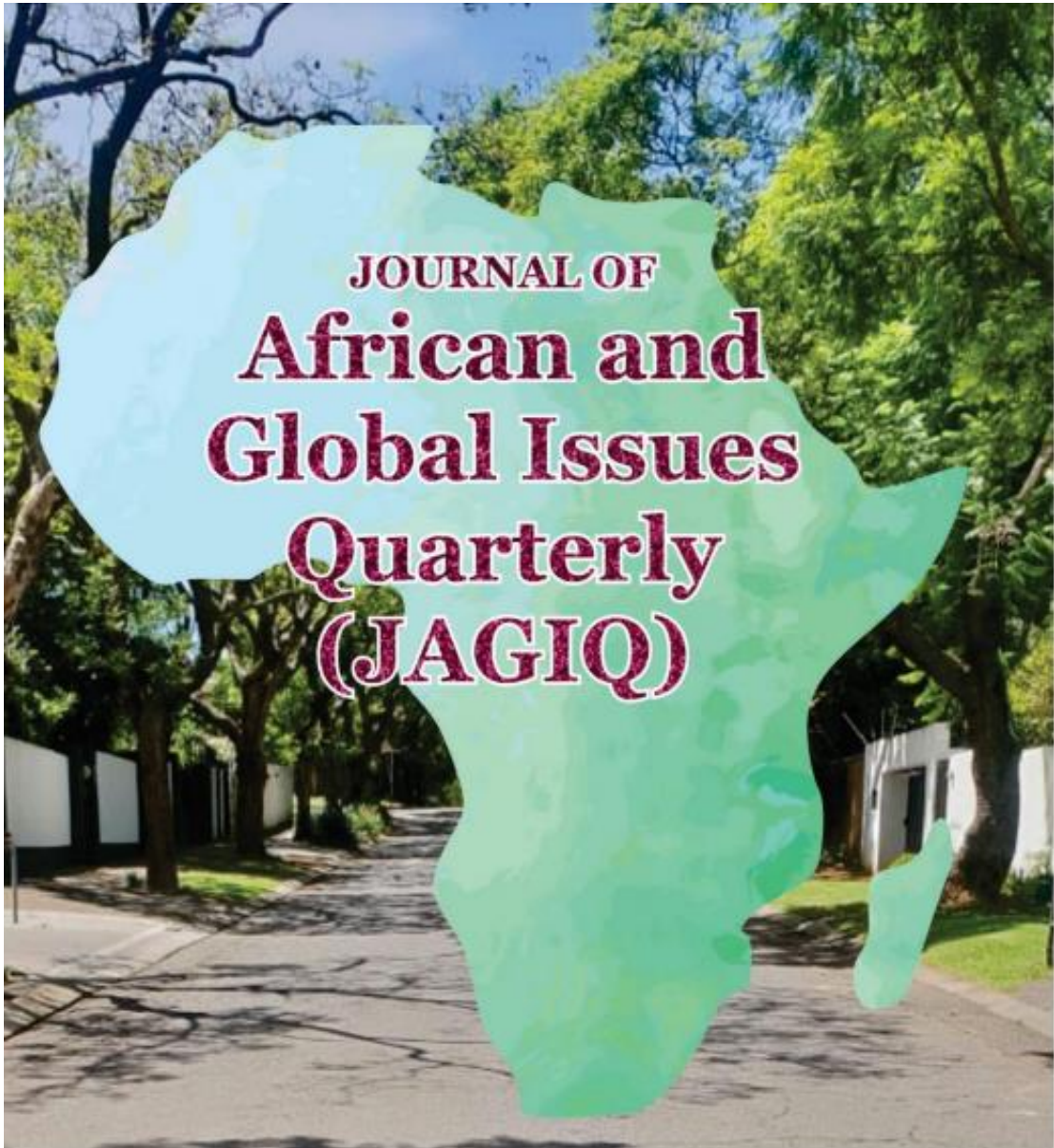




ISSN: 2709-8478 (PRINT)
2710-0073 (ONLINE)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.69778/2710-0073/2026/7.2/EN>

Editorial Note:

Strengthening Accountability, Confronting Violence, and Reimagining Security in Africa

This Special Issue of African and Global Issues Quarterly arrives at a critical juncture. Across Africa, nations grapple with interconnected crises: the erosion of public trust in financial governance, the devastating rise of organised violence among youth, the persistent marginalisation of vulnerable populations, and the enduring legacy of colonial and neocolonial institutions that continue to shape contemporary realities. The thirteen papers presented here dissect these challenges with intellectual rigour and practical urgency.

We open with Nakabago and Hofisi's forensic examination of Uganda's Universal Primary Education capitation grant. For decades, UPE has been hailed as a pro-poor triumph. Yet, as the authors reveal, weak monitoring and evaluation of internal controls have turned a lifeline into a leaky vessel. Without real-time auditing and community-based oversight, financial accountability remains aspirational. This paper is a clarion call: education funding cannot be separated from forensic vigilance.

