

Workshop n° 33/44 - Socio-economic perspectives on migrations

**SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN MIGRATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA
AND AUSTRALIA: NEW TRENDS**

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The functioning of African sub-Saharan countries has been and continues to be strongly influenced by Europe, in general, and by France, in particular. Emigration is one obvious outcome of this influence. If the post-World War II period marks the “golden-age” of African migration to Europe, notably, for economic reasons, the last decade shows a change in migration characterized by increasing desperation and violence for those trying to get to Europe for work. Consequently, potential emigrants, especially from the former French colonies, are finding ways to avoid Europe altogether. Canada, the United States, and Australia are viewed as new avenues of sub-Saharan-African-Former-French-Colonies emigration.

This paper will critically address this slow but important shift in migration. Emphasis will be put on the macro-factors for why Africans leave home for yet another Diaspora far away. In theory, by using the systems perspective, we will show how the global system is continuing to reorganize.

France, Germany and the United Kingdom wish to severely restrict migration from Africa, but at the same time they want to be more open to importing rare goods and products from Africa; they want the resources but not the people. Oil, diamonds, gold, and so on are necessary for complex western economies to function and to maintain their standard of living. The impoverishment of Africa to materially sustain Europe and the West is related to the equal political impoverishment of Africa. The lack of democracy in extraordinarily wealthy countries is the consequence of deals between former colonizers and corrupt presidents in office eternally. In real democracies, representative leaders would lead their countries toward improving the economic and social conditions of their peoples. What exist are dictatorships who maintain the exploitation and mis-development of their people which then raises the necessity for emigration. Citizens have to emigrate for health, education, employment, and protection from violence and the indifference of their governments.

Access to high education is fundamental to a people’s welfare. People who immigrate for their educations are left with two choices: 1) return home or 2) stay overseas after studying. Each student emigrant’s decision is strongly related to political and economic conditions at home. They do not necessarily want to stay abroad forever. High education is generally followed by marriage, seeking jobs, becoming parents, raising children and so on. The life process, especially raising a family, requires the absence of civil war, ethnic genocide and poverty. But to remain in a foreign country is to be transformed; this is especially so for one’s children. One learns more about the world, which in turn impacts one’s reasons for remaining overseas or returning to one’s home country. Migrant agencies and associations form important links for immigrants in each diaspora.

In conclusion, this paper will show the complexity of the process which results in people moving from their home country and the institutional responses through states and/or state-to-state relationships. A systems approach offers a way of bridging macro-level studies of relations between

areas such as dependent relations between core and hinterland, and the micro-perspectives of individual migration decisions. The focus on new trends of migration from French areas to Anglo-Saxon ones addresses this important shift in patterns of migration.

