b) notes that women's participation in all aspects of peacebuilding in Africa is low. Chauke (2022) argues that just 19% of jobs in the information and communications technology sector are held by women, because women have much less access to employment prospects in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector, and there are fewer women working in these positions. In comparison to their male counterparts, women who are employed in the sector receive low earnings. Malinga (2020) adds that the gender pay gap and gender inequality in the ICT business result in women earning up to 25% less than men in the technology sector. So, unless adequate steps are taken to adopt sustainable digital policies relating to gender, the gender gap will continue to increase in the ICT sector.

A deeply ingrained patriarchal system, in which public decision-making authority is perceived to be the domain of men, is fundamental to the limitations that women face. Sadie (2005) argues that "traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes especially as regards women's roles and status in society remain strong, particularly in rural areas" (cited in Mlambo and Kapingura 2019:5). In most African communities, roles and the distribution of labour are still distinctly gendered. Women find it more challenging to transition from their traditional domestic responsibilities to public roles outside of the home due to these social standards. This is due to the fact that women's gender identity is primarily perceived as having a domestic aspect and prevents women from entering the public domain (Kangas et.al. 2015). A society that prevents the self-actualisation of women is patriarchal because it privileges male dominance and hinges authority in both the private and public spheres on masculinity.

Pan-Africanism: An Ideology and A Movement for Liberation

Adi (2018:2) defines Pan-Africanism as "the efforts to promote the political, socio-economic and cultural unity, emancipation and self-reliance of Africa

and its diaspora." Geiss (1967:720) defines it "as an intellectual or political movement among Africans or people of African descent that saw Africa, Africans, and people of African descent as a unit." It includes ideas that see Africa as a whole and support its political independence, the economic, technological, and social modernisation of African society through the establishment of some political unification or close political cooperation among African countries. Nangwanya (2016) asserts that Pan-Africanism is an ideology and a movement that encourages Africans to work together globally in order to free themselves from racial oppression, (neo)colonial dominance, and imperialism.

Africa is at the centre of Pan-Africanist ideology, with a focus on both the continent and a global Africa. Adetula et al. (2020) corroborate this notion by explaining that Pan-Africanism is a movement, an ideology, and a geopolitical initiative aimed at emancipating and unifying Africans and members of the African diaspora worldwide. The idea that an independent and enhanced economic, social, and political African destiny may be built via unification is at the core of this statement. At the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) inauguration event in Addis Ababa in 1963, the first president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, said: "We must unite to achieve the full liberation of our continent" (Adetula et.al 2020:1).

Pan-Africanism's history as a movement to promote cooperation and understanding between people of African descent dates back to the mid-19th century/early 20th century. However, it was not until after World War I that the movement started to have the ultimate goal of agitating for the liberation and self-government of enslaved and colonised African people. Logan (1962) traces its history to 1900 when a Young West Indian Barrister, H. Sylvester Williams, initiated the concept for the Pan-African Conference, which convened in London in July 1900. Adebajo (2021:4) explains that the concept of Pan-Africanism developed amid the sweltering oppression of slavery in the Caribbean and the Americas and was transported back to Africa by its students who went to study in the US and Europe. And when the struggle for Africa's independence and decolonisation gained momentum, the political side of Pan-Africanism experienced a significant upheaval. The history of the Pan-Africanist movement must include the Pan-African Congress that was held in Paris in 1919 as part of efforts to formalise Pan-Africanism in the early twentieth century. A number of well-known African nationalists, including Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta, were instrumental in the success of

the fifth Pan-African Congress, which was held in Manchester, England, in 1945. Adetula et.al. (2020) report that this conference signalled the transition of Pan-Africanism's leadership from African-Americans to Africans. It goes without saying that the early formulations and expressions of Pan Africanism occurred mostly in North America and the Caribbean, outside of Africa.