The crisis of youth violence, examined across two complementary studies by Somtochukwu, Muyideen, and colleagues, forces us to look where society often refuses to look: inside Ogun State's correctional facilities. Their first paper critically submits that socioeconomic indicators unemployment, broken kinship networks, and educational exclusion are causal pathways into cultism. The second adds a psychosocial layer, revealing how trauma, identity displacement, and the search for belonging drive young inmates deeper into violent collectives. Together, these studies argue that incarceration without therapeutic intervention is not rehabilitation but a factory for recidivism.

History matters. Daniel Oluwafemi John takes us into Igangan Town, Oyo State, between 1973 and 2021. The farmer-herder crisis is often framed as a contemporary emergency, but John demonstrates its long arc: decades of land tenure ambiguity, climate-induced migration, and state neglect. Understanding 1973 is essential for solving 2026. This is a sobering lesson in how unresolved grievances become inherited wars.

Joel Odaudu moves beyond Africa's borders with a multidimensional causal analysis of terrorism. Rejecting single-factor explanations, Odaudu insists on the confluence of political exclusion, economic inequality, and social fragmentation. His framework is a necessary tool for any government designing a counterterrorism policy that does not merely react but prevents.

The international justice system faces a necessary reckoning in Avitus A. Agbor's incisive critique of the International Criminal Court's racist image and agenda. Through comparative analysis of the situations in Ukraine and Palestine, Agbor exposes the selective application of international law a double standard that undermines the Court's legitimacy and perpetuates global hierarchies of victimhood.

Choma, Thobejane, and Rannditsheni's revisiting of human rights for people living with albinism foregrounds a community too often marginalised in both policy and scholarship. Their work reminds us that human rights discourse must move beyond abstract universality to address specific, lived vulnerabilities rooted in superstition, stigma, and systemic neglect.

Governance and accountability receive comprehensive treatment. Mohono, Gabanakgosi, and Shopola's Public Value Theory perspective on parliamentary oversight provides a fresh framework for understanding democratic governance in Southern Africa. Zweni and Mahlala extend this conversation to grassroots public participation in municipal budget development, demonstrating that budgets are political statements about whose needs are prioritised.

The spectre of fragmentation looms large in Kelechi Johnmary Ani's unravelling of secessionist movements in Ambazonia and Biafra. By examining governance failures, identity politics, and historical grievances, Ani illuminates the root causes of separatist aspirations rather than merely managing their symptoms.

The private sector's challenges in volatile environments are explored by Parsad and Chummun, whose study of operational excellence in VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) environments focuses on South Africa's insurance industry, offering practical insights for navigating uncertainty.

Academic rigour and methodological integrity come under the spotlight in Musaigwa, Nojiyeza, and Tabane's practical guide to writing strong conclusion chapters, addressing a perennial challenge in research dissemination and preempting reviewer criticism.

Nthambeleni Charles Netshisaulu's conceptual analysis of reversible metaphors in Tshivenda adds a rich linguistic dimension, demonstrating how language reflects and shapes cognition, culture, and social relations.

Taken together, these contributions remind us that accountability is not a bureaucratic checkbox. It is the thread linking school grants to classroom outcomes, correctional policies to safe communities, land history to peaceful coexistence, international law to genuine justice, and linguistic expression to cultural identity. The papers collectively argue that sustainable development in Africa demands simultaneous attention to financial probity, social inclusion, historical reckoning, and institutional reform.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all contributing authors for their intellectual rigour and commitment to advancing knowledge that serves African communities. In a world increasingly characterised by complexity and contestation, the role of critical scholarship has never been more vital. This Special Issue intervenes with rigour, compassion, and hope.

Editor

Dr. Nicholas Idris Erameh

Nigerian Institute of International Affairs

Lagos, Nigeria

Email. Eramehnicholas@gmail.com

Table of Content:

1. Monitoring And Evaluation Of Internal Controls In The Financial Accountability Of The Universal Primary Education Capitation Grant In Uganda <i>Johan Nakabago, Costa Hofisi</i>	5
2. Psychosocial Analysis Of Youths' Involvement In Cultism In Ogun State Correctional Facilities, Nigeria <i>Ogunmefun Folorunsho Muyideen, Njoku Daniel Somtochukwu</i>	26
3. A History Of Farmer-Herder Crisis In Igangan Town, Oyo State, Nigeria, 1973-2021 <i>Daniel Oluwafemi John</i>	43
4. The Political, Economic, And Social Determinants Of Terrorism: A Multidimensional Causal Analysis <i>Joel Odaudu</i>	56
5. Blunting The Racist Image And Agenda Of The International Criminal Court (Icc): The Situations In Ukraine And Palestine <i>Avitus A. Agbor</i>	80
6. Revisiting Human Rights And People Living With Albinism <i>Tsoaledi Daniel Thobejane, Vhuhwavho Rannditsheni, Hlako Choma</i>	95
7. The Role Of Parliamentary Oversight And Its Influence On Democratic Governance: A Public Value Theory Perspective <i>SD Mohono, BJ Gabanakgosi, MA Shopola, T Motswakae</i>	110
8. Unravelling The Dimensions Of Secessionist Movements In Africa: Focus On Ambazonia And Biafra <i>Kelechi Johnmary Ani</i>	130
9. Use Of Total Physical Response Method For Teaching Action Verbs To Primary School Learners <i>Farisani Thomas Nephawe</i>	141

