

The Discursive Politics of Belonging: A Comparative CDA of Sub-Saharan Migration in African and European News Narratives

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine how news stories construct ideas of 'belonging', specifically when reporting on people moving from Sub-Saharan African countries. It investigates news from both Africa and Europe, noting differences in how they portray migrants. By closely reading these reports, the work highlights how various media sources use wording, focus points, and underlying beliefs to influence public understanding, thereby shaping debates over acceptance. African news often shows people moving to stay alive, highlighting the hardships that force them to leave their homes. Conversely, European reports lean toward safety concerns, fitting in, and what it means to be 'us'. Examining these different viewpoints reveals how the media either supports or questions who gets included -or left out- shapes opinions, and also impacts immigration policies.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Migration, Media Narratives, African Media, European Media.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of migration from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe has long been a controversial topic in international political discourse. In fact, it does not simply refer to people's displacement from one area to another, in pursuit of better life conditions and safety, but also to a deep narrative shaped by sociopolitical factors. In both African and European discourse, the media are instrumental in shaping migration, influencing public perception, and framing political matters. In this light, the notion of belonging, the issue of identifying the self

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and the other, and the expectations of where migrants better belong in local and destination countries have become a focal point of debate.

The current work aims to scrutinise the political discourse of belonging by demonstrating how Sub-Saharan migration is represented in both African and European news discourse. On the basis of comparative critical discourse analysis (CDA), the current study aims to uncover the linguistic strategies, figures of speech, frames, and scopes used in media across various areas to construct notions of identity, self-belonging, and migrants' rejection. Therefore, media discourse, generally regarded as a response to broader political ideologies, reflects hidden beliefs about what is called 'belonging' within a specific country or a whole continent and how these beliefs are transmitted.

In African discursive media, migration is generally portrayed as a response to conflicts, poor living conditions, and economic constraints. Media narratives aim to focus on the tragic conditions that incite people to migrate by considering them either as being illegally displaced people or survivors who aim to seek better life conditions. Conversely, Western European media often portrays the migration phenomenon from the angles of economic burden, safety measures, and cultural differences, with Sub-Saharan migrants generally regarded as a menace to social life or as obstacles to the notion of identity. Such controversial visions not only depict the political settings of each side but also lead to diverse viewpoints on the notion of belonging.

The notion of political belonging in such media narratives tends to be biased. In fact, they are sensitive to nationalism, xenophobia, and humanitarianism and assist in meeting or confronting constraints on national and cultural identities. Highlighting the importance of media in building such narratives, the present work examines **How ideologies related to migration frame the public mindset and national policies?** In order to answer this principal question, it is primordial to examine how belonging is granted to some and denied to others, who are regarded as external agents or marginal figures.

The present study aims to provide an analysis comparing how African and European news media frame Sub-Saharan migrants and the policies adopted in response. It also seeks to investigate the power relations at work in their discourse. In practice, this study seeks to answer the following question: How do African and European media narratives reflect the identities of Sub-Saharan migrants? and how are such reflections shaped in the discourse of belonging? The current investigation will examine how African and European media narratives differ. Based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this study highlights the main themes, metaphors, and framing techniques used to depict Sub-Saharan migration and the notion of belonging. The findings reveal broader political migratory policies and discursive operations that frame the outsider and the insider today.

2. Literature Review

Migration, belonging, and media discourse are complementary in that they reflect public understanding of who is considered inside or outside the national community. It is recognised that representations of migrants, particularly those from the Global South, are actively constructed through linguistic choices, narrative structures, and ideological frames. This section aims to shed light on the main aspects of the literature relevant to this study: media discourse and ideology, representations of Sub-Saharan African migration in African and European news, the notion of belonging, and the identified gaps that the current study focuses on.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a significant understanding of how media channels convey power relations through language. In this light, Fairclough (1995) posits that discourse

is both socially shaped and socially shaping, i.e., it does not simply report on events but also constructs them. Similarly, van Dijk's (2000) study on media racism demonstrates how Western news discourse often establishes symbolic frontiers between an in-group ("us") and an out-group ("them"), especially in narratives about migration and ethnicity. Additionally, Wodak and Meyer (2015) support this view by arguing that discourse is a domain in which ideologies become naturalised and legitimised through repeated patterns.

These key studies are based on a theoretical background that aims to analyse how news narratives define migrants, attribute agency, and moralise movement. They also focus on the essential role of lexical choices, metaphors, and sourcing practices in impacting public perceptions. Since the media often operates as the primary source of information about migrants for the general public, the narratives it shares can significantly reflect political debates, social attitudes, and institutional responses (Chouliaraki, 2017).

2.1. Media Representations of Sub-Saharan African Migration

Migration between Africa and Europe is among the most ancient migrations in the world history. Based on the African Origin Theory, it is one of the diffusions process that allowed the world population. This presses continued within the simple migration until the complex migration (Djelti 2017a). The osmosis theory of human migration has summarised the evolution of migration from the first human on earth until nowadays and explains it mainly by the natural determinants of human migration (Djelti 2017b).

During the complex migration, borders, policies, technology, selectivity have made crossing borders not only difficult but the acceptance of others sometimes impossible. It is known that humans need to emigrate whenever and wherever they want; but they cannot accept others in their lands. Such double feeling regarding the same phenomenon or bias exist even in migration theory. The optimistic autochthon theorist consider migration economically as an opportunity for the origin countries (Scott 1969) and the migrant theorists (Bhagwati, 1974) have developed the Brain Drain concept.

Technology, communication and Media have facilitated and accelerated migration and participated in its complexity. Its discourse is paradoxical for the two shores of borders. If African migrants are seen as heroes in their families and villages, because of the risk they took to help their families, they are considered as irregular and illegal in the destination, because of the risk they represent for the touchstones.

2.2. African Media Perspectives

Studies based on African journalism tend to focus on migration as a complex phenomenon rooted in socioeconomic difficulties, conflict, and survival strategies. In this context, Awad (2020) demonstrated that African migrants often turn migrants' lived experiences into a frame of mobility as a result of life hardship rather than an individual threat. Similarly, Sharp (2011) asserts that African media discourse frequently positions migration within the context of

displacement histories, regional inequalities, and state instability, thereby highlighting the need for contextual understanding.

Generally, African coverage tends to emphasise themes such as resilience, community obligation, and African struggles. Such narratives often depict migrants as victims of systemic injustice or as shelter and safety seekers rather than depicting them as dangerous or culturally incompatible. Therefore, this approach automatically builds a moral community, a form of continental belonging, by considering mobility as a response to conditions that are familiar across Sub-Saharan societies. Such discourse challenges dominant Western assumptions that depict African migration mainly as an economic or security issue.

2.3. European Media Perspectives

Unlike African media, European media is based mainly on deep securitisation and crisis narratives. In this light, Berry et al. (2016) argue, on the basis of various comparative studies of EU press coverage, that migrants are generally viewed as posing risks to national stability, public safety, and cultural cohesion. Additionally, Chouliaraki and Zaborowski (2017) demonstrated that the refugee problems of 2015 magnified Africans' portrayals as distant and marginalised subjects whose identities are defined through humanitarian pity or security fear.

In general, European narratives tend to use metaphors such as “waves,” “influx,” or “floods” (Benson, 2013), which imply an uncontrollable threat. Such discursive techniques correspond to political discourse narratives that connect migration to security, integration challenges, and national identity debates (Ibrahim & Howarth, 2018). The reliance on official sources such as government statements or border agencies further privileges institutional perspectives over migrant voices. Therefore, African media focus on the motives behind human escape, whereas European media focus on the effects and risks, reinforcing symbolic boundaries around who belongs to the nation.

3. Theorising Belonging and Boundary Construction

The sense of belonging is a multifaceted concept that involves emotional attachment, cultural alignment, and political recognition. Yuval-Davis (2011) argues that belonging consists of both *the politics of belonging*, the mechanisms through which individuals are included or excluded, and *the emotional belonging* attached to identify. Media discourse is an essential domain in which these politics unfold.

Additionally, Anthias (2008) initiates the concept of *translocational positionality*, emphasising that belonging is shaped by intersecting locations such as race, class, gender, and nationality. In migration reporting, these intersections often determine who is portrayed as “fitting in” or “out of place.” De Genova (2017) further highlights that the European approach, unlike the African migration approach, is conceptualised in histories of colonial power, shaping how displacement is framed as a threat, a debt, or a humanitarian burden.

While the European media views African migrants as being culturally incompatible, economically burdensome, or securely risky, it generates exclusionary systems of belonging. Conversely, African media narratives that focus on everyday experiences and regional responsibility yield a more inclusive perspective on belonging grounded in continental solidarity.

Together, such theories shed light on how belonging is not a stable or fundamental state but is instead discursively produced through media representations. This perspective focuses on the fact that social identity and sense of community are constantly negotiated, contested, and framed within public discourse. By analysing how the media constructs and conveys the notion of belonging, we can better understand the mechanisms by which inclusion and exclusion operate in society. Ultimately, these perspectives challenge the fundamental views of identity, highlight the flexible essence of social belonging, and highlight the relevance of critical media literacy in identifying these processes.

4. Methodology

The current study employs qualitative, cross-cultural Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how African and European media construct narratives of Sub-Saharan African migration. The methodology is designed to uncover linguistic choices, narrative structures, and ideological assumptions that shape public understanding of belonging, exclusion, and national identity. The following section outlines the research design, corpus selection, data preparation, coding procedures, analytical framework, and limitations.

4.1. Research Design and Rationale

The study employs a comparative qualitative research design, with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its primary analytical tool. CDA is selected because of its ability to link textual features to broader power relations and ideological structures (Van Dijk, 1998). This design is appropriate because (i) migration debates are highly ideological and sensitive to framing, (ii) media discourses function as sites where belonging, citizenship, and identity are constructed and contested, and (iii) comparing African and European media offers insight into how different sociopolitical contexts shape representations of migration.

The study strives not only to identify discursive patterns but also to interpret how these patterns contribute to public debates on inclusion and exclusion.

4.2. Multilevel CDA Framework

This study adopts a multi-level Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework grounded in the theoretical development of Van Dijk's sociocognitive approach (van Dijk, 2020). In this

case, CDA examines media narratives of Sub-Saharan African migration because it connects linguistic structures to broader systems of knowledge, ideology, and power relations. Following his conceptualisation of discourse as a social practice operating simultaneously at the micro, meso, and macro levels, each level provides complementary insights into how media discourse constructs the politics of belonging, highlighting the interplay between linguistic choices, institutional practices, and broader sociopolitical and ideological structures. Such key concepts aim to reinforce the present study's analysis of how migration narratives are cognitively, socially, and institutionally framed across African and European contexts.

Table 1: Key Textual Features in Media Discourse

Feature	Description	Examples/Function in Discourse
Lexical Choices	Words used to label or categorise migrants, reflecting ideological positioning.	<i>Migrants, illegals, refugees, workers</i> — each term carries different connotations (legal status, threat, vulnerability, economic value).
Metaphors & Imagery	Figurative language that shapes how migration is conceptualised.	<i>Flows, floods, waves</i> — natural disaster metaphors that frame migration as overwhelming or uncontrollable.
Syntactic Patterns	Sentence structures that shift agency and responsibility.	Active voice: “Migrants storm the border” (foregrounds migrant agency). Passive voice: “Migrants were detained/rescued” (background state actors).
Presuppositions & Implicatures	Implicit assumptions or inferred meanings that guide interpretation without being explicitly stated.	Phrases like “the migrant crisis” presuppose crisis conditions; “Europe struggles to cope” implies burden or strain.

Source : Based on Van Dijk (2016, 2020)

a. Textual level (microanalysis)

At the textual level, the analysis focuses on the language choices and rhetorical devices that structure meaning and convey ideological positioning. On the basis of Van Dijk’s (2020) conceptualisation, this stage emphasises semantic macrostructures and local coherence in news narratives. The following table outlines the main linguistic features analysed in this study.

By systematically examining these features, microlevel analysis uncovers how language functions as a vehicle for ideological positioning, conveying assumptions about power, inclusion, and belonging even in apparently objective reporting. This provides the foundation for understanding how such linguistic choices interact with meso-level institutional practices and macrolevel ideological frameworks to produce the broader discursive politics of belonging.

b. Meso-level analysis (media production practices)

The meso-level examines how news institutions and professional practices shape discourse. Drawing on van Dijk's (2016, 2020) work on elite discourse and institutional control, this level investigates the following:

- **Selection and prioritisation of voices:** Newsrooms decide whose perspectives gain prominence. Government officials, supranational institutions (e.g., the EU), and established NGOs often dominate, whereas migrants' own voices are marginalised.
- **Intertextual references:** Official reports, press releases, and prior coverage serve as instruments that legitimise interpretations while constraining alternative readings.
- **Professional norms and routines:** Editorial policies, narrative structure, headline framing, and stylistic conventions influence emphasis and omission, shaping the perceived legitimacy and urgency of news stories.

The Meso-level analysis highlights the newsroom as an institution that actively reproduces social hierarchies and mediates public access to knowledge, reinforcing the ideological positions observed at the macro level.

c. Macrolevel Analysis (Ideological Structures and Sociopolitical Contexts)

At the macro level, the analysis situates media discourse within broader societal, political, and historical contexts. Following van Dijk (2016, 2020), this stage examines how overarching ideologies shape representations of migrants:

- **European media:** Frames often emphasise security, national identity, or humanitarian crisis, constructing migrants as external to the imagined political community and legitimising restrictive policies.
- **African media:** Narratives highlight structural inequalities, conflict, and regional mobility, positioning migrants as part of shared sociopolitical realities, although host country interests may produce tensions between solidarity and exclusion.
- **Ideological naturalisation:** Macrolevel discourse reinforces assumptions about inclusion and exclusion, shaping public understanding of belonging, legitimacy, and social hierarchies.

Macrolevel analysis provides the structural backdrop for meso- and microlevel processes, demonstrating that media discourse is embedded in wider ideological and political systems that govern how migrants are perceived and represented.

By integrating micro, meso, and macro perspectives, this framework allows a comprehensive examination of how African and European news narratives construct the politics of belonging. This finding demonstrates that discourse is simultaneously linguistic, institutional, and ideological, producing complex patterns of inclusion, exclusion, and symbolic power.

d. Corpus Selection

The corpus consists of 12 news articles published between 2020 and 2024, drawn from major African and European news outlets.

- **African outlets:** *Daily Nation* (Kenya), *Mail & Guardian* (South Africa), *The Guardian Nigeria*
- **European outlets:** *BBC News*, *The Guardian UK*, *Le Monde*

Articles were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

1. **Relevance:** Reports explicitly addressing Sub-Saharan African migration (e.g., migration to Europe, intra-African mobility).
2. **Genre:** Hard news articles and analytical reports to ensure comparability.
3. **Reach and influence:** Outlets with large readerships and established reputations.
4. **Language:** English and French articles (translated into English when necessary).

4.3. Data Processing and Coding

Each article was read multiple times and coded according to four analytical dimensions derived from the research aims:

1. **Lexical Choices**
 - Terms used to describe migrants (e.g., *refugees*, *illegal youth* and *workers*).
 - Evaluative adjectives and metaphors (e.g., *waves*, *influx*, *crisis* vs. *opportunity*, *diaspora*).
2. **Thematic Focus**
 - Causes of migration (economic, conflict-related, climate-induced).
 - Dominant narrative frames (humanitarian, security, economic development, crisis).
3. **Source Selection and Voice**
 - Their perspectives are emphasised (government officials, migrants, NGOs, local communities).
 - Presence/absence of migrant self-representation.
 - Frequency of institutional vs. experiential voices.
4. **Ideological assumptions**
 - Implicit notions of belonging, citizenship, or menace.
 - Representations of Europe or Africa as “destinations,” “problems,” or “solutions.”
 - National identity narratives are tied to inclusion and exclusion.

On the basis of CDA theory, coding was conducted manually, following a grounded approach that allowed recurring patterns to emerge inductively.

4.4. Analytical procedures

The analysis of the news narrative excerpts followed three main steps:

- **Textual Analysis:** This method examines vocabulary, modality, transitivity, headline framing, and metaphors. It also identifies discursive strategies such as categorisation, generalisation, and legitimisation.
- **Comparative Analysis:** This analysis compares African and European narratives to highlight differences in framing, agency, and thematic focus. It further focuses on tensions between narratives of migration as a *challenge*, a *crisis*, an *opportunity*, or a *regular social process*.
- **Interpretation in the sociocultural context:** This connects findings to broader ideological discourses about identity, security, development, and postcolonial relations. To put it another way, it relates patterns to public debates on immigration, nationalism, and regional integration.

5. Analysis and discussion of the findings

This section suggests a critical interpretation of the discursive patterns identified in the twelve news articles analysed. With respect to Van Dijk's theoretical emphasis on the relationships among language, ideology, and power, the findings are grounded in the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The analysis focuses on four analytical dimensions, lexical choices, thematic focus, source selection and voice, and ideological assumptions, culminating in a comparative synthesis table Appendix 1 that embodies the key differences and interpretive implications.

5.1. Lexical Choices: Discursive Categorisation and Ideological Positioning

Significant divergences were noted in the lexical repertoires used by African and European outlets. European media frequently employs specific terminology such as *illegal migrants*, *border pressure*, and *irregular crossings*, constructing migration as a phenomenon that requires regulation and control. Specifically, the use of crisis metaphors such as *waves*, *floods*, and *surges* further naturalised migration as an overwhelming and destabilising force. Such lexical choices perform ideological work, framing migrants as a challenge to European stability and governance.

In contrast, African outlets predominantly used socially embedded descriptors such as *youth*, *workers*, and *returnees*, situating migrants within socioeconomic and developmental contexts rather than legalistic or security frames. The use of metaphors such as *diaspora networks*, *mobility pathways*, and *economic corridors* highlighted agency, