

Chapter 12

The Janus-Face of Contemporary Migration: Perspectives on West African Return Migration and Transnationalism with a Focus on Ghana and Senegal



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Recently, a burgeoning literature has emerged on the return experience of migrants, with some analysts touting the benefits of return to the socioeconomic development of countries of origin, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Still, only few studies have examined how return migrants create and sustain transnational connectivity with their countries of destination upon their return to the homeland, and fewer still have analyzed how these dynamics play out in the context of West African migrants. This primarily theoretical paper explores the interconnections between return migration and transnationalism among West African migrants, focusing on the case of Ghanaian and Senegalese migrants. The insistent premise of the paper posits that contemporary migration is essentially Janus-faced, in the sense that migrants are transnational in both their pre- and post-return periods. The paper addresses the following questions: (i) What are the perspectives of Northern countries and supranational bodies, such as the EU, on return migration, and how do these perspectives compare with those of Southern countries, such as Ghana and Senegal? (ii) How do West African migrants view their own return migration, and to what extent are their emic perspectives different from those of Northern governments and their government in the homeland? (iii) How do West African returnees—specifically, Ghanaian and Senegalese returnees—use their transitional connectivities to facilitate their resettlement and reintegration in the homeland upon their return? Clearly, return migration elicits a number of important questions, into which this Chapter stands to provide useful preliminary prescience in the context of Ghanaian and Senegalese migrants.

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237

12.1 Introduction

During Greco-Roman mythological times, *Janus* was the god of many phenomena and entities vis-à-vis transitions through space and time, including beginnings, endings, and passages. Depicted as a two-faced person, Janus had functions pertaining to exchange, travelling, and journeys, and was, purportedly, able to see into the past and future, simultaneously, and watch over boundaries of all ilk, including those of city-states, gates, and doorways. With this inherent connectivity to two places in mind, Janus is used here as a metaphor for the underlying transnationality of contemporary international migration.

Prior to the seminal work of Nina Glick Schiller and her colleagues in the 1990s (Schiller et al., 1992, 1995), scholars of international migration assumed that most immigrants from the global South make a permanent move to settle in rich countries and thereby sever ties with their homelands. As a corollary, earlier analysts downplayed the *Janus-face* of the immigrant experience. We now know better: the immigrant experience has gone transnational, with cognate concepts and neologisms, such as “transnational identity” (Mensah, 2014; Satzewich & Wong, 2006), “transnational social spaces” (Faist, 2000: 191), and “flexible citizenships,” (Ong, 1999) becoming trendy in the study of international migration. Since the early 2000s, this basic realization has culminated in a burgeoning literature on immigrant transnationalism, with some studies focusing on the case of African immigrants in various Western countries (Black et al., 2003a, b; Asiedu, 2005; Flahaux & Reeve, 2015; Sinatti, 2015; Setrana & Tonah, 2016). However, while analysts now generally acknowledge the salience of migrants’ transnational connections to the homeland *prior to their return*, they have largely overlooked the extent to which these same migrants deploy, or rely on, their transnational identities, connectivities, and practices to facilitate their resettlement in the homeland *upon their return*. Yet, as Setrana and Tonah (2016: 550) aptly point out: “...the lives of migrants in the countries of origin are also likely to become ‘transnationalised’ and it would be unrealistic to assume that migrants would readily abandon their transnational activities and links after return.”

The fact that the transnational activities of returnees have been understudied in the extant literature is not that surprising, since return migration, in general, has only now gained some currency among international migration scholars. King (2000), for instance, describes return migration as “the great unwritten chapter in the history of migration” (p. 7). Presently, though, the stories of return migrants are being told with discernible frequency from a number of disciplines, including anthropology, geography, and sociology, with several analysts touting the significant contributions of returnees to the socioeconomic development of their homelands (Cassarino, 2004; Daugaard-Hansen, 2009; de Arce & Mahía, 2012; Nyi et al., 2012). Still, only few studies have examined the interconnections between migrants’ transnationalism and their return migration, and, even fewer still have explored how these interconnections play out in the context of West African migrants living in the West. Additionally, only a handful of studies have examined how

returnees use their transnational practices to help them resettle in their homeland, upon their return.

Quite expectedly, given the complex and multifaceted nature of return migration, its theorization in the extant literature is imbued with considerable contestation. Compounding this contestation is the fact that origin and destination countries are often motivated by different interest when it comes to return migration. For instance, while most advanced countries, especially in Western Europe, routinely deploy return migration as a tool for the removal of “unwanted” immigrants, several West African countries, including Ghana and Senegal, use return migration to boost their diasporic investments and, ultimately, socioeconomic development in the homeland. As a corollary, the return migration policies of origin and destination countries tend to be divergent. In a similar vein, such national policies often differ from, if not conflict with, the goals and aspirations of the migrants themselves (Boccagni, 2011; Sinatti, 2015). For instance, while most origin countries in West Africa entice their returnees to invest in productive ventures in such sectors as healthcare and education, many returnees tilt their investments toward symbolic and conspicuous consumption in the form of mega-houses, luxury cars, and lavish funeral celebrations. Clearly, then, the goals and aspirations of return *from above* (i.e., from the origin and destination countries) are often at odds with those *from below* (i.e., from the migrants themselves).

This **Chapter** uses the case of Ghanaian and Senegalese migrants in the global North to shed light on the interrelationships between the return migration and transnational practices of West African migrants overseas, paying particular attention to how the returnees among them use their transnational connectivities to help them resettle in the homeland upon their return. To the extent that transnational and return migration practices occur not only from the standpoint of migrants, *from below*, but also in the context of institutional parameters set by nation States and supra-national entities such as ECOWAS and the European Union (EU), *from above*, we will pay due attention these scalar dynamics to get a better grasp of the key issues at play here.

