

Illegal Migration Push and Pull Factors: Lessons for Migration Management Professionals

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Abstract

Around the world illegal migration is occurring with undocumented socio-economic and political impacts and it yawns for concerted efforts at all levels to address it. Every immigrant is entitled to full protection as reaffirmed by international legal instruments of universal significance. The rationale for the systematic literature review is to examine the push and pull factors of illegal migration, share knowledge to spark and inspire processes that will usher rapid growth from all directions. A systematic review of the literatures using information collected from different sources was actuated. Google search engine and others were used to search for articles. Only peer-reviewed articles published after 2000 were selected except extracts of fundamental mileage. However, articles published by staunch international organizations working in the area for years and produced indefatigable knowledge were stealthily appraised.

The study revealed that the causes are numerous and include: vibrant shadow economy, lack of reliable and efficient social security system, traffickers and smugglers networks, population growth and density, social recognition and acceptance, socio-economic ties, unemployment and poor wages, maltreatment of undocumented migrants, visa quota systems, non-globalization of the labor force, ecological disasters, social networks, national migration legislations and policies, labor force growth, survival mechanism for individual and families, climate change and disasters, strict border control, conflicts and political instability, politicization of migration, family reunification, lack of quality social services, mass media; and poverty. In conclusion, the push and pull factors can be summarily mapped into social, economic, political, natural; and legal. To eliminate the phenomenon, it requires the implementation of a combination of strategic preventive and remedial strategies.

Keywords: illegal, migration, push, pull, migrant, factors,

provisions of entry and/or residence in the receiving nation [3].

Introduction

Like birth and death, the free movement of people from nation to another, have been one of the fundamental features of human societies throughout history especially in a world where freedom of movement is deeply enshrined in a fleet of international legal instruments [1]. In essence, people movement has always been part of human history for numerous reasons such as economic, political; and social satisfaction [2]. Of recent, the desire to migrate especially from low economic countries to developed nations by any mean including illegal migration has become more compelling particularly for the youths due to many factors including resources scarcity, bleak future, strict immigration policies; and laws [1]. Illegal migration can be attributed to series of factors including restrictive policies and laws limiting the legal movement of people [3].

Irregular immigration in spite of being an international problem, it does not have any globally accepted definition and solid theoretical base making it extremely hard to accurately capture the number around the globe and furthermore formulate strategic plans to eliminate it [4]. However, in the modest term it can be defined as the act of migrating from one country to another against the legal

In recent years, it appears that there are more people on the move than it used to be some decades back attributable to many factors namely search for better living conditions, employment opportunities, growing inequalities, discrimination, human right violations, poverty, environmental degradation, conflict and violence, etc. and unfortunately the number is soaring as 15 to 20 percent of the global migrants are illegal ones [5]. Pictures on the international media of dramatic arrivals and rescue operations on the high seas have resulted to moral panic vis-à-vis invasion likewise humanitarian pleads to act on the phenomenon [6]. Irregular migrants especially from West Africa to Europe experienced multitude of life threatening problems such as abduction for ransoms, slavery, torture, among other inhuman treatments particularly in Libyan (Bah, 2019 [7]). Most importantly, because it does not only consist of the most youthful population from the source countries, to get to the advanced world, they depend on human traffickers risking their lives [6].

Thus, with the uncontrollable increment in the phenomenon and associated human disasters it has occupied a central stage in global and state security as in some nations it is

perceived to be a threat because the number of migrants are in millions (Tallmeister, 2013 [8]). Though in reality, the correct statistics on irregular migration are notoriously hard to obtain, nevertheless data at certain European borders manifest a four-fold increment [9].

The unprecedented soaring in spite of the mounting efforts both at the international and national level to eliminate it has made the phenomenon more a global concern [10]. In most nations especially in the developed world, the phenomenon is high on the public debate agenda with differing perspectives [11]. The Gambia, regardless of being one of the smallest countries on the globe, it is one of the largest contributors to illegal migration in terms of the number of people who make the journey across the Mediterranean [6].

Enthusiastically, in spite of all the disasters and inhumane treatments meted on the migrants the movement of the human population has been of benefit to both source countries and destinations in many ways for example, it decreases the unemployment pressures, boost up remittance, self-esteem and economic independence especially for the migrants and their families [12]. Apparently, though human movement including irregular migration is not anything new, the proper comprehension of the causes, effects; and prevention methods are not well established scientifically and understood [2].