10. Implementing Operational Excellence In Vuca Environments: A Study Of The Insurance Industry In South Africa
Sahil Dwarika Parsad, Bibi Z. Chummun
159

11. Reversible Metaphors In Tshivenda: A Conceptual Analysis Of Domain Swapping
Nthambeleni Charles Netshisaulu
177

12. The Catalyst Of Public Participation In The Development Of Municipal Budgets In Category B Municipalities In South Africa: A Community Engagement Perspective
Abongile Zweni, Sandiso Mahlala
201

13. Europe’s Manufactured “Migration Crisis”: Media, Militarisation, and Mobility in a Time of Global Crisis
Aghogho Akpome, Kofi Takyi Asante
218

EUROPE’S MANUFACTURED “MIGRATION CRISIS”: MEDIA, MILITARISATION, AND MOBILITY IN A TIME OF GLOBAL CRISIS

Aghogho Akpome

Department of English, University of Zululand,

South Africa

aakpome@gmail.com

Akpome@unizulu.ac.za

Orcid ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4538-360X>

Kofi Takyi Asante

Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research,

University of Ghana, Ghana

ktasante@ug.edu.gh

Orcid ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8459-1375>

ABSTRACT

Drawing on twelve focus group discussions, this paper argues that Europe’s “migration crisis” is less a crisis of migration than a manifestation of the continent’s declining capacity to project economic and political power. The study situates the anxieties of European migration policy within the history of imperial expansion, neoliberal restructuring, and global crisis. It argues that the explosion of anti-migrant sentiments is not due to organic expressions of xenophobia but manufactured outcomes of profit-driven media narratives and political exploitation of the crisis. Participants in the focus groups consistently identified as a driving force of the crisis the economic grievances stemming from de-industrialisation and austerity – conditions created by the same political and economic elites now channelling popular resentments towards migrants. This crisis has been sustained by a lucrative industry in surveillance, detention, and border control that is part of the “repatriation” of domination from imperial outposts onto European territory. The paper argues that Europe’s “migration crisis” is, therefore, a symptom of the continent’s declining capacity to project economic and political power. Rather than an organic expression of xenophobia, the explosion of anti-migrant sentiment in mainstream media and political discourse is part of a political strategy of displacement, redirecting grievances born of a structural crisis onto vulnerable groups successfully portrayed as posing a threat to the polity.

Keywords: *anti-migrant sentiments; African mobility; Europe; militarised borders*

INTRODUCTION

The “migration crisis” in Europe is less about migrants and more about the internal unravelling of Europe’s ability to assert itself as a global power. It is integrally bound with the intensification of political and economic crises in Africa and West Asia, fuelled by a long history of Western intervention in the economy and politics of these regions that systematically eroded productive capacity and national security. Across Africa, the imposition of the structural adjustment programmes eroded state capacity, destroyed domestic manufacturing capacity, and led to jobless growth that has fuelled outmigration of young people desperate for jobs (Mkandawire & Soludo, 1998; Torvikey & Asante, 2025).

In the Arab world, the so-called War on Terror and its aftermath displaced millions of people in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. The resulting “refugee crisis,” which saw a record 1.3 million refugee applications in Europe in 2015 alone (Connor, 2016), has become a political flashpoint within Europe and has come to overshadow public discourse on migration policy. Africans fleeing the immiserating impact of neoliberal economic policies constitute a large portion of this flow. A recent Pew Research Centre study finds that “more than half of migrants living in Europe [were] born in South Africa, Somalia, Senegal, Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo and

Cameroon, in addition to Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya” (Pew Research Centre, 2018).

These developments have had a noticeable impact on politics across Europe, in particular, the rise of political leaders riding on the wave of the reactionary backlash against new arrivals. Starting from the controversial 2016 Brexit referendum in the UK, general elections over the past decade in Europe have been particularly divisive in countries as far apart as Austria, France, Germany, Georgia, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, and Romania. These concerns continue to find expression in different ways, including the EU’s migration policy crises, the recent near collapse of Germany’s coalition government over the establishment of migrant holding centres, and protests over the ban on the Islamic face veils in public in Denmark (Samuel, 2018).

While the impulse to implement restrictive migration policies has largely been driven by right-wing populists, left-leaning political parties have become increasingly involved in creating a hostile social environment for migrants. The Danish Social Democrats, under the leadership of Mette Frederiksen, have adopted hardline policies previously associated with the political right and have “argued that migration levels threatened social cohesion and social welfare, with the poorest Danes losing out” (Adler, 2025). Within this political environment, traditional ideological

left-right labels at first glance seem to no longer seem to make sense, as left or centrist leaders like Keir Starmer and Emmanuel Macron adopt hardline policies and make pronouncements – Starmer warned that the UK was becoming “an island of strangers” – while far-right figures like Nigel Farage and Marine Le Pen are “heavily mixing social welfare policies into their nationalist agenda to attract more mainstream voters” (Adler, 2025). This signals the rise of nativism, “the process by which left and right positioning is fading away in favour of the ‘native’/foreigner axis” (Guia, 2016: 2).

The controversy over migration can, thus, be seen as a microcosm of fundamental political transformations taking place in Europe and across the Global North, which are themselves part of the seismic geopolitical shifts currently underway. There is also extensive scholarship on securitisation and border controls (Slominski, 2021) and EU migration policies on integration (Bojadžijev & Mezzadra, 2015; Alisic & Letschert, 2016; Lehne, 2016). On the other hand, attention is now being paid to the increasingly important role of the media in bringing these developments and debates to the public (see Consterdine, 2018; Triandafyllidou, 2018; Wolling & Arlt, 2016; UNHCR, n.d.).

Indeed, while political controversies represent one of the dominant discursive footprints of the crisis, its aesthetic trail is marked by an avalanche of graphic images of asylum seekers in overcrowded boats and

rescue ships on the Mediterranean, at port cities such as Lampedusa, Lesbos and Algeciras, at border fences in the Spanish enclave of Ceuta and in refugee camps in conditions that are mostly chaotic, dehumanising and precarious. Added to these is the media coverage of the inevitable social and cultural tensions between refugees and locals, such as the reported molestation of scores of young women in Cologne, Germany on New Year’s Eve 2015 by “gangs of men described by the authorities as having ‘a North African or Arabic’ appearance” (Eddy, 2016). The following year, there was a false report that a similar incident had happened at a Frankfurt restaurant (Okwonga, 2017).

In this paper, we draw on primary data from focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted in three European countries to argue that the political radicalisation and polarising media narratives on migration in Europe must be understood in the context of Europe’s history of projecting economic and political power overseas. As its ability to project power has waned, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain the domestic social contract in European countries, sparking political crisis. Thus, we argue that expressions of bigotry against migrants are neither *organic* nor *apolitical*, but an expression of the decline of Western hegemony. Within Europe, this decline has proceeded alongside the broader trend of militarisation and commodification that long predated the “migration crisis.

METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study was to examine the complex ways in which representations and perceptions of African migrants operate within European discourses across political and socio-cultural spheres. The study was carried out using a qualitative research design rooted in the constructivist approach to capture and interpret the perspectives of the research participants and to map the connection between their expressed views and broader political developments. Focus group discussions (FGD) and semi-structured interviews were conducted in cities across three European countries, specifically in Lampedusa, Naples and Rome (Italy), Copenhagen and Odense (Denmark), as well as Berlin, Frankfurt and Wuppertal (Germany) in early 2020. These countries were purposively selected for their importance as key places of arrival (Italy) as well as ultimate destination and volume (Denmark and Germany respectively) for refugees and asylum seekers.

A non-probability sampling approach was used to select respondents, with the principal consideration being that they were citizens of European countries. Potential respondents were approached through the personal network of one of the co-authors, who had contacts in academia and non-governmental organisations. This selection effect partly accounts for the fact that the political views of the respondents were strikingly progressive. The study was interested in respondents with some educational attainment, are sufficiently politically

conscious, and hence follow news about migration more closely than others. There was a balanced mix of males and females aged between 18 and 62 (from interns to recent retirees and all city-dwellers). Each focus group consisted of between five and eight respondents with most of them living in their countries of origin.

The views of these categories of respondents align with the objectives of this study to go behind the superficial media representations of migration in the media and popular discourses. As such, we engage with the data at a much deeper analytical level. The data collection itself involved a rigorous dialectical exchange with the respondents in a process that approximated participatory real-time analysis of the data. Therefore, the quotations from the interviews are both data from the study and analysis of this data. In this respect, we do not claim that the views are necessarily representative of European views in general. Indeed, we take particular note that our sample is drawn from western European countries while recognising that significant anti-migrant sentiments have been reported in several eastern European countries.

The discussions with respondents covered multiple themes related to attitudes and perceptions of African migrants in Europe, including asylum seekers and refugees. The focus group discussions were recorded (after consent to record was duly secured) and transcribed verbatim. The transcribed data were analysed using thematic analytical principles and procedures

outlined in Attride-Stirling (2001) and Braun and Clarke (2019). In line with the constructivist paradigm of the study, the goal of using this analytical approach was to *make* meaning of the data. The analysis followed the six-step approach outlined in Braun and Clarke (2019), namely 1) familiarisation with the data, 2) generation of initial codes, 3) identification of themes, 4) review of themes, 5) definition and labelling of themes, and 6) report writing.