Clearly, the nexuses between return migration and transnationalism elicit a number of thorny, yet intriguing, questions, for which this chapter seeks to provide some answers in the context of West Africa, drawing primarily on case of Ghanaian and Senegalese immigrants in the West. The insistent premise of this chapter, which flows from our titular commitment, avers that *migration, especially in its contemporary manifestation, is patently Janus-faced*. This inherent duality plays out not only in the day-to-day activities of migrants, but also in the very consciousness of migrants, impinging on their personal identities and sense of belonging as they live their life in a *third space-a-la-Hommi* Bhabha (1994). More importantly, this connectivity to two (or more places), per transnationalism, continues even after the migrant return to the homeland, as we shall soon see. Even though our approach here is primarily theoretical, we draw specifically on the empirical works of Setrana and Tonah (2016) in Ghana and Sinatti (2015) in Senegal to firm up most of arguments. Accordingly, we pay homage to the “ethnographies of return” (Oxfeld & Long, 2004) provided by these scholars in the two national contexts (Ghana and Senegal) relevant to our chapter.

Following this introduction, the Chapter is divided into five substantive sections. The first provides the theoretical grounding for the Chapter by examining how return migration has been theorized in the extant literature, with some insights into the nexuses between return migration, on the one hand, and immigrants' transnationalism and integration, on the other. The second section profiles the international migration trends in West Africa, in general, and Ghana and Senegal, in particular, before we deal with the perspectives of return migration *from above*—i.e., from northern governments as well as the governments of Senegal and Ghana—in the third section. In the penultimate section, we zero in on the perspectives of return migration *from below*—i.e. from the emic realities of Ghanaian and Senegal migrants themselves. We end the chapter in section five where we synthesize our main findings on how transnationalism is enmeshed in both the pre- and post-return lives of the migrant.

12.2 Return Migration and Its Intentions

With growing evidence of the beneficial role of return migration to the socioeconomic development of origin countries [(de Haas, 2005), coupled with the fact that many first generation migrants are approaching their retirement age (Fokkema, 2011; White, 2006), return migration has gained considerable attention in academic and policy circles around the world. At the same time, as with migration, 'return migration' remains an elusive concept to define, with its meaning and synonymous concepts varying per context and, indeed, per analyst. For instance, Kunuroglu et al. (2016: 3) use 'return migration' and an equally abstruse term, 'remigration' as synonymous. However, we doubt whether these two terms are close enough to be substitutable. A 'remigrant,' to us, is someone who is migrating *again*, as signified by the prefix 're,' but not necessary migrating *back* to the home country, as commonly implied in the concept of return migration. We thus find Guzzetta (2004), for one, using the term 'reverse migration' as a preferred synonym for 'return migration'—a semantic move that is, arguably, more appealing, since there is an implicit return (back) to the starting point, which is often the homeland.

Adding to conceptual muddle is the fact that 'return migration' has both permanent and temporary dimensions that are not readily deducible from some of the common definitions of the term. Also, 'return migration'—both as a concept and as a phenomenon—overlaps quite substantially, if not conterminously, with transnational mobility among migrants, making it hard to distinguish between the two terms in most cases. Meanwhile, as Carling and Erdal (2014) note: "While the boundary between return migration and transnationalism is sometimes blurred, it also makes sense to see the two as distinct concepts, influencing each other" (p. 3).

Dustmann and Weiss (2007: 238) define 'return migration' as a "situation where the migrants return to their country of origin, by their own will, after a significant period of time abroad." While we are in general agreement with this definition, we are still unsure what constitutes "a significant period of time abroad," just as we

doubt whether the homeward trip should necessary be voluntary to qualify as return migration. For our purpose, “return migration” is a *broad, relative, and contextual* concept that denotes the homecoming of the migrant. It is *broad* in the sense that it covers both permanent and temporary returns, as well as both voluntary and involuntary moves back home. We also use it—as did Kunuroglu et al. (2016)—to embrace the homeward return of not only the first generation migrant, but also of the second and subsequent generations. It is *relative* and *contextual* in the sense that it has no essential quality that distinguishes it from other forms of homeward returns, such as return visits, circular migration, and transnational migration, in particular. With our definition, West African migrants who were forced out of Libya during the recent turmoil, for instance, are all return migrants or returnees, even though they did not come home by their own will for the most part. Similarly, migrants who are deported to their homelands are included in this broad definition of return migration. As Sinatti (2015) notes, “return is largely a tool for the removal of unwanted immigrants through forced and semi-voluntary return mechanisms” (p. 276); mind you, some researcher might decide to operationally define ‘return migration’ to exclude such returnees and deportees, as did Dustmann and Weiss (2007)—either way, our view of return migration being a relative and contextual concept remains both consistent and defensible.

The theoretical and empirical boundaries between return migration and transnational mobility are particularly nebulous. It is virtually impossible for someone, other than the migrant involved, to make this distinction; and to the extent that two different migrants can dub practically the same form of mobility differently (as either return migration or transnational migration) speaks to the relative nature of the concept. Since return migration is not always permanent, but sometimes temporary, any categorical distinction between it and sustained transnational migration is hardly justifiable. Indeed, because many migration decisions are open to future change, the notion of permanent return is even problematic (Carling & Erdal, 2014: 2–3), and this realization brings the overlap between return migration and sustained transnational mobility into even bolder relief. Although the boundary line between transnationalism and return migration is blurry, the two concepts are neither coterminous nor interchangeable; they are, indeed, distinct.

Another wrinkle in the theorization of ‘return migration’ concerns the distinction between its *behaviour* and *intention*. Until quite recently, migration scholars have been blindsided by their inattention to the return intentions of migrants. There is now a growing attention to migrants’ return intentions, and for good reasons. For one thing, “behavioural-tracking data [on migration] are prohibitively expensive to collect” (Tezcan, 2018: 390), and researchers are increasingly relying on surveys to gauge migrants’ return intentions as a proxy for their migration behaviour; of course, while the two are not the same, they are closely related. Understanding migrants’ return intentions is also important in its own right: it helps both origin and destination countries to “calculate projections on applications, eligibility and scope of retirement benefits” (Guzzetta, 2004: 110). Moreover, given that most diaspora engagement policies to lure citizens back home have underperformed, if not failed, the need to understand the return intentions of migrants cannot be overemphasized

(de Haas et al., 2015). As Bilgili and Siegel (2017: 15) rightly point out: “[h]aving a better understanding of migrants future plans regarding return may help policy makers find out about the potential of return and develop programs and policies that enhance return for development through the transfer of skills, financial resources, and experience.” Also, who can deny that migrants’ return intentions affect their decisions on employment, savings, investment, human capital formation, and civic and political participation at both ends of the migration cycle (Bilgili & Siegel, 2017; Lapshyna & Düvell, 2015).