The term Pan-Africanism describes a philosophy that advances the notion of a unified Africa and the people of African descent. Although the ideas changed throughout the course of many historical periods, the emphasis on the unity or oneness of Africa persisted. Malisa and Nhengeze (2018) argue that the growth of Pan-Africanism as an intellectual movement connected to the ambitions of people of African heritage in many regions of the world has been largely possible in part because its conceptualisation took place at universities. Armah (2010) posits that while Pan-Africanism is both a philosophical and intellectual movement, it was also a political movement or organisation with the aim of liberating and uniting Africa, particularly in the wake of slavery and the introduction of modernity. Fergus (2010) points out that Pan-Africanism was a concept that enabled previously enslaved Africans to see their similarities as victims of racism and imperialism. In other words, they understood that their similar racial lineage and origin on the same continent had made them the subject of slavery; hence, Pan-Africanists equated freedom with the African continent. According to Gebrekidan (2012), Pan-Africanism encouraged individuals to struggle for the emancipation of their native continent of Africa. The fundamental idea was that, wherever they lived in the world, individuals of African descent went through identical circumstances. Slavery, racial injustice, and colonialism were a few of these experiences (Padmore 1956; Malcolm 1992).

Tondi (2005) states that there are several themes that can be seen in the development of Pan-Africanist thought and practice throughout the 20th century: Pan-Africanism as a means for people of African descent living abroad to return to Africa; Pan-Africanism as a sign of liberation; and Pan-Africanism as a call for the political unification of the continent. Maimela (2013) argues that it is a deliberate admission of the reality that, in the end, states cannot be fully united without the people, the overthrow of tribalism and limited territorial nationalism in Africa, freedom of movement for all people, and the restoration of the African personality.

As a movement, manifestations in Africa show that Pan-Africanism was used by African elites as a unifying factor during the early post-colonial state-building era, and it did indeed serve as a focal point for anti-imperial agitations and nationalist ambitions at the time. As African states gained political independence from colonial domination, Pan-Africanism's worth as a liberation philosophy became clear (Adetula et.al. 2020). Further embrace of Pan-Africanism is still dominant on the African continent as a tool for understanding and reacting against neo and post-colonial struggles of African people. It has been used to garner solidarity amongst African people and the diaspora against hegemonic Eurocentric and imperialist empires that seek to exploit Africa and its resources. The greater call for unity amongst Africans and Africans across the world is seen as a foundational base for the agitations against these structures.

While Pan-Africanism was instrumental to the political decolonisation of Africa, the movement treated the 'woman' question with ignorance and silence. This silence explains why notable figures in the movement are often men, while the women are left forgotten. The works of women like Andreé Blouin, Olufunmilayo Ransome Kuti, and Adelaide Casely-Hayford are instrumental to the success of the Pan-Africanist movement for liberation in Africa. Andreé Blouin was an adviser to prominent liberation figures like Patrice Lumumba, Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure and was at the forefront of the struggle for political decolonisation in Africa, yet her story is rarely told in everyday history. Olufunmilayo Ransome Kuti was an important figure in Nigeria's agitation for independence and also a prominent member of the Pan-Africanist movement. Adelaide Casely-Hayford was an active member of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), one of the influential Pan-Africanist organisations. These women were not just mothers and wives; they were critical members of the Pan-Africanist movement and were at the forefront of the struggle for liberation and political decolonisation in Africa. In responding to the woman's question, Pan-Africanism must acknowledge the agency and agentic role of women in liberation struggles.

Feminism: A Theory and Praxis for Women's Liberation.

Feminism is an ideology and movement that advocates for gender equality. It argues for equal rights for all genders in all spheres of life, including politics, decision-making, employment, and domestic responsibilities. Ackerly

(2000:17) notes that "feminism is a movement and scholarship that centres the lives of women in order to expose and challenge gendered power dynamics in society". Vukoicic (2013:33) adds that "feminism is driven by the individual and collective experiences of women and is premised on the idea that patriarchal values in society lead to discrimination against women in both public and private life". To eliminate this prejudice against women requires changes in the social, political, or cultural order (Jones and Budig 2008). Women's rights activists have drawn attention to the historical assumption that there is an inherent difference between men and women and have examined how this difference has been given distinct social, political, and economic connotations in various countries and civilisations. They argue that one of these differentiations is that women have been given an inferior or secondary status in society because of the assumed natural sexual differences (Olaitan 2023b).