The meaning-making process through which conceptual insight was distilled from the interview transcripts followed an iterative process of categorising and recategorizing of codes. Constructs and emerging themes were then derived from the categorised codes. The emerging themes were themselves subjected to a rigorous process involving identification, scrutinising, after which they were either discarded or modified and further elaborated. Key themes that remained after this process include the intensification of xenophobic attitudes towards migrants in general and Africans in particular, and the exploitation of anti-migrant sentiments by media, corporate, and political elites.

FINDINGS

European Attitudes towards Migrants: Between Cosmopolitanism and Xenophobia

Migration has become an increasingly polarising issue, reflected in the sharp divide between the cosmopolitan outlook of our respondents and the reactionary sentiments of the general

public. While our sample does not include any respondent who themselves espoused reactionary sentiments, the overall picture of widespread antiimmigrant sentiments emerging from our data is consistent with media accounts and survey reports of rising anti-immigrant sentiments in Europe. For instance, a recent survey reports that significant majorities of people in Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Sweden felt that immigration has been too high. The figures reach extremely high levels in Spain (80%) and Germany (81%) (Henley, 2025).

In the context of growing animus against migrants, the focus group respondents espoused a strikingly liberal attitude towards African migrants. This attitude arose from moral as well as pragmatic convictions. On the one hand, it is based on a humanitarian impulse that viewed welcoming migrants as a *moral imperative*. On the other hand, they also believed that taking in more migrants was an *existential necessity* for Europe as the continent grapples with internal problems such as an impending demographic crisis and a critical shortage of workers. As one respondent in Germany noted, “We have a lot of problems here. We do not have enough workers, skilled workers to do all the different tasks which need to be done. I think there is a possibility they have a chance to help Europe and Germany... to become more economically productive, to become powerful” (Frankfurt FGD, 30/4/2019).

Furthermore, the respondents also believed that migrants could culturally enrich the nations of Europe. They described the increasing flows of migrants as an opportunity to “open our borders” and to “learn a new culture” (Napoli FGD, 18/1/2019); a situation that would make it possible for individuals to “meet people from different backgrounds and it is always something that makes a community richer in experience” (FU Berlin interview, 23/4/2019). This positive image of the migrant – as “a possibility” – sharply contrasts with the prevailing views of migrants as an economic burden that is propagated by the media and exploited by the political class.¹

Given the potential for Europe to benefit economically and culturally from migration, the respondents regretted that politicians across the region were not supportive enough of migrants. They criticised the prevailing immigration regime designed to restrict the movement of Africans as much as possible, which has led to the rise of the use of dangerous travel routes to Europe; and the discouragement of migration by making migrants feel unwelcome through bureaucratic delays and complicated integration pathways that compel them to live in dehumanising conditions. This ends up increasing social friction by foreclosing the integration pathway altogether for

many migrants since “they have been outsiders for such a long time... and so it can turn out to be the opposite and people are lost for society”; after a certain point, according to one respondent, integration through work becomes practically impossible as people may have been irretrievably pushed out of the mainstream (FU Berlin interview, 23/4/2019). Thus, from the perspective of the respondents, the prevailing regime of hostility towards migrants is not just a humanitarian failure but also one that deprives Europe of the opportunity to benefit from the economic and cultural potential of migrants.

The Manufacture of Anti-Migrant Sentiments

The respondents contrasted their own liberal cosmopolitanism to that of the general public, which they characterise as ranging from cold disregard to active hostility and even neo-Nazi sentiments. While the respondents worry about the growing polarisation between the cosmopolitan and xenophobic outlooks, they are also aware that far from being organic, the anti-migrant sentiments that have emerged in recent decades are a manufactured outcome of a vicious loop of media sensationalism and political opportunism.

The media plays a key role in whipping up anti-migrant sentiments by widely disseminating narratives and images

¹ It must be noted that this language is not the preserve of the political right. Even international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and humanitarian organisations often resort to the language of

“burden sharing” when trying to encourage countries to take in people seeking asylum as they flee from conflict-ridden countries (Swanson, 2016).

that distort or misrepresent the situation. For instance, they tend to “give a one-sided view” of events or to focus only on “the worst of the worst” in their reportage (Copenhagen FGD, 27/4/2019). This framing of migrants in the context of delinquency and criminality has a powerful effect given the general under-representation of migrants in the media, creating and reinforcing a public association of migrants with crisis and criminality (Eberl, 2018).

While tabloids largely drive this, the economic incentives created by the commodification of attention in the context of declining advertising revenues and competition for readership encourage some otherwise more mainstream media houses to participate in sensational reporting on migration equally. This process is analogous to the situation in the US. For instance, the American Civil Liberties Union estimate that about a quarter million dollars have been spent on polarising political ads that portray migrants as a threat (Joshi, 2024). Scholars have pointed out that even though new coverage sometimes distinguish between so called “legal” and “illegal” migrants, public attitudes on migration tend to be dominated by the images of illegality disseminated by the media (Macdonald, 2025).