Methodology

A systematic review of the literatures using information collected from different sources was actuated. Google search engine, google scholar, web of science; and Scopus database were used to search for these articles. During the search numeration combinations of words and phrases were used to ensure articles reflect the most recent knowledge and scholarly works. The systematic searches beget varied and voluminous articles which had to be sieved not only to meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria but to ensure the fundamental objectives of the study are wrangled.

Therefore, only peer-reviewed scholarly publications published after 2000 were selected except extracts perceived to be of basal mileage to the study. However, articles published by staunch international organizations known to have been working in illegal migration for years and has produced indefatigable knowledge in the area were stealthily appraised.

Inclusion and Exclusion Procedures

The underneath procedures were followed in articles inclusion. That is, only:

1. Peer-reviewed scholarly articles on illegal migration.
2. Peer-reviewed scholarly articles published from 2000 to 2021.
3. Articles on international or regional perspectives on illegal migration.
4. Articles on illegal migration published by international organizations with years of meritorious experiences in migration management and illegal migration.

To exclude some articles from the review, the below captioned criteria were applied. That is:

1. Non-peer reviewed articles.
2. Articles published before 2000 unless critical and impactful.
3. Media generated articles including newspapers.
4. Articles not published in English language.

In spite of the fact that 237 articles both qualitative and quantitative were trawled, only 104 articles were qualified for reviewed which is largely due to a dearth of data. In essence, only peer-reviewed articles and publications by international organizations considered being trustworthy because they occasioned standard, ethical and robust studies were reviewed.

Discussions

Migration including the illegal one is caused by different factors which can be broadly classified into the “push” and “pull” factors.

Vibrant shadow economy

Fixed costs in business have always been a challenge to many entrepreneurs and as such they will do all it takes either to reduce them or eliminate them altogether [13]. Labor as critical as it is in the production chain especially in labor intensive economic activities some businesses in the informal sector have managed to control it and boost the productivity by engaging unskilled laborers mostly the undocumented workers. With such opportunities it has significantly contributed to the unemployed youthful population in underdeveloped nations engaging in all it takes to go to the developed nations for greener pasture concurring with: immigration is significant in many respects because the immigrants fuel the economy of both sending and receiving nations, they grease the wheels of the labor market, increase productivity and raise GDPs, increase competition with insignificant reduction in native wages, increase demand for labor; creates new jobs [14] and [15]. The demand for cheaper labor by the receiving countries and the fact that illegal immigrants are disenfranchised has contributed to the uninterrupted growth of illegal immigration [10]. Illegal migration persist because of high demand of cheap labor in agriculture, hospitality industry; and domestic services in the developed countries in which the migrants are willing to work at low wages [4]. The demand for cheaper labor by receiving countries has significantly instigated illegal immigration especially where there are limited visa quotas and endless waiting [16].

Similarly, the main causes of illegal migration from Punjab in India to Spain consist of the following: job opportunities in the shadow economy, social network support, possibilities for getting regularized status; and accommodative immigrant model [5]. Illegal migration persist in the United States of America because it is economically beneficiary as it avail employers cheap labor to maximize profits [17].

Lack of reliable and efficient social security system

Life and related issues have never been permanent especially when it comes to the means of survival and healthy conditions thus, warranting caring governments

and societies creation of alternative structures in case of any destabilization being due to old age, natural or manmade disasters [18]. In traditional societies where the main mean of survival is by farming and other agricultural activities, children were sufficient as a form of social security especially for parents at old age [19]. However, with industrialization and urbanization, formal employment has become the principal mean of survival for many including families. In this type of economic system, children and the extended family system are no longer regarded as a social security instead they come a burden to some households heads. To rescue the situations at old age and for families in difficult circumstances governments are obliged to initiate some social security schemes to assist the elderly and unemployed ones especially the youthful population. In the absence of such schemes, in trying moments, some people would resort into doing all sort of things including criminal activities for a living as substantiated: the causes for illegal migration entail lack of consistent social security system, access to factors of production, investments, employment opportunities, skills application avenues, family support; and the fact that friends have done so and their life and living conditions have positively transformed [20].