Asnani (2020) notes that feminism includes several socio-cultural and political groups that work toward achieving equality between men and women in terms of rights. Raj and Davidson (2014) argue that women do not have the same rights and opportunities that men do due to different societal restrictions. Anderson (2016:40) asserts that "feminist thought offers an approach for assessing social as well as environmental experiences of groups and individuals, regardless of sex or gender, while suggesting ways to change social and environmental factors. It also attempts to highlight proposed interventions for women's intrapersonal and interpersonal concerns; millions of women have had their lives impacted by it". Ratna (2004) observes that feminism is a means for women to advocate for their rights and that conflicts between stronger and weaker groups are intimately tied to gender differences. In order to promote gender equality, feminism has become a suitable theory and method (Enyew and Mihrete 2018). While there are different variants of feminism which permeate into different sociological, political, and moral philosophies, it focuses primarily on the economic, political, and social disparities that women face (Adawo et al., 2011). Gender is the primary focus of feminist theorising, which aims to advance gender equality in the world (Kaur and Nagaich 2019).

A wide range of specific actions and targets fall under the central concept of feminism. For instance, it aims to grant women the right to pursue employment and achieve financial and economic independence (Malinowska 2020). It also denotes institutional and community-based efforts to eliminate

gender-based discrimination in society. It serves to provide women equal rights in all spheres of life, including the economy, politics, and society, and it seeks to uncover the hidden reality of male dominance and female subordination and servitude in the world (Brunell & Burkett, 2019). Application of feminist theory to peace and security echoes the argument that women are on par with men in society, and that they are not just the victims of conflict but also active participants in peacebuilding (Olaitan 2023b). Holistically, feminism promotes a larger advocacy for women's emancipation from all forms of oppression, financial independence, the right to make informed decisions about their bodies, and the freedom to choose their own lifestyles and sexual orientation (Learner 1994). Most feminist variants advocate for the abolition of gender biases, sexual disparities, limitations, and oppression that women experience (Bryson 2007).

Feminist research and participation have perhaps been able to stake a claim in the global political and development debate more than any other social movement (Ahikire 2008). Notably, African feminism, which is a variant of feminism that focuses on the lived experiences of African women, has achieved significant achievements because of recurrent surges in scholarships and activism. When projected into the broader development field, the capillary influence of African feminist ideas is much more obvious. The significant gender rhetoric that now permeates African development discussions is a result of feminist agitations. Ahikire argues further that "this is demonstrated by the fact that some of feminism's most liberal offshoots, such as 'women in development', 'gender equality', and 'gender mainstreaming', have acquired acceptance and become standard practice in most national governmental arenas" (ibid:10). For instance, the policy discourse of the AU demonstrates the effectiveness of feminist advocacy. Feminism's effect may be seen in documents like the African Union (AU) Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, which calls for a 50:50 gender balance in politics (Ahikire 2014:11).

Towards a Pan-African Feminist Pathway for African Women

Theorising Pan-Africanism within the context of feminism allows us to envision how African women can agitate for their liberation from the structural and institutional obstacles that hinder them. For instance, Osman (2014:43) states that "Pan-Africanism has inspired women's movements in Africa and generated

debate around many issues such as the role of women in the political process of their countries and the emancipation of women". This further attests to its importance for women's liberation from restrictive power structures. At the same time, understanding feminism as an equality-focused theory that seeks to address systems of power that discriminate against women consolidates these efforts. Therefore, both these concepts hold possibilities for African women to liberate themselves from oppressive systems of power. The possibilities they hold would be discussed around two themes - consciousness raising and advocating for their increased representation in the public sphere through gender mainstreaming strategies.

Consciousness raising: Towards a Pan-African feminist movement

The juxtaposition of Pan-Africanism and feminism can legitimise calls for the consolidation of a Pan-African feminism that caters to the issues that women in Africa face. This Pan-African feminist movement can borrow from African feminism(s), Afro-feminism and other feminisms that are focused on the struggles of African women. Atanga (2013:305) states that "African feminism considers the history and diversity of Africa, as well as colonialism. It is focused on the realities of the difficulties that African women face daily, which might be linked to historical injustices". Steady (2000, cited in Atanga 2013:307) argues that feminism is a method African woman have created and used to fight for their survival. She maintains that "feminism is the neglect of male protection and the development of resourcefulness and independence. Many of the black women in Africa and the Diaspora have developed these characteristics, though not always by choice". Tamale (2024) posits that African feminism provides a pathway for addressing contemporary challenges that African women face in the new normal.