Consequently, the media has played a role in widening the gap between perception and reality about migration. As a respondent in a focus group in Rome observes, “the numbers are bigger in the media and also in the perception; big in terms of how many people are coming” (Rome FGD, 26/1/2019). This misrepresentation of the scale of immigration is then channelled into a broader narrative that frames migration using the language of “crisis” and “threats”, and invokes images of being overrun, overwhelmed, or invaded. In 2015, for example, the media gave extensive coverage to the migrant camp in the north-western French town of Calais near the Channel Tunnel where hundreds of refugees made desperate and deadly attempts to enter the UK, often disrupting traffic in the process. Events in the camp dominated the news, not only for the dramatic manner in which it was dismantled in 2016, but also for the graphic images of the squalid conditions in which its residents, many of whom came from Africa, lived.²

Against the backdrop of economic stagnation and de-industrialisation driven by the outsourcing of jobs to Global South countries with low wages, the narrative of “invasion” by migrants provides a cathartic outlet for workingclass Europeans aggrieved with their precarious economic situation. As one respondent observes,

² But media coverage of African refugees has not been completely negative. In May 2018, a Malian refugee who made a daring rescue of a toddler dangling from the balcony of a high-rise Paris apartment block

received positive media coverage globally, received a presidential award for bravery, and received fast-tracked citizenship (Chrisafis, 2018).

these economic anxieties are exacerbated by the narrative that migrants will “steal our jobs” and drain resources allocated to social spending for citizens (Napoli FGD, 18/1/2019). These anxieties are then seized upon and instrumentalised by politicians who are themselves committed to the neoliberal framework of austerity-driven social spending cuts.

As such, though analytically distinct, there is obviously a tight nexus between media and political elites as key actors in the manufacture of the “migration crisis”, because the incentives and actions of journalists and politicians are inseparable in the social construction of the “crisis”. This is particularly notable with politicians on the right, who enthusiastically leverage and amplify media stereotypes and misrepresentations. In some cities in Italy, for example, this has resulted in an “increasing rhetoric of fear of the other [that is] basically racist” (Napoli FGD, 18/1/2019). During elections, as a respondent in a Danish FGD noted, politicians “turn [distorted narratives] into something worse than it is,” as a strategy to mobilise an otherwise reluctant or disengaged voter base (SDU Odense FGD, 26/4/2019).

This pattern of political opportunism is not only limited to right-wing political parties. As we noted above, the rise in nativist rhetoric has largely blurred the lines between left-wing or progressive discourse and the rhetoric of far-right populists. For political leaders who embrace this practice, it comes with immediate political payoffs. As one respondent observed, the tactic of

polarising the electorate in order to divert attention from more fundamental economic grievances has become a kind of political “football” that almost all political parties play to a greater or lesser extent (Interview with Giacomo, 24/1/2019). This outcome is not surprising; driven as it is by what Ayers and Saad-Finho (2015) call the “evacuation of politics” in the context of neoliberalism. Within this context, the most consequential economic policy matters have been cordoned off as purely technocratic and insulated from political debates or contestation, an indication of the near-complete hegemony of the neoliberal orthodoxy (Foli and Asante, 2025). Since economic policies are no longer matters on which political pressure can be brought to bear, the remaining outlet for venting economic grievances is paradoxically the one that involves the *politicisation* of such grievances by inflecting them through divisive narratives. This partly explains the growing political prominence and ferocity of culture war controversies around migration, abortion, and sexuality in the Global North.

The “migration crisis” is, therefore, a reflection of the declining economic dominance of the Global North, which is an outcome of the unravelling of the liberal international order that has been in place since the end of the Second World War. The consequence of the growing inability of the Global North to project economic power and to determine economic outcomes internationally (Mearsheimer, 2019) is the emergence of manifold crises in the centres of power across Europe and

North America. The emergence and intensification of reactionary politics reflect this dynamic and is rooted in what a respondent perceptively labelled as a politics of the “fear of the unknown” (SDU Odense FGD, 26/4/2019). It manifests itself in manifold anxieties about crime rates, sexual safety, and an anomic loss of the familiarity of cultural grounding.

As the analysis above indicates, this moral panic is neither *organic* nor *apolitical* but is actively constructed by a combination of media narrative peddling and political instrumentalisation. These anxieties are most acute among populations that are themselves subject to economic precarity, such as residents of Rome’s marginalised social housing complexes, who, in their economically depressed conditions, see the increasing numbers of foreigners moving into their neighbourhoods as “the addition of the state towards their marginality” (Rome FGD, 26/1/2019). Thus, while xenophobic or even racist sentiments can be seen as an expression of individual resentment, it is a manifestation of something much broader, i.e. a distorted expression of localised class grievances, which has subsequently been seized upon and magnified by economic and political elites and diverted into channels of expression that do not challenge the bases of economic and political power. Moreover, as we shall demonstrate in the next section, the elites have succeeded in mobilising these sentiments to pursue broader strategic goals in the shifting geopolitical landscape as the ability of the Western

powers to project power comes increasingly under strain.