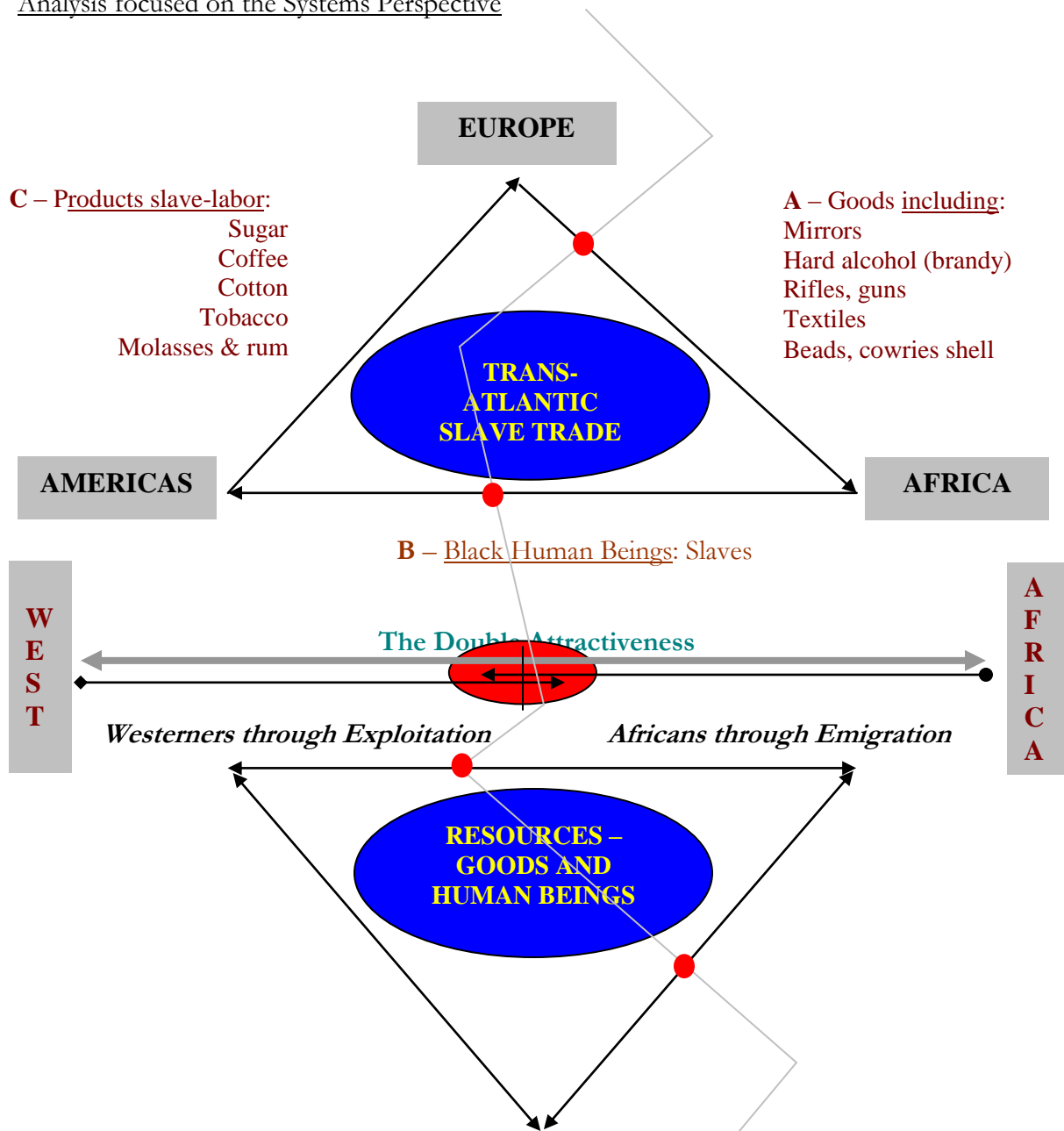
Appendix.

Foundations & Lessons from History. Current major issues are results of historical processes. How significant is history to understand what is occurring today with migration patterns. Everything is related with interest.

The first European contacts came in the late 15th century, and commercial relationships were quickly established with the kingdoms – trading for slaves in the interior. The coastal area was a major source for the transatlantic slave trade that was made possible with the Portuguese shipping power. The expression of that power led to the discovery of the *Sub-Saharan Africa* through the Guinea coast. The chief commodities dealt in were slaves, gold, ivory, and spices. The European discovery of *America* in 1492 was followed by the great development of the slave and goods trade.

Exchange Foundations Based on Material Possessions

Analysis focused on the Systems Perspective



EUROPE

The lucrative nature of this trade by the *Portuguese* drew other nations to the Guinea coast that remains today a strategic area for the same actors mainly through oil exploitation. From the 15th century until today, nothing has changed concerning the attractiveness of this area. English mariners went there as early as 1553, and they were followed by Spaniards, Dutch, French, Danish and other adventurers. Colonial supremacy along the coast passed in the 17th century from Portugal to the Netherlands and from the Dutch in the 18th and 19th to *France* and *Britain*. The patterns of contemporary migrations from Africa are substantially related to that later influence.

The Partition of Africa Amongst the European Powers. The last quarter of the 19th century saw the map of Africa transformed. Lines of partition marked out the possessions of Germany, France, Britain, and other powers such as Belgium. Railways penetrated the interior, and vast areas were opened up to Western conquest. The Europeans did the same in America with this great strategic difference; in America, it was to build a strong nation, unlike in Africa where it was to impoverish. The causes which led to the partition of Africa can be found in the economic and political state of Western Europe at the time. No African countries were consulted during the partition of Africa. An “International treaty” was signed that disregarded the ethnic, social and economic composition of the people that lived in the area. This was to resurface years later, as ethnic or “tribal” conflict after the African countries were supposed to have gained their independence.

This introduction will show the paradox of wealth and poverty together. It becomes a paradigm.