Even though for many migrants, the idea of returning to the homeland is a *definite yes*, for some it is a *definite no*, and for still others, it remains a possibility, which is “neither certain nor unthinkable” (Carling & Erdal, 2014: 2). These options, and the attendant uncertainties, have created some confusion in the way survey questions on migrants’ return intentions are posed in the available literature. As Tezcan (2018: 391) points out, most surveys that ask questions about “intention to return/intention to stay” exclude an option to respond “I don’t know,” thereby forcing respondents into a binary choice. However, “I don’t know” is a reality when it comes to return intentions—a reality, which cannot be ignored if we are to maintain any theoretical lucidity. Perhaps the thorniest issue in the literature concerns the interconnections between immigrants’ return, transnationalism, and integration. The issue is twofold: First, what are the likely effects of immigrants’ integration in the destination country on their return migration or return intentions? Second, what effects, if any, do immigrants’ transnational ties with the homeland have on their return migration and its intentions? These questions can be framed in other ways. For instance, are those who are structurally or economically integrated more likely to return than those who are only socio-culturally integrated? Does transnational connectivity undermine or promote immigrants integration or not?

Carling and Pettersen (2014: 15) examine return migration intention in an integration-transnationalism matrix to accentuate the complex imbrications between these variables—i.e., return intention, integration, and transnationalism. Once we conceive of “integration” and “transnationalism” as a scale that ranges from a low- or weak- to a high- or strong-point, we can determine how return intention might play out in the context of a particular migrant, based on where he or she is located along this scale. It is clear from the Carling-Pettersen approach that integration and transnationalism are not absolute phenomena, which are in strict competition of each other; rather, they are relative, and connected to each other to some degree, depending on the context. Below is how Carling and Erdal (2014: 3) describe the Carling-Peterson integration-transnationalism matrix in relation to immigrants’ return intention:

Carling and Pettersen’s analysis of return migration intentions shows that it is the *relative strength* of integration and transnationalism that matters. Unsurprisingly, the highest odds of planning return are among people who are strongly transnational and weakly integrated. And conversely, the people who are strongly integrated and weakly transnational are the least likely to be planning return migration. In the middle, however, are two different groups with intermediate levels of return migration intentions: those who are *both* integrated and transnational, and those who are *neither*. (pp. 3–4; emphasis in original)

Clearly, it is not easy to determine, in absolute terms, how immigrants' return intentions are affected by their integration and transnational ties, as neither of the latter two is absolute; indeed, each comes in the form of a continuum, along which the migrant is positioned based on his or her particular circumstance.

What does the extant literature say about the return migration of West African migrants vis-à-vis these revelations? What are the relationships between the return migration of these migrants and their transnational activities? To what extent are West African migrants—and specifically the Ghanaians and Senegalese among them—engaged with their countries of destination upon their return to the homeland? What are the perspectives of the migrants themselves on return migration, relative to those of their destination countries in the global North and their homelands in the South? Answers to these questions would invariably point to different directions, depending on the specificities of the individual and the collective involved, as well as the theorization underpinning any such discussion.

12.3 West African Migration to the Global North

As with almost all regions of Africa, West Africa has a long history of human mobility, traceable to the pre-colonial period. This tradition was boosted in the post-colonial era by way of cash crop-induced labour migration across international borders inherited from the colonial enterprise. For instance, increased production of cocoa and coffee in the forest regions of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire engendered a massive influx of wage-labour from countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger (Konseiga, 2005). While migrants have been crisscrossing the sub-region over the centuries, the immediate post-independence decade of the 1960s saw the emergence of a discernible pattern in which countries of the arid and semi-arid half in the north, including Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, became the primary sources, while those in the coastal or southern half—notably, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana—served as the main destination points. With time, many West African countries adopted restrictive migration policies during economic downturns, some of which entailed the mass deportation of undocumented migrants, as happened in Nigeria in late 1970s and early 1980s (Adepoju, 2005; Konseiga, 2005). In such situations, adamant migrants have little or no choice but to shift their attention to other countries within Africa or beyond that might be relatively receptive to their search for a greener pasture. Such trends persisted for the greater part of the post-independence era until ECOWAS initiated programs to ease travel restrictions for all member states with the ratification of its *Protocol on Free Movements of Person* in 1979 (Gnisci & Treémolières, 2006) which was revamped in 2008 with the *ECOWAS Common Approach to Migration*. The latter provided guidelines for member states to move beyond a regime of migration control and exclusion to one of migration management. With these initiatives, ECOWAS citizens can now, among other things, travel visa-free and stay in another country for a maximum of 90 days (Government of Ghana, Ministry of Interior, 2016). Meanwhile with the

prevalence of civil war in countries such as Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, refugee movements have become commonplace in many parts of the sub-region since the early 1990s, with countries such as Senegal, Mali, Ghana, and Nigeria hosting thousands of West African refugees (Government of Ghana, Ministry of Interior, 2016).

There are indications that labour movements, which feed into the extraction of local natural resource and the production of cash crops, have waned under contemporary globalization and its attendant innovations in telecommunication and long-distant transportation. Since the late 1980s, in particular, more and more West Africans have been migrating to North American and European countries. Much of the European-bound flows have been notoriously dangerous, with migrants, most of whom are young males, crossing the scorching Sahara sands through Northern African countries such as Libya, Algeria and Morocco through the Mediterranean and Malta to Europe. That West Africans have been forced by socioeconomic and political circumstances at home to risk their lives on such hazardous trips is bad enough, but to see Europeans maltreat them—in what amounts to a quasi-apartheid migration exclusion, as though Europeans did not, or do not, emigrate to Africa—is even worse.