Ahikire (2014:8) argues that "the crucial part that gender plays in Africa's underdevelopment has been publicised due to African feminism". African feminism is understood to have its roots in several other movements; the colonial and post-colonial histories of Africa, African nationalist movements, as well as later developments and sociopolitical influences, are among them. The attention on gender equality has had the effect of putting patriarchal norms and ideals under some pressure. The discourse on African feminism allows for the utilisation of feminism based on African identity, and most importantly,

one that understands the multiplex problems that African women face. The implication of which is the ability to engage in consciousness raising to ignite the need for solutions to these multiplex problems. There is a need for a concept and ideology that understands the numerous problems that bedevil African women while also providing a framework to address them. African feminism focuses on the needs of women in Africa (Kamau 2014). This premise is why a group of African feminists convened to make the African feminist charter in 2006. The charter reads,

> "We define and name ourselves publicly as feminists because we celebrate our feminist identities and politics. We recognise that the work of fighting for women's rights is deeply political, and the process of naming is political too. Choosing to name ourselves feminists places us in a clear ideological position. By naming ourselves as feminists we politicize the struggle for women's rights, we question the legitimacy of the structures that keep women subjugated, and we develop tools for transformatory analysis and action. We have multiple and varied identities as African feminists. We are African women – we live here in Africa, and even when we live elsewhere, our focus is on the lives of African women on the continent. Our feminist identity is not qualified with "ifs", "buts" or "howevers". We are Feminists—full stop" (African Feminist Charter 2016:3).

The African feminist Charter provides the framework and principles for African feminist advocacy and work. African feminist scholars like Amina Mama, Patricia McFadden, and Sylvia Tamale have noted the importance of building an African feminism that caters to the practical realities of African women, requiring its work to go beyond theorising. They focus on the impact of both the theory and praxis of African feminism for improving the well-being of African women.

By rallying around a common identity based on Pan-African ideals while pursuing feminist goals, African feminism can enjoy legitimacy amongst African women for its liberatory potential. This legitimacy can yield some form of awareness amongst African women on the factors that limit their participation and visibility in society. The recognition that they all face similar woes that feed discrimination against them enables them to acknowledge the need for solidarity. Solidarity of purpose is important to drive the agenda for gender equality and the advancement of women's empowerment on the continent. The personification of the systems of power that discriminate against African

women can also assist with the strengthening of this consciousness. Just like the Pan-Africanist movement found purpose in agitating against colonial and imperial structures, a Pan-African feminist movement can direct its agitation against power structures that affect women. By echoing the need for favourable norms and institutions that acknowledge women as equal beings to men in the African society, we can begin to challenge the basis of these systems of power. Acknowledge that women have a place in politics, the economy, the labour sector, technology, etc. and must significantly participate and be represented in these sectors. However, this would not be possible if African women did not engage in consciousness raising to garner the needed solidarity towards the cause.

Advocating for increased representation in society

Following consciousness raising is the practical manifestations of the tenets of both Pan-Africanism and feminism, such that African women can be liberated from restrictive structures limiting them. It is important for African women to have an ideological basis rooted in their African and gendered identity for them to agitate for their equality. Gender inequality is an endemic and systemic menace that requires a continental drive to pull the needed strength. Challenging restrictive norms rooted in culture becomes not only the responsibility of women but of men who are beneficiaries of patriarchal systems of power. African feminists have done tremendous work in permeating development and policy spaces to drive emancipatory change. Atanga (2013) notes that African feminist theorists have been instrumental in the global networks that have fostered this development. The substantial presence of gender discourse in African development agendas is a result of African feminism and its activism. African feminism, which is motivated by the unique difficulties and problems women in Africa face, has given concerns of development and underdevelopment more momentum.

The crucial part that gender plays in Africa's underdevelopment has been widely acknowledged in development discourses. This could only be achieved after years of intensive research and activism that fought against male bias in development. The practical implementation of the Gender and Development (GAD) viewpoint, according to Ahikire (2014), is a necessary component of feminist participation. Given the significance of the development sector in the South generally and in Africa in particular, GAD as a methodology

gained acceptance as having the capacity to translate feminist concepts into practical actions that would alter the daily experiences of women. Africa, for instance, is a continent that struggles with development due to severe poverty, suffering, conflict, displacement, and global marginalisation. In this regard, GAD provided feminism, particularly African feminism, with a platform from which to address both the gendered aspects of development and its challenges. The issue of gender mainstreaming subsequently emerged as a major focus. The idea of gender mainstreaming and the entire sector of demanding policies and actions within government agencies, which in turn led to the demand for certain skills, was successfully popularised by African feminists. As a result, both GAD and gender mainstreaming have become two strategic measures that can be wielded to engage government, policymakers, and relevant stakeholders towards including women in spaces to increase their representation.