Traffickers and smugglers networks

Most governments have ratified and domesticated international and regional instruments that promote the free movement of people placing some obligations on them for the realization of the intended goals for a better world for all, and yet some governments continue to constrain the excise and enjoyment of such fundamental rights resulting in abuse and the prevalence of many other criminal activities (Dutton, n.d.). For some countries, for example, because of strict migration regulations and policies, it has become near impossible for people to travel to those countries with ease more especially for people from developing nations resulting in plethora of networks of smugglers and traffickers as corroborated: there are many factors that can be attributed to illegal migration such as migration policies, rarely constrained traffickers and smugglers networks, access to technology; and sometimes personal characteristics including age, gender; and educational background [21].

Population growth and density

For communities to develop especially in developed nations, population size and density is critical both as inputs and consumers of goods and services. However, if it is not well managed and judiciously applied it becomes a burden on community leaders and governments particularly when it comes to providing the fundamental services and opportunities for growth and development such as jobs and quality and relevant social services [22]. In search of these rare but critical commodities, some are forced to migrate regardless of the mode of travel and status: technically the sending nations have also contributed to the unprecedented soared in illegal immigration due to highly anticipated short-term economic benefits, the desire to reduce the demographic pressure, capacity to reduce unemployment especially among the young ones; and the expected large flow of remittances [23]. People cross international boundaries for numerous reasons including structural

demand in developed nations, poverty, overpopulation, family reunification, environmental degradation, political persecution, conflicts; and asylum seeking [24].

Social recognition and acceptance

To be socially recognized and accepted is not only fundamental in the psychological development of a person but so too it is for his or her economic and political progress as all the resources required for such are not lying in the communities idle but in the hands of the holders. For the possessors to grant access, just as it is in the business sector, one must be recognized, trusted; and accepted by them [25]. Because in certain communities, recognition and acceptance is deeply rooted in a person's financial strength, it has compelled many including the youths to turn to all types of activities including the illegal ones to be recognized and valued in societies including the families as reified: in The Gambia, illegal immigration is as a result of multiple factors which include to experience the outside world, curiosity and adventure, lack of job and poverty, seeking a better means of life and living conditions, desire for material things including flashy cars and beautiful buildings, to be recognized and accepted in the society because of having money; and false information about Europe especially by those already there which can be safely classified as personal factors [26].

Socio-economic ties

Centuries back, the globe was just a single and small community with no continent or nations particularly in the case of certain regions of Africa. Thus, it had huge empires with people of nearly the same culture [27]. However, with economic greed and colonization, many communities were divided when strong bonds and ties have already developed. To reunite with families in quota visa constrained systems, some have opted to travel illegally concurring with: in some instants, migration is occasioned by the existing economic, social, cultural; and political links between people and people and between countries and countries [28].

Unemployment and poor wages

To earn decent living in this modern world, securing a job is a near must. However, because of some economic crisis such as unprecedented economic meltdowns or crisis, inflation, climate change, conflicts, covid-19 pandemic, etc. jobs are becoming rare in the market leaving many people especially the youths unemployed [29]. To be engaged and seen living a productive life in the communities, some including the youths have resorted to series of activities including the criminal ones conforming with: immigration as an investment in some cases, is caused by the cons, seriously outweighing the cos while the pros include for example, higher wages, physical safety, cons encompasses the associated costs in the form of financial and psychological expenditures [30]. In regards to economic migration, the push factors entails unemployment, low salaries and wages, poor per capita income vis-à-vis the receiving country, state repression, fear of civil wars or community violence, the inequitable distribution of resources and rights, contested borders, corruption, incompetence; and deprivation of basic needs (Kyaining Kyaing, n.d.) and [31] Illegal migration is mainly driven by some economic difficulties like lack of

access to employment opportunities, poor salaries; and wages in the source countries [10].

Maltreatment of undocumented migrants

Migrants, in spite of their immigration status are human beings and deserve to be treated in dignified manners especially in the hands of immigration authorities as enshrined in series of international human rights instruments and protocols [32]. Of recent, immigrants have been badly treated at different entry ports especially in developed nations. To avert these inhumane treatments in strictly entry regulated countries, most desperate and eager to travel persons particularly in third world countries have resorted to illegal migration as debunked: receiving countries suddenly becoming intolerant to undocumented immigrants due to multiple of factors such as socio-economic and geopolitical problems has hugely resulted in the unprecedented increase in illegal migration around the globe [10].

Visa quota systems

Up to the early 21st century traveling from one country to another was relatively easy and cheap. In some instances, travelers were only required to have valid passport, air ticket, national identity cards; and reasonable amount for living expenses. Thus, visa was not a critical requirement either it was not needed at all or it can be obtained at the point of entry such as airports, seaports or at the borders, etc. However, of recent, in spite of highly proclaimed and internationally guaranteed freedom of movement of people, goods; and services, international travel is highly constrained by series of immigration requirements principal of which visas resulting in huge economic losses and frustrations [33]. As fundamental as it is in travelling, it is very limited in some cases not available at all particularly for travelers from developing to developed nations laying fertile grounds for human trafficking and other risky undocumented travelling endorsing: illegal migration is favored over the conventional one because there is no hassle to secure travel documents, visas, it does not involve having to wait too long for permits which sometimes are not guaranteed or granted, there is no limit to the period one can stay in the host country, sometimes it is easy, cost effective; and fast in getting employment [34]. Illegal immigration is globally on the increase due to many factors including developed countries desire for cheaper labor, limited opportunities to legally entered host countries, tough requirements for travel visas, unnecessary long waiting for visa approval, unauthorized immigration being less expensive; and strict immigration policies in receiving countries [10]. The lack of access to visa due to being limited in number, endless waiting duration; and being too expensive are some of the relevant factors blamable for undocumented migration (Conrad Suso, 2019 [6]. Illegal immigration is preferred over legal one for many reasons namely, having to wait unnecessarily too long for a visa due to small annual visa quota, lax enforcement of visa acquisition regulation; and national borders laws [35].

Non-globalization of the labor force

One of the fundamental characteristics and requirements of globalization is a free market economy in which goods and

services can move freely with the ultimate objectives of big companies and highly developed nations' goods and services being accessible to all for massive profits. However, some smaller and underdeveloped nations' products are not only literally excluded from the highly preached globalization but heavily starved to extinction [36] as well as their labor force resulting in some illegal migration in search of better salaries and wages as vilified: irregular migration can be associated with different factors principal among which is the globalization of all markets except labor under the present capitalism, seeking for survival opportunities, climate change; and unprecedented increased in civil violence in the developing countries [37].

Ecological disasters

For community to develop, it requires lot of well-thought balanced resources being human, financial; and material in nature. However, for some of these resources to be developed and further sustain, there must be an ecological balance in the environment the ultimate source of all resources including energy [38]. Thus, any threat being as a result of any disaster including climate change, conflict, deforestation, etc. can result in destabilization of some factors of production that ultimately leads to population displacement in search of an alternate lending support to: the causes of migration are highly linked to population growth and density, ecological disasters, financial vulnerability and debts, socio-cultural matters, social networking, governments migration policies, labor force growth, ethno-political conflicts, regional economic integration; and most importantly it being ultimately regarded as survival mechanism for individual and families [39].

Social networks

To develop physically, mentally; and psychologically it requires conducive social environment where one is accepted and valued which is mostly found in the company of family members and friends. Within such environment, lot of things are learned and put into practice some might be positive and others negative [40]. Thus, friends and family members are powerful socializing agencies and to some degrees determine what we believe and practice through inspiration among others as validated: the causes of irregular migration can be attributed to many factors namely, encouragement from different social networks including friends, civil conflicts, having the financial means to travel, lack of economic opportunities in the source countries, culture of migration, asylum policies and border control mechanisms, families, religious leaders, the availability of smugglers and traffickers networks or agents; and the strong desire to leave one's country [41].

National migration legislations and policies

The free movement of people, goods; and services has become critical component in the socio-economic and political advancement of the globe and individual economies [42]. Although fundamental, it has to be managed rationally and utilize judiciously, otherwise there can be some negative impacts especially when it comes to human migration. While other nations' migration regulations are so tough others have very flexible and humane ones becoming

a heaven for economic migrants affirming: in the case of the pull causations, principal herein include the receiving countries migration humane legislations and policies and the favorable labor market situations in terms of securing and maintaining a job for decent life and living conditions [28]. Trade and investment in countries of origin instead of reducing the inflows of migrants it increases it since it is not the poorest people that travel but those with sufficient funds to pay for the trip [41].