Migration in West Africa, in particular, and Africa, in general, has never been a closed, autonomous system, divorced from cognate trends elsewhere in the world. For centuries now, West Africa has been nested in the global migration system to one degree or another. For instance, during the so-called “Age of Discovery” in Europe, from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, West Africa served as one of the leading destinations for European emigrants who were supposedly exploring the World, then (Mensah, 2010). And, following their “discoveries” came the enterprise of colonialization and the infamous *Transatlantic Slave Trade*, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, which culminated in the *Scramble for Africa*, from 1884 to about the start of the first World War in 1914 (Mensah, 2010). Through these diabolical machinations, Africa was literally divided up among the European powers, with many Europeans settling on the continent, while some Africans were at the same time forcibly shipped *en masse* to the Americas, as slaves, to work the plantations.

Lest we forget, at the time of the Industrial Revolution in Europe, from the 1760 to about 1820, Europeans were trekking all corners of Africa for raw materials to support their industrialization. Hyperbolically speaking, it was, perhaps, the fear of the African mosquito that saved African lands from sizeable permanent European settlements, except in South Africa where the sub-tropical, temperate, and Mediterranean climates remain uncondusive for mosquitoes. Arguably, it was only when Europe entered the fourth stage of its *Demographic Transition*, around the mid-1970s, that European migration to Africa effectively dwindled. At that time, both the birth and death rates of most European countries ebbed very low, with no surplus population to send out. It was just around that same time that the tide of voluntary migration turned, with West Africans emigrating to European and North American countries. Clearly, then, to insinuate—as does conventional wisdom—that West Africans, in particular, or Africans, in general, are, perhaps, the only ones

who emigrate *en masse* to the global North, and never *vice versa*, cannot be farther from the truth.

Presently, there are large West African diasporic communities in nearly all major European and North American cities. With a regional average Human Development Index (HDI) of a mere 0.491 in 2019, ranging from a low of 0.377 in Niger to a high of 0.651 in Cabo Verde (Table 12.1), it is unsurprising that many West Africans use migration to diversify their livelihood and live chances. For the most part, the origins and destinations of West African international migrants are mediated by the legacies of colonialism, with most of them migrating to the countries of their former colonial “masters.” Not only did many European countries, at first, give preferential treatment to migrants from their former colonies, but the latter also find it easy to settle in these countries, given their commonalities in official language and culture. We thus find many Anglophones—from countries like Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone—migrating to Britain and other English-speaking countries such as the US and Canada, just as Francophones from Senegal, Burkina Faso and Cote

Table 12.1 West African countries: key population, development, and migration indicators

#	Country	Current ^a population (2020)	Global emigrant stock, 2017 ^b	Remittance, 2019 (US\$ millions)		HDI ^c , 2019	Colonial power
				Inflow ^b	As % of GDP		
1	Benin	12,123,200	657,594	396	3.5	0.520	France
2	Burkina Faso	20,903,273	1,518,063	445	3.0	0.434	France
3	Cabo Verde	555,987	237,921	247	12.1	0.651	Portugal
4	Côte d’Ivoire	26,378,274	1,065,361	335	0.7	0.516	France
5	The Gambia	2,416,668	106,525	235	13.5	0.466	Britain
6	Ghana	31,072,940	856,204	3723	5.5	0.596	Britain
7	Guinea	13,132,795	467,933	33	0.3	0.466	France
8	Guinea-Bissau	1,968,001	106,901	47	3.1	0.461	Portugal
9	Liberia	5,057,681	405,732	411	12.8	0.465	ACS ^d
10	Mali	20,250,833	1,143,309	964	5.4	0.427	France
11	Niger	24,206,644	383,917	293	3.0	0.377	France
12	Nigeria	206,139,589	1,309,063	25,368	5.7	0.534	Britain
13	Senegal	16,743,927	643,640	2495	9.9	0.514	France
14	Sierra Leone	7,976,983	374,691	51	1.3	0.438	Britain
15	Togo	8,278,724	524,460	510	9.1	0.513	France
<i>Regional mean</i>				2370	5.9	0.491	

^a<https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/western-africa-population/>; ^bWorld Bank (2018b); ^cHuman Development Index; ^dAmerican Colonization Society

d'Ivoire and Lusophones from Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau heading to France and Portugal, respectively. The increasingly restrictive immigration policies of the EU, in particular, have reduced West African migration to Europe, pushing many prospective migrants underground into the cruel arms of human trafficker and 'connection men' and other fraudulent actors (Mazzucato, 2008). Notwithstanding these constraints, West Africans continue to emigrate to different parts of the world, with some countries, such as Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, and Nigeria, having more than a million of their citizens living outside their own borders by 2017 (see Table 12.1). Expectedly, remittance remains a major source of foreign exchange for almost all West African countries, contributing to nearly 6% (on average) of their respective Gross Domestic Products (GDPs) by 2019 (Table 12.1).

12.3.1 Senegal and Ghana: International Migration Trends

With Ghana's independence in 1957 and Senegal's in 1960, the former has a slightly more post-independence experience than the latter. Also, Ghana's population of 31.1 million is almost twice that of Senegal which stands at 16.7 million (Table 12.1), just as the size of the Ghanaian economy, with an estimated GDP of USD65.56 (World Bank, 2018a) is more than double that of Senegal's USD24.13; their respective GDP per capita are USD2,202 and USD1,521 (World Bank, 2018a). Despite these notable differences, the two countries have the enviable reputation of being among the very few stable countries in Africa. This is attested by their peaceful change of governments over the years, and their ability to deal with their socio-economic and ethnic problems without much violence. While both economies did reasonably well during their immediate post-independence period, under their respective trailblazing Presidents—i.e., Kwame Nkrumah for Ghana and Léopold Sédar Senghor for Senegal—living conditions in both countries deteriorated from the late 1970s to about the late 1980s, following the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs (Mensah, 2006). In addition to extensive currency devaluations and civil service retrenchments, both countries were compelled by IMF-World Bank conditionalities to withdraw subsidies from the provision of amenities and social services such as healthcare, education, water and electricity (Mensah, 2006). Their GDPs dropped precipitously, inflation and unemployment soured, and crime and other social problems increased for the greater part of the SAPs era. It was against the backdrop of these conditions that citizens from both countries—including many with higher education or professions in demand, such as physicians, nurses, engineers, and teachers—began to leave in droves for greener pasture overseas (Adepoju, 2005; Black et al., 2003a). It was not until the early 2000s that the Ghanaian and Senegalese economies began to enjoy renewed vigour and growth, with some attendant improvements in living conditions (Mensah, 2010; Flahaux & Reeve, 2015). And it was around this time that many of diasporic populations—who left Ghana and Senegal in 1980s and 1990s, and thus relatively settled in their host

countries—intensified their transnational connectivity, short-term visits, and return migrations to the homeland (Asiedu, 2005; Flahaux & Reeve, 2015).

By 2017, there were over 0.8 million Ghanaians living outside the country, according to estimates by the World Bank; the corresponding figure for Senegal was 0.6 million people (see Table 12.2 below). The main non-African destinations for Ghanaians include the US, UK, Italy, Germany and Canada, in that order. For Senegal, the leading non-African host nations are France, Italy, Spain, US, and Belgium, in that order. Interestingly, whereas UK, the former colonial power for Ghana, is second only to the US, as the leading non-African destination for Ghanaian migrants, France, which comes in first for Francophone Senegal, places as far down as ninth among the top-ten Ghanaian destinations. With remittance accounting for 5.5% of Ghana's GDP and as high as 9.9% of Senegal's (Table 12.1), migration is clearly an important component of the lives of people in both countries.

12.4 Return Migration: Perspectives *from Above*

12.4.1 *The Case of Western Governments*

During the 1960s, several Western countries, including France, UK, Germany, US and Canada relied, on foreign workers to boost their economy (Flahaux & Reeve, 2015: 101; Marot, 1995; Mensah, 2010). Consequently, their immigration policies were quite flexible, with some even allowing citizens from their former colonies to enter without visa. France, for one, set up recruitment offices in West African countries such as Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire to facilitate the migration of workers to France (Flahaux & Reeve, 2015: 101; Marot, 1995). As the global economy went into a tailspin during the OPEC crisis of the early 1970s, many Western countries

Table 12.2 Top 10 Non-African destinations for Ghanaian and Senegalese emigrants, 2017

Rank	Ghana		Senegal	
	Destination	No. of emigrants	Destination	No. of emigrants
1	USA	171,428	France	119,661
2	UK	87,000	Italy	93,567
3	Italy	47,287	Spain	63,004
4	Germany	33,000	US	41,631
5	Canada	24,718	Belgium	5873
6	Spain	16,006	Canada	5795
7	Netherlands	13,990	Germany	4181
8	Belgium	9372	Switzerland	2664
9	France	6797	Portugal	2148
10	Australia	5980	UK	1750
	<i>World total</i>	<i>865,204</i>	<i>World total</i>	<i>643,640</i>

Source: World Bank (2018b)

started to tighten their immigration regulation, only to relax them somewhat in the late 1980s, as globalization and the cumulative effects of earlier migration engendered more international migration around the world. By the late 1990s, as the population of Blacks and other ethno-racial minorities increased in major cities of the West (e.g., London, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Paris, Toronto, and New York), immigration became a highly contentious political issue, forcing many governments to curb the flow of racial minority immigrants.

Numerous studies (e.g., Cassarino, 2004; Ghosh, 2000; Sinatti, 2015; Mensah, 2010) have shown that the immigration policies of the EU and other Western countries, including US and Canada, are now geared towards the curtailment of irregular immigration. Consequently, “return” is used by many Western governments in conjunction with such terms as “removal,” “readmissions” [to the homeland], “expulsion,” and “deportation”—all of which seek to turn back unwanted immigrants, such as those who have overstayed their visa or those whose asylum applications have been denied (King, 2000; Koser, 2000). And, as Sinatti (2015) points out, implicit in the Western idea of return is the fact “that the return of these migrants would be permanent.” Ensnared in this scenario of *permanent* return, many undocumented migrants expend substantial resources on what Mazzucato (2008), writing in the context of Ghanaians in the Netherlands, calls the “the formal and informal economies of identity papers” (208–209).

Meanwhile, many Western countries are coming to the realization, justified or not, that they need to incentivize countries of the global South to have the latter readily re-admit their citizen-returnees. Often the incentives given in the related bilateral agreements include funding for youth employment and other initiatives to boost the role of returnees, in particular, migrants, in general, in the development of countries in the global South. It is with this mindset that the EU gave Senegal nearly EU300 million for economic development and other migration-related needs in a bilateral cooperation agreement from 2008 to 2013 (Sinatti, 2015; Republic of Senegal [RS] and European Commission [EC], 2007). This approach is premised on the belief that “improving conditions in the country of origin will reduce the desire to emigrate and curtail irregular migration” (Sinatti, 2015: 279). However, is the situation that simple and straightforward? We know from the hypothesis of *migration hump* (de Haas 2007), for instance, that development or short-term economic growth does not necessarily reduce migration. In fact, there are indications that as countries develop, migration and other forms of human mobility increase—after all, it is not the very poor that engages in international migration, for one. In the final analysis, it is apparent that the position of the global North, regarding return migration, is quite problematic, to put it mildly: Not only is their idea of incentivising the returnees’ homelands likely to have the opposite consequence, but their conception of return as something more or less permanent is equally questionable. As the premise of this chapter posits, migration is essentially Janus-face; and most migrants remain mobile and transnational even after they return to their homeland, often due to circumstance they cannot control much, and at times out of their own volition.

12.4.2 *The Case of the Senegalese and Ghanaian Governments*

Both Senegal and Ghana readily acknowledge the importance of migration to their respective economies (Government of Ghana, Ministry of Interior, 2016; Setrana & Tonah, 2016; Republic of Senegal [RS], Ministry for Senegalese of the Exterior [MSE] 2006; Sinatti, 2015). With remittance accounting for so much of their GDPs, who can candidly aver otherwise. It is in this context that programs for diaspora engagement and return migration have gained currency in policy and academic circles in both countries (Asiedu, 2005; Mensah et al., 2018; Sinatti, 2009; Flahaux & Reeve, 2015). Ghana and Senegal are among the few West African—and, indeed, African—countries to invest significant resources in the management of migration for their benefit. Ghana for one passed a National Migration Policy through its parliament in 2016, and is currently working on a Diaspora Engagement Policy through the renowned Center for Migration Studies at the University of Ghana. Quite expectedly, the Ghana National Migration Policy has specific policy objectives and strategies for return migration. These include efforts to facilitate the return, readmission, and reintegration of emigrant; enhance the government's capacity to manage return migration; raise the awareness of Ghanaians on the importance of migration to national development, and that of returnees on job opportunities in Ghana (Government of Ghana, 2016). There are also strategic moves to develop guidelines for the evacuation of Ghanaian migrants in emergency situations, and to create a database of Ghanaians in the diaspora (Government of Ghana, Ministry of Interior, 2016: 44–45). Furthermore, with a Dual Citizenship provision in the nation's Citizenship Regulation Act of 2001, Ghana extends citizenship rights to its diasporic community worldwide. The same can be said of the passing of its Representative of People's Amendment Act, (*ROPAA: Act 699, of 2007*), by which the government is extending voting rights to Ghanaians abroad (Mensah et al., 2018). Moreover, Ghana now has a Diaspora Affairs Bureau within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and National Integration, and a Diaspora Desk in most of the Ghana Consulate offices overseas to address matters of mutual interest to the Ghanaian government, diaspora, and potential returnees. And, as Teye et al. (2017) note, the Emancipation Day celebrations, held annually in Ghana since 1998, and the more recent Pan African Festival (PANAFEST) are all part of the government's effort to encourage the diasporic and returnee communities to be actively involved in the sociocultural and economic life of the nation.

Unlike Ghana, Senegal does not have a dual citizenship provision in its Constitution, neither does it have a formal, parliament-sanctioned National Migration Policy. Still, Senegal sees it as matter of top national priority, and has, accordingly, mainstreamed migration across many policy domains, including education, health care, social security, and pension. Also, as Sinatti (2015: 276) rightly points out, Senegal is a country of special interest to the EU, in particular, when it comes to migration, since it is located at the heart of the main migratory route for irregular migrants from West Africa to Europe. Senegal has a Ministry for the Senegalese of the Exterior (MSE), created as far back as 1993, through which it

deals specifically with its diaspora- and returnee-related issues. In 2006, the priorities of the Senegalese government concerning return migration were consolidated in a policy document on migration and adopted by the MSE (Republic of Senegal, MSE, 2006). Unlike the EU and other Western countries and supranational entities, the Senegalese government (like its Ghanaian counterpart), through this policy document adopts a broad conception of return migrant to include not only migrants who are deported, but also those who come home for short- or long-term visits, tourism, and ‘permanent’ resettlement. The document also acknowledges that even though some Senegalese emigrants are high-skilled workers, the vast majority are, indeed, low-skilled men, who often emigrate alone with the intention of making money to return home (Flahaux & Reeve, 2015; Republic of Senegal, Ministry for Senegalese of the Exterior [MSE], 2006). This is generally different from the case of Ghanaian emigrants, among whom are many high-skilled workers, including physicians, nurses, teachers, and other university graduates (Adzei & Sakyi, 2014; Asampong et al., 2013; Asiedu, 2005). Another subtle difference between Senegal and Ghana is the fact that the former tends to have a more *selective and elitist approach* to return migration than the latter (Amassari & Black, 2001; Republic of Senegal, Ministry for Senegalese of the Exterior [MSE] 2006; Sinatti, 2015; Asiedu, 2005; Setrana & Tonah, 2016). For instances, this is how Sinatti (2015), who has studied Senegalese migration for some time now, summarizes the situation there:

Encouraging the return of a small portion of migrants with sought-after skills and attracting diaspora investment in sectors identified as relevant for national economic growth while still reaping the benefits of remittances sent by the majority of other emigrants offers Senegal the best of both worlds. Senegalese policies towards return not only adopt a strongly *elitist stance*, but also refuse a distinction between different temporalities of return, favouring mobility over permanent resettlement...the Senegalese government reveals a notion of return that focuses on attracting migrants’ resources and skills rather than on the return of migrants themselves. (p. 281; emphasis is mine)

The government of Ghana, on the other hand, encourages the return of a broader spectrum of its citizens, including both skilled- and unskilled-workers, and even African-Americans and Afro-Caribbeans of all socioeconomic background, through such initiatives as the Dual Citizenship provision, the PANAFEST festival, and the Joseph project, which targets African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans. Named after the Biblical Joseph, who was sold into captivity by his brothers, this Joseph project encourages the return visit of ‘historic’ African diasporas to Ghana for tourism, investment and re-settlement (Mensah et al., 2018).

Also, a close reading of the Senegalese approach—as presented in its 2006 policy document on migration—suggests that the government is not only selective, targeting the elite for the most part, for obvious reasons of getting more resources, but it also favours fixed or short-, rather than long-term returns. Here too the words of Sinatti (2015), with insights from the MSE document (MSE, 2006) is worth repeating: “...governmental initiatives favour the return of high-skilled migrants on fixed-term assignments and promise information and assistance to a restricted number of aspiring migrant investors with promising ideas” (p. 281). Of course, one should not be under any illusion that the Ghana government is also keen on

procuring as much resources, skills and investments from its diaspora and returnees as possible; it just so happens that its approach—as one can discern from the National Migration Policy and other diaspora engagement programs—is not that selective and elitist, or at least not explicitly so, as in the case of Senegal. For instance, as part of the Year of Return celebrations in 2019, the government of Ghana granted citizenship to 126 African-American and Afro-Caribbeans in a ceremony at the Jubilee House—the seat of the Ghana government (Asiedu, 2019). Notwithstanding these subtle, yet noteworthy differences, both Ghana and Senegal do not see return as primarily *forced* or involuntary return, as in deportation, for instance. For both countries, return migration is mainly voluntary, and that forced return amounts to an aberration or a crisis situation to be dealt with as such. Furthermore, for both Ghana and Senegal, return needs not be permanent or even long-term, it can be short-term visit or take the form of circular or transnational migration, thereby reinforcing the Janus-face character of contemporary migration.