A Pan-African feminist pathway offers opportunities for African women to agitate against systems of power that subjugate them. Igniting the awareness that patriarchal norms that restrict them from participating in public spheres are responsible for their continued underrepresentation in society. These norms also feed narratives that women are less than men, that gender equality is un-African, and that women should only be seen and not heard. Thereby culminating in systemic and institutional discrimination against women either in politics, the economy, the digital economy or peace and security, etc. The awareness translates to consciousness of their status, oppression, and subjugation, such that it unearths the necessity for action. Consequently, the necessity for action manifests in the form of agitation against systems of power, institutionalised processes of gender and development, and gender mainstreaming. All of which can facilitate the correction of harmful patriarchal norms, foster women's empowerment, and advance gender equality in Africa. African women must take charge of their fate to rise against the woes that hinder them from fully participating in public decision-making.

General reflection

How do we begin to address the systemic multi-dimensional discrimination that African women are exposed to without leaving them behind? By acknowledging their agency as both victims of systems of power and agents that can challenge these systems. The juxtaposition of Pan-Africanism and

feminism combines the liberatory and emancipatory praxes of these two movements to respond to contemporary challenges facing African women. It recognises the agentic role that African women can play in their own liberation from gender inequality. It centres the importance of framing a Pan-African feminist pathway hinged on African feminism that is based on the lived realities of African women and one that responds to the nuanced and intersectional structures of power that inhibit their self-actualisation. The advocacy for gender equality is based on the recognition that all beings are equal, making it concerning why African women are still fighting for equality years after Africa has achieved political liberation. The current state of gender relations in Africa requires targeted advocacy for equality, which a Pan-African feminist pathway can provide. Advocacy for equality would entail the demand for gender parity in political participation, income equality, equal participation of women in agricultural development projects, targeted policies to reduce gendered violence, and the erasure of gender stereotypes. These goals require the recognition of the intersecting structures of power around gender, class, sexuality, age, (dis)ability and how they impact women's ability to participate in public life equally. Pan-Africanism is an important liberatory ideology that holds much history and significance for Africans; its juxtaposition with feminism, an equality-focused ideology, can pave the way for gender parity in Africa.

Conclusion

African women have, over the years, been at the forefront of the Pan-Africanist movement for independence from colonial and imperial structures while pushing for a common African identity of people of African descent. The ignorance of the 'woman' question relegated their substantive contributions to almost nothing, which is why prominent Pan-Africanist Olufunmilayo Ransome Kuti is reduced to the first woman to drive a car in Nigeria. The tokenisation of the efforts women made to the Pan-Africanist movement fed into the continued oppression of women after most African countries gained political independence. Post-colonial Africa did not offer much prospect for women because they were still victims of discrimination. Discrimination that manifests in low political participation, income inequality, gender pay gap, etc., affects the overall empowerment of women. The quest for gender equality is another liberatory struggle that African women across the world

must embark on, as political independence does not mean much if women, who constitute half of the population, continue to be underrepresented within the system. To this end, this article explores how Pan-Africanism and feminism, as two emancipatory ideals, can aid in the advancement of gender equality in Africa.

This article argues that by embracing both Pan-Africanism and feminism, a legitimisation of African feminism becomes widespread, such that African women have a solidarity of purpose. This solidarity of purpose is based on the awareness of their collective woes and problems, while giving birth to a Pan-African feminist identity. The collective identity based on gender and being African offers strength to this solidarity, which would metamorphose into an action-focused consciousness. This article concludes that Pan-African feminist pathways offer limitless opportunities for African women to agitate against systems of power that discriminate against them. It is important for there to be consciousness amongst African women before they can advocate for gender equality. Without acknowledging the root of their problem, progress toward their empowerment cannot be made; this is where the juxtaposition of Pan-Africanism and feminism comes in. To drive gender equality in Africa, African women must take charge and assert their agency to challenge systems of power while collaborating with relevant stakeholders simultaneously.

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