Labor force growth

Youthful and dynamic population is one of the greatest assets of any nation as all other resources being financial and material are complementary to it [43]. However, it requires proper management with well-thought development plans otherwise it doesn't only lead to over population, scarcity of fundamental services and opportunities such as jobs, but unplanned exodus to other nations in search of better life and living conditions as substantiated: while it is not certain as to how many illegally migrated from Mexico to the United States, the causes include increased in working-age population, poor salaries, changes in the US immigration policies; and greater volatility in the US [44].

Survival strategy for individual and families

Since creation, survival has never been easy for mankind and as such in most cases if not in all cases, he has been struggling throughout to make ends meet. Although with science and technology there have been some significant improvements in accessing to the basic needs, however, there are certain communities, to live even a moderately decent life, it requires lot of struggle especially where unemployment and cost of living is skyrocketing [45]. In some communities especially in poverty-torn ones social standing including being respected and accepted even in the family is anchored on purchasing power, thus, compelling members to resort to all types of activities not only for survival but to gain mere recognition corroborating: in The Gambia, some socio-cultural factors such as the inability to fulfil social responsibilities, success and societal respect bolted on financial and material possessions, pressure to migrate especially from friends, family members and even the wider society, not wanting to travel being perceived as deviant behavior, betterment of families being anchored on getting remittance, diversification of family income risk, the fact that one has to provide for the family in the future especially for the boys, status and prestige being petrified on migration; and illegal migration becoming a culture have significantly contributed toward illegal migration [6]. While numerous reasons can be linked with undocumented immigration namely, getting residential permit in Europe, asylum; and better life and living conditions, migrants would have changed their minds if they were fully aware of the associated risks [46].

Climate change and disasters

The climate has not only been influential in the type of clothes we wear but even the type of housing and food we eat. However, with recent developments, it has become a critical input in the socio-economic and political development of the globe [47]. With intensive

industrialization, the globe has witnessed unprecedented increase in pollution resulting in rapid climate change causing lot of disasters with poorer communities paying the highest price in the forms of draught, conflict, flooding, inadequate rainfall, etc. To make ends meet, some individuals and communities are forced to migrate concurring with: illegal migration is caused by some environmental factors including climate change in the form of crop failures, extreme draught and flooding, inadequate rainfall, deforestation, land exploitation, poor prices for some agricultural products or commodities at the international market; and poor performing fishery sector [6]. The causes of illegal migration are multifaceted and include land fragmentation, poverty, drought, desire to join friends and family members, financial hardships, lack of jobs, excellent urban amenities, uncoordinated activity of legal emigration process; and better facilities in receiving nations [1].

Strict border control

The freedom of movement is a fundamental human right of which all citizens of the globe are entitle to. However, the right requires to be exercised in responsible manners otherwise, it can be catastrophic for some societies especially those who managed to establish a well-functioning social security systems for growth and development [48]. To control and manage migration including the illegal one, there is a need for reasonable border control otherwise; it can result in the inflows of undocumented migrants as objectified: illegal immigration is on the increase because of weak boulder control systems, availability of asylum and being granted refugee status in the receiving countries, lack of common market, poor performing formal economy, soft penalties for attempting illegal immigration, lack of common language; and flexible laws in transit countries [10]. Illegal immigration is on the increase because of tough border control by the receiving countries plus harsh policies that limit the legal inflow of foreign workers [6].

Conflicts and political instability

Peace and political stability, is a non-negotiable ingredient in the socio-economic development of all societies particularly when it comes to owning and maintaining a place call 'home'[49]. However, in the absence of such fundamental ingredients, infrastructural developments are not only disrupted but social cohesion threaten resulting in people fleeing everywhere as refugees in search of security and survival lending legitimacy to: irregular migration from Africa to Europe is on the increase because of the tidal wave of persons fleeing poverty, warfare; and structural demand for cheap labor in the host countries [50]. Immigration including the illegal one is driven by multifaceted causes which include but not limited to socio-economic and political disparities, environmental and climate change; and domestic political dynamics and instabilities [24].