12.5 Return Migration *from Below*: Emic Perspectives of Ghanaian and Senegalese Migrants

One can plausibly argue, based on experience and anecdotal evidence, that, in general, African, (and for that matter West African), migrants tend to have a deep-seated urge to return, eventually, to their homeland. This cultural imperative is not easy to theorize: Can we say that African or West African migrants are *essentially* different from other migrants, or just that the difference here is one of *degree* and not of *essence*. It is not easy to talk about (West) African culture, as such, without bordering on essentialism. While we do not think West African *cultures* are different, in essence, from those of other societies, we still believe West African migrants, like other Africans, tend to have greater propensity (as in the degree of propensity) to return home, due to their strong attachments to their traditional lands, extended family systems, and the attendant communal lifestyles and ethos, from which they find it hard to sever their ties for good. Indeed, Europeans and other non-African societies used to also have such high propensity, except that most of them have now moved on, due to their hyper-modernization and technological advancements which have shifted their cultural practices further away from traditionalism and communalism, and attachments to primary land resources and extended family ethos. Thus, from our perspective, communalism and traditionalism are not essentially African, but universal; and that most societies have adhered to them at one time or another. To us, the notion of an essential West African or African culture, that is at its core different from that of European culture is hard to sustain, since African culture is not even monolithic, and has internal diversities, in terms of ethnicity, language, religion, and other cultural practices, that are mind-bogglingly complex in their own right.

Against the backdrop of this cultural expectation, many Ghanaian and Senegalese migrants romanticise about their return with a nostalgic zeal that is hard to fathom or contain at times. Thus, for most Ghanaians and Senegalese, as with most Africans, migration is ‘temporary’ (Gmelch, 1980). For many (if not most) of them, the real thrill in, and motivation for, migration lies in the return; and many cannot wait to return, with all the associated mystique and allure of foreignness and the accolades of the conquering son or daughter, who has ventured abroad and lived with foreigners and return safely (Carling & Åkesson, 2009). As Sinatti (2015) notes in her study of Senegalese migrants “They indicate return itself as the reason that motivates departure” (p. 282); the irony here cannot escape us, but that is the reality among many (West) African migrants. However, these days, the passion to return is tapering down a bit, due to the influence of globalization and its electronic-mediated communication innovations that allow migrants to easily collapse space and time, and interact with people back home instantaneously on a daily basis, without having to return, *per se*. Meanwhile, these same technological innovations have facilitated migrants’ transnational travels, with many Ghanaian and Senegalese migrants now involved in back-and-forth trips between the homeland and the destination. This transnational connectivity is often used to lay the groundwork for various socioeconomic and political plans they might have for their eventual return (Asiedu, 2005; Black & King, 2004; Ammassari & Black, 2001; Ammassari, 2004; Flahaux & Reeve, 2015).

With the eagerness to return so strong among Ghanaian and Senegalese migrants, as with other West African migrants, it is hardly surprising that many among them pursue homeowners at the homeland, while still living overseas (Black & King, 2004; Ammassari & Black, 2001; Sinatti, 2009; Asiedu, 2005; Firang, 2011). The familial and cultural pressures to build a house, while living outside or upon return, are so intense that many migrants have little or no choice but to sacrifice adequate housing or homeownership in their destination to help finance housing projects in their homeland, in what has been dubbed *transnational housing career* (Firang, 2011). Various real estate agency in both Ghana (e.g., Regimanuel Gray Limited; Trasacco Estate; Devtraco Ltd) and Senegal (e.g., Global Property Senegal Ltd) are tapping into the growing demand for housing among returnees and members of the diaspora with creative financial arrangements and loan facilities to allow them to pay for a mortgage in the homeland while living abroad. Similarly, there are government programs to facilitate the legal acquisition of building plots among the diaspora and returnees. For instance, Sinatti (2015) writes about a Senegalese government program that allocates a vast amount of land for the development of *cités de la diaspora*—i.e., a place where exclusive apartments are built for migrants through real estate cooperatives facilitated by the Senegalese government. Notwithstanding such government programs, there is evidence that many Senegalese and Ghanaian returnees and people in the diaspora prefer to put up their own buildings in neighbourhoods of their own choosing (Grant, 2009; Setrana & Tonah, 2016; Sinatti, 2009, 2015). In the case of Ghana, in particular, one finds migrants and returnees putting up mega-houses, many of which hardly get completed before the

unfortunate demise/passing of the migrants or returnees who started them in what has been colloquially dubbed the “funeral home syndrome”.¹

Besides dealing with housing, it is the need for a sustainable income that, perhaps, exercises the minds of returnees most. Keenly aware of the acute dearth of job opportunities that “pushed” them out of their homeland in the first place, many returnees enter into self-employment, relying on their resources and networks at both ends of the migration cycle. Perhaps nothing puts returnees to the path of transnational connectivity more than the need to make a sustainable living at home upon their return. As several studies in Ghana (e.g., Setrana & Tonah 2016; Kyei, 2013; Anarfi et al., 2005) and Senegal (Flahaux & Reeve, 2015; Sinatti, 2009, 2011) have shown, returnees in both countries tend to establish businesses with ties to the outside world. These international ties are usually for business partnerships, mentorship, and capital sourcing. Invariably, having spent some time overseas, many of these returnees have unique insights into the business niches, opportunities, and gaps at both the homeland and the destination, which they can exploit to their entrepreneurial advantage. As a corollary, many gets into such sectors as import/export, trading, entertainment, hotel and hospitality, healthcare, and education, where they have a competitive edge over their non-migrant counterparts. In fact, some among the latter even depend on the former to help them establish business networks overseas. Like the entrepreneurs, many returnee-professionals (e.g., physicians, professors, and engineers) maintain their networks abroad with personal visits and other short-and long-term professional leaves such as sabbaticals. As Setrana and Tonah (2016) note, in the context of Ghanaian return migrant-professionals:

Such visits help them to keep abreast with new trends and modern technologies in their jobs while at the same time boosting their incomes back home. It further enhances the ability of return migrants to compete with non-migrants for the opportunities available in the Ghanaian labour market because of the general believe that people who are trained abroad have good work ethics and are smarter. (p. 556)

In addition to the return migrants who cultivate their transnational connectivity for entrepreneurial and professional development are those whose engagement with their former destinations are mainly for personal reasons—e.g., visiting their second- or third-generation immigrant children, undergoing their annual medical checkups, renewing their residency and other official documents, filling their annual national income taxes, and collecting their pensions or other social benefits.