“Repatriation” of Domination and the Commodification of the Migrant

Far from being merely a breakdown of social relations, the “migration crisis” is an integral component of a lucrative industry while also functioning as a tool of geopolitical control. Thus, the phenomenon of the “migration crisis” is continuous with Europe’s centurieslong history of projection of imperial power. However, as its ability to project power overseas has weakened over recent decades, the instruments of external control have now turned inward. In the mid-twentieth century, Aimé Césaire (1972 [1950]) used the concept of “imperial boomerang” to provide an analysis of fascism and Nazism in Europe as arising out of the normalisation of colonial cruelty in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The boomerang consists in the brutal methods of surveillance, the racial hierarchies, and instruments of surveillance used on colonised populations finally “returning” home to be used on the Western population who never expected to be subjected to the same violence:

And then one fine day the bourgeoisie is awakened by a terrific boomerang effect: the gestapos are busy, the prisons fill up, the torturers standing around the racks invent, refine, discuss. People are surprised, they become indignant. They say: "How strange! But never mind—it's Nazism, it will

pass!" And they wait, and they hope; and they hide the truth from themselves, that it is barbarism, the supreme barbarism, the crowning barbarism that sums up all the daily barbarisms; that it is Nazism, yes, but that before they were its victims, they were its accomplices; that they tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole edifice of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack

(Césaire, 1972)

Migration policy is one of the arenas where this boomerang effect or the "repatriation" of the tools of foreign dominance is being played out. The most striking manifestation of this can be found in the Italian island of Lampedusa. Once a bustling tourist destination, the island has undergone a transformation involving increasing militarisation, where a war against migration is being waged. According to a longtime resident of Lampedusa, the island has now effectively become a "military base" serving as a "prison for people whose movement do not conform with European travel norms (Interview with Giacomo, 24/1/2019).

It has become saturated with military installations and technologies of surveillance such as radars, drones, and naval deployments as part of European efforts at migration control (Corso & Mookherjee, 2024; Vives, 2025).

The "migration crisis" has been invoked to justify this militarisation, although the process long predated the "crisis." The process was already underway at the turn of the twenty-first century, when a *migration-security industrial complex* had begun to take shape in the shadows of the September 11 attacks. A working group set up by the European Commission in 2003 had proposed for "the EU [to] allocate a budget of 1.3 billion euros per year to security" (Argobast, 2016, p. 6). The years that followed saw the manufacture of diverse "emergency" situations in the areas of migration, terrorism, and other threats to "national security" that ensured a convergence of interest between political actors pursuing an agenda of militarisation and the rise of a for-profit security industry.

The island's economy has shifted from tourism to border control and military spending. As one respondent observed, the tourists have now been replaced by military personnel "sleeping in hotels, and having lunch and dinners in the restaurants" (Interview with Giacomo, 24/1/2019). The incentives emerging from this development have created their own internal dynamics, as local businesses have found a profit motive in the "war on migration" and have pivoted their business operations accordingly. An integral part of this

process is the commodification of the migrant. In this regard, the experience of Lampedusa, which at first glance appears to be an exception, is, in reality, a reflection of the changing direction of migration policy in Italy and across Europe.

Migration policy in Italy has slowly changed from the 1980s, when migrants were seen as workers and accorded labour rights and protections, to one where migration came to be defined as a problem and a border control issue from the 1990s onwards (Constantini, 2019). However, the turning point came with the passage of Law No. 189 of 2002, “Changes in Regulations on the Matter of Immigration and Asylum,” which, among other restrictions, introduced a new detention system for asylum seekers. The management of these detention facilities was outsourced to social cooperatives, but in recent years, private detention facilities have become increasingly involved in their management.

The private detention and reception centres have been described by journalists and activists as a “booming” industry. In a collaborative investigation involving journalists from six EU countries, contracts running into hundreds of millions of euros were reported. The investigation also uncovered cases of serious fraud, including the transfer of millions to the Mediospes social cooperative even though a contract was never signed and the award of a GBP276 million detention contract to Serco, even though they had a history of defrauding

the British government (Journalismfund Europe, 2025). In 2018, Mitie was awarded half-a-billion British pounds worth of detention contract. Moreover, these detention facilities are massively profitable. *The Guardian* estimated “a 20.7% profit margin at the G4S-owned Brook House in 2016, while at Tinsley House the margin was 41.5%” (*The Guardian*, 2018).

As such, the “migration crisis” has become lucrative “since the presence of the migrants inside the [detention centres] has become an economic issue: more migrants, more money” (Interview with Giacomo, 24/1/2019). This development is not unique to Lampedusa.

The European Commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs stated in 2007 in the context of the new immigration policy that “security is no longer a monopoly of the public sector, it is part of the common good, and responsibility for its implementation must be shared between the public and the private sectors” (Arbogast, 2016: 6). This logic of commodification and militarisation has been externalised beyond the borders of the European Union. Across the Mediterranean, the EU has struck deals which involve paying Libyan militias to intercept migrants bound for Europe. The result is a brutal market where human mobility is framed as both a product and a threat, which is then commoditised for economic gain and exploited for political capital.