Politicization of migration

In general terms man is largely claimed to be a political being and as such he cannot be separated from politics. In politics and political leadership, the judicious application of public resources including the human one is critical with the

ultimate objective of resolving public problems and initiating socio-economic and political programmes for excellent and progressive standard of living for all [51]. However, if politics is to be applied especially geo-politics in the best interest of politicians and their political affiliates to resolve international problems without caution it might end up creating more problems instead of solving the one on the table affirming: illegal migration has failed to cease because the programmes are more politically and diplomatically anchored instead of genuine reasons and interests in eliminating the phenomenon [52].

Family reunification

For some years now the world has witnessed some family separations due to multitude of factors like wars, conflicts, natural disasters, etc. In disasters like conflict and wars, family members run in different directions for safety. Sometimes, they land in far and different countries as refugees. At certain time, they would wish to be reunited as a family as provided in some international and regional conventions [53]. However, because of some strict immigration regulations it results in people being refused or having to wait for months or years before they can be issued entry visa sometime at heavy financial and psychological costs. To avert these predicaments, some people would try different alternates to be reunited with their loved ones including illegal immigration as substantiated: immigration can be fueled by the desire for better paying employment opportunities, decent life and living conditions, joining parents, grandparents, friends and other family members; and access to quality and relevant education; [24].

Lack of quality social services

For any society to develop there must be some quality, relevant; and affordable social services such as education, healthcare, housing, security, transportation, etc. In view of the centrality of these services in the socio-economic and intellectual development of citizens, their provision is one of the most critical contracts citizens globally have signed with their respective local and central governments. Thus, governments in most nations, remain the sole providers of such services with reasonably checked private sector participation [54]. In the event that a government is unable to deliver such services in poverty torn nations, it is either voted out or overthrown through rebellion or coup d'état [55]. For some citizens who cannot bear the heat they opt to leave the jurisdiction by any feasible mean including undocumented travel concurring with: the causes of illegal immigration encompasses, lack of quality social services, unemployment for youth and women, inadequate or poor migration management, poor governance, inadequate border control, lack of relevant vocational skills, conflicts; and food insecurity [56]. In Mexico, some of the fundamental causes of illegal immigration include inequality, poor quality education, lack of access to credit facilities; and low skills [57]. Similarly, access to resources, quality and relevant education, favorable migration laws, limited control in receiving countries, travel opportunities, flee of networks in facilitating traveling and settlement in receiving countries, environmental degradation; and population growth can all be attributed to illegal immigration [30].

Mass media

Today, the media is one of the biggest and the most influential social institutions in the world and as such it roles have gone far beyond what they were known to be traditionally. Thus, by some particularly human rights activities, it has now been ascribed as not only critical but the fourth arm of government [58]. However, it has been alleged to have caused lot of problems in the ways issues are presented including the presentation of the developed world as a 'perfect world' to live, thus resulting in the scramble to travel to Europe and United States of America by any mean including illegal immigration concurring with: while the big international media and social media has significantly contributed to illegal immigration, it has equally contributed to the unwarranted opposition to the legalization of undocumented immigrants [59].

Poverty

In today's monetary world, to earn a decent living one needs to have reasonable amount of money daily. This has become all the more necessary with skyrocketing cost of living and serious economic meltdowns. In a situation where employment opportunities are limited, people tend to leave for other places being national or international in search of better life and living conditions [60]. However, with the numerous hurdles in getting the required travelling documents due to inelastic immigration regulations like visa quotas, others chance unconventional travel as attested to: in Sri Lanka, women are forced to illegally migrate because of poverty, poor family status, poor salaries; and lack of access to decent employment opportunities [61].

Declaration of conflict of interest

I declare that there is no conflict of interest with respect to the study, authorship and/or publication of the manuscript.

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Ethics Approval

Ethics approval was not necessary for a study of this nature and scope.

Summary and conclusion

Like most social problems, poor governance and poverty, which are widely blamed for illegal migration, they cannot be the principal causation in spite of being critical factors. In summary, the push and pull factors include vibrant shadow economy, lack of reliable and efficient social security system, traffickers and smugglers networks, population growth and density, social recognition and acceptance, socio-economic ties, unemployment and poor wages, maltreatment of undocumented migrants, visa quota systems, non-globalization of labor force, ecological disasters, social networks, national migration legislations and policies, labor

force growth, survival mechanism for individual and families, climate change and disasters, strict border control, conflicts and political instability, politicization of migration, family reunification, lack of quality social services, mass media; and poverty.

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