Naturally, migrant businesses in Ghana and Senegal have not escaped reproach. For instance, some authors (e.g., Grant & Oteng-Ababio, 2012; Black et al., 2003b; Ammassari, 2004) are concerned that many of these businesses are too small, with little or no innovative capacity to help move the broader national development agenda forward much. Others, such as Grant and Oteng-Ababio (2012), lament that some of these migrant businesses even have detrimental consequences for the health

¹ This refers to a situation surrounding a mega-house, mostly in Accra, built by migrants, which is for the most part incomplete, but rushed to be completed upon the death of the migrant owner to make preparations for the funeral and celebrations of the migrant owner’s. Such buildings are at times called “Toronto funeral homes” to signify their ties to the outside world or to migration.

and wellbeing of people in the homeland; notable examples in this case include businesses that deal with the importation of electronic waste and other used or second-hand commodities, such as fridges, computers, and clothing. In fact, one wonders, what good or development impetus can a nation get from the importation of underwear, towels, socks and blankets, for example? However, to the extent that there is some demand for these items in the homeland, the issue becomes rather contentious, with no simple answer. Also, there are those who chide migrant entrepreneurs for bringing disreputable Western enterprises such as erotic and nightclubs and 'adult' massage parlours, which, in the minds of many traditionalists and religious zealous, undermine the moral fiber of society. That many West African migrants engage in the conspicuous consumption of non-productive luxurious goods and services (e.g., mega-houses; flashy cars; and lavish funeral, birthday, outdoor and naming ceremonies) has been yet another source of criticism in the literature. The concern here is a simple one: such lifestyle tends to put the socioeconomic inequality in society on a bolder relief, and, thus, feeds into new rounds of emigration among the youth (Setrana & Tonah, 2016).

There is no denying that the goals and aspirations of the individual migrant is not always congruent with those of the nation state. Often with limited business acumen and skills, in the context of a poorly developed enabling environment for business, it is unsurprising that most migrants play it safe by taking only minimal risk with their hard-earned money from not only places of extreme cold climates, but also of cold shoulders, metaphorically speaking. Also, some migrants have bitter experiences with their previous business ventures in the homeland and, thus, cannot eschew being cynical about doing business there again (Black et al., 2003a). These dynamics account for the discernible risk aversion and lack of innovation found among immigrant businesses in both Senegal and Ghana. At the same time, we need to be balanced in our analysis, for categorical answers—regarding whether or migrant businesses are small or not; innovative or not; and, good for the broader national development agenda or not—are patently unsustainable. It is not surprising then that Setrana and Tonah (2016), concluded in their study of Ghanaian migrant businesses that "...our findings revealed that although some of the businesses were small and for sustenance purposes, they provided employment to many residents in Ghana" (p. 558). The fact that they used various qualifications to avoid a categorical conclusion is quite noteworthy. In the final analysis, it bears reiterating that the perspectives of the returnee *from below* are not similar to those of the national government *from above*. As Sinatti (2015) rightly puts it in the context of Senegal:

The personal development ambitions of migrants lead to investments that are distant from the aspirations of economic growth indicated in Senegalese government policy. Real estate investments and migrant businesses may contribute to upgrading disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods or villages, generate demand for the services of local craftsmanship...or bring local benefits through multiplier effects, but their overall contribution to national development is limited. (p. 283)

Similarly, there is a clear disjuncture between the perspectives of return from the migrants themselves and those of northern governments, most of whom see return as mainly permanent and involuntary. For most West African migrants, return is

rather a temporary phenomenon entailing both forced and voluntary migrants, many of whom sustain their livelihoods through forms of transnationality, even upon their return to the homeland. This is how Setrana and Tonah (2016) summed up this sentiment in their study of returnees in Ghana:

Contrary to the perspectives of northern governments where any return that involves re-migration is seen as indicating a failure of the sustainability of return.... an alternative view suggests that in order for return to be sustainable, returnees often need to retain continued access to the wider international, professional and social world in which they have worked and lived. (p. 555)

So far, as the cases of Ghanaian and Senegalese migrants indicate, many returnees rely on their transnational connections to help them resettle in the home country upon their return, often travelling back-and-forth between the two ends of the migration cycle, with the origin now serving as the substantive abode for the migrant. Clearly, then, the migrant life in the post-return period is as transnational as it was in the pre-return era—there lies the Janus-face of cotemporary migration.

12.6 Conclusion

From the preceding analysis, it is quite clear that even though many migrants settle and become integrated into their destination countries, they concomitantly remain connected to their homeland through various transnational engagements, and it is with this understanding that we, in this chapter, cast the migrant experience as Janus-faced. It is significant to note that migrants often sustain simultaneous connectivity to both ends of the migration cycle, not necessarily because they are unable or unwilling to integrate. Rather, many of them use this connectivity to facilitate their livelihoods in both the origin and destination countries. Whereas most Northern governments tend to see return migration as primarily involuntary and permanent, Southern governments, such as those of Ghana and Senegal, perceive return migration mainly as a voluntary phenomenon, with both temporary and permanent dimensions. Thus, there is some divergence in the perspectives *from above*—i.e., perspectives of Northern countries (and supra-national bodies such as the EU) vis-à-vis those of Southern countries. There is also some discrepancy between how return migration is perceived and enacted by the migrants themselves, relative to the perspectives of their origin countries. For instances, whereas the latter seek to use the resources of returnees to pursue broader national development goals, the former tend to use their resources for non-risky and often non-production ventures and celebrations aimed at boosting their social status in the local community. This dynamic is as common among Ghanaian returnees as it is with their Senegalese counterparts, pointing to a *convergence* of return perspective *from below*.

At a different level of abstraction, one can discern a funnel-shaped divergent-convergent schema in which the perspectives from above are divergent as much as possible, while those from below converge. To help bring all this to a coherent close

is our recurrent metaphor of *Janus-face*, with which we have shown that migrants are usually as transnational in their post-return era as they were in their pre-return time—thus, be it in the origin or the destination, the migrant is Janus-faced.

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