CONCLUSION

We have argued that the “migration crisis” in Europe is less a crisis of migration than an outcome of Europe’s declining capacity to project economic and political power externally, a reality that has substantially eroded its ability to sustain social cohesion. Against this backdrop, the growing expressions of anti-migrant sentiments and the rise of reactionary politics should be understood not as expressions of spontaneous prejudice or bigotry but as a manifestation of a deeper crisis. The analysis of respondents’ views shows that dominant anti-migrant sentiments expressed in mainstream political discourses themselves were manufactured through a vicious cycle of media sensationalism, political opportunism, and the rise of an industry that profits from a growing sense of crisis.

The “migration crisis”, thus, serves the useful *political* purpose of diverting the grievances arising from deindustrialisation and austerity policies from the political and economic elites onto minorities who are easy targets. Similarly, the manufactured crisis serves a useful *economic* purpose by commodifying the migrant, thereby generating profit for private firms providing detention, surveillance, and containment services. What is framed as a crisis is actually an opportunity for Western elites to consolidate their political and economic power even while ordinary citizens in the imperial centres reel from the impact of economic and political decline.

REFERENCES

- Arbogast, L. (2016). Migrant detention in the European Union: a thriving business. *Brussels: Migreurop/Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung*.
- Ayers, A. J., & Saad-Filho, A. (2015). Democracy against neoliberalism: Paradoxes, limitations, transcendence. *Critical Sociology*, 41(4-5), 597–618.
- Adler, K. (2025, 4 June). The country where the left (not the far right) made hardline immigration laws. Available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1mgkd93r4yo> (accessed 7 November 2025).
- Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: an analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 1, 385–405.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597.
- Césaire, A. (1972[1950]). *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Chrisafis, A. (2018, May 29). Paris ‘Spider Man’ joins fire brigade after citizenship fast-tracked. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/29/parisspider-man-joins-fire-brigade-after-work-papers-fast-tracked>.
- Constantini, E. (2019). Internal changes to the social care and reception system in Italy. *InGRID Workshop “Rights of Migrants”*.
- Corso, A., & Mookherjee, N. (2024). The presence of abandonment: Left to live at the borderland of Lampedusa. *American Anthropologist*, 126(4), 622–634.
- Eberl, J. M., Meltzer, C. E., Heidenreich, T., Herrero, B., Theorin, N., Lind, F., ... & Strömbäck, J. (2018). The European media discourse on immigration and its effects: A literature review. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 42(3), 207–223.
- Eddy, M. (2016, January 5). Reports of Attacks on Women in Germany Heighten Tension Over Migrants. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/06/world/europe/coordinated-attacks-on-womenin-cologne-were-unprecedented-germany-says.html>
- Foli, R. K., & Asante, K. T. (2025). Neoliberal Hegemony and the Narrowing Discursive Space for Social Policymaking in Africa. *African and Asian Studies*, 24(12), 148–167.
- Guia, A. (2016). *The concept of nativism and anti-immigrant sentiments in Europe*.

Henley, J. (2025, February 26). Western Europeans say immigration is too high and poorly managed, survey finds. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/uknews/2025/feb/26/western-europeans-say-immigration-is-too-high-and-poorlymanaged-survey-finds>.

Joshi, A. (2024). Three Ways the Media Introduces Bias to the Immigration Debate. *ACLU News and Commentary*. <https://www.aclu.org/news/immigrants-rights/threeways-the-media-introduces-bias-to-the-immigration-debate>.

Journalismfund Europe. (2025). The Booming Border Industry in Europe. <https://www.journalismfund.eu/booming-border-industry-europe>.

Macdonald, D. (2025). News media focus on “illegal” immigrants drives how Americans think about immigration policy. *LSE United States Political and Policy*, retrieved from <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2025/06/12/news-media-focus-onillegal-immigrants-drives-how-americans-think-about-immigration-policy/> (accessed 8 August 2026).

McIntyre, M. (2018, October 10). Private contractors paid millions to run UK detention centres. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/uknews/2018/oct/10/private-contractors-paid-millions-uk-detention-centres-some-firmsmaking-30-percent-profit>.

Mearsheimer, J. J. (2019). Bound to fail: The rise and fall of the liberal international order. *International Security*, 43(4), 7–50.

Mkandawire, P. T., & Soludo, C. C. (1998). *Our continent, our future: African perspectives on structural adjustment*. IDRC.

Okwonga, M. (2017, February 23). Fake News Meets German Racism. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/23/opinion/fake-news-meets-germanracism.html>.

Swanson, A. (2016, January 8). The myth about refugees as a burden. *SBS News*. <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/the-myth-about-refugees-as-a-burden/xlcbca9rr>.

Torvikey, D. & Asante, K.T. (2025). *Austerity, Sovereign Debt, and Social Development: Lessons from Ghana*, Discussion Paper #50. Suva, Fiji: Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN).

Vives, L. (2025, September 22). The Mediterranean: Both a graveyard and a bottomless money pit due to EU border policies. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/the-mediterranean-both-a-graveyard-and-a-bottomlessmoney-pit-due-to-eu-border-policies-264756>.