



From Eritrea to the EU: Driven to Security



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Abstract:

Eritrea is small country located in the Horn of Africa that has remained an unknown mystery to most of the world. Since 1991, Isaias Afwerki has been the oppressive ruler of Eritrea after a 30-year struggle for independence from Ethiopia (BBC, 2015). In recent years, thousands of migrants have been seeking asylum in the EU to avoid mandatory conscription for all citizens in national service. According to a report conducted by the UN Commission of Inquiry, “crimes against humanity may have occurred with regard to torture, extrajudicial executions, forced labour in the context of national service” (OHCHR, 2015).



Map of migration route from Eritrea to the EU
Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Retrieved from: The Wall Street Journal

Migration Networks:

Economic Drivers:

- Eritreans rely on intricate migration networks to navigate the lucrative illegal migration industry and other entry barriers
- Social capital provides information about opportunities (i.e. employment) in the destination country, providing migrants with a sense of economic security

Physical Security Drivers:

- Safety and security are fostered through social capital while transitioning to a new life in the EU and overcoming the trauma of migration
- The ideal destination is Italy or a Scandinavian country where the largest Eritrean diasporas are located (RMMS, 2014, p.92)

Thesis:

Castles (2013) defines drivers of migration as factors that “encourage cross-border mobility” and “that shape the forms taken by movement” (p. 125). This paper will argue that while the migration of Eritreans to the EU is a complex phenomenon, the most influential drivers of their migration are economic and physical security.

Methodology:

This argument is supported with a review of the literature on South-North migration flow and migration networks, with a critical analysis of economic and physical security drivers of migration on Eritreans.

South-North Migration:

Economic Drivers:

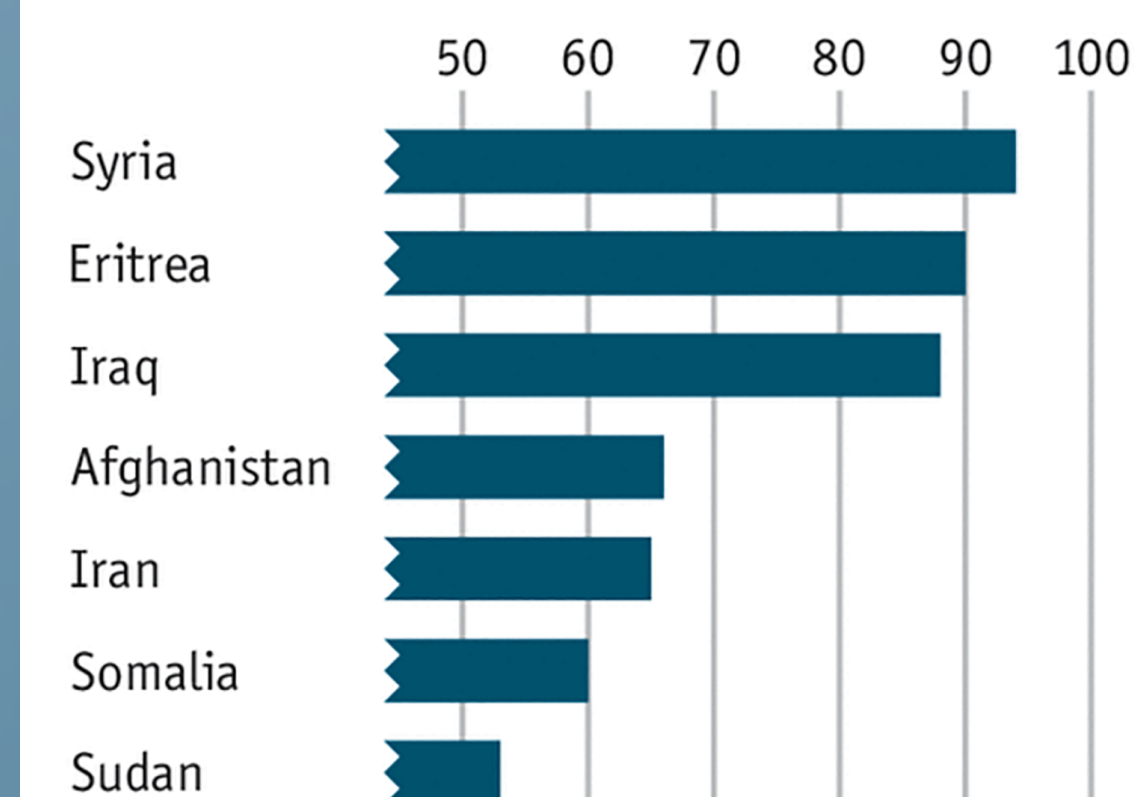
- Migration is fuelled by the inhumane conditions of national service jobs within a repressive culture that does not foster economic growth
- The EU is perceived as an outlet for enhanced quality of life with education and professional opportunities

Physical Security Drivers:

- Elements of daily life in Eritrea breach the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- The EU is perceived as an ideal place to seek refuge as it has implemented international human rights treaties and has systems to protect its citizens’ human rights

Highly recognisable

Asylum recognition rate* of over 50% in European Union states



Asylum recognition rate refers to nationals who receive some level of protection in an EU country over 50% of the time they apply for asylum status

Source: Eurostat
Retrieved from: The Economist

Conclusion:

The repressive ruling of Eritrea, with national service conscription for all citizens and crimes against humanity committed by the government, has resulted in desperation for freedom and security. Eritrean’s quality of life can be improved through migration to the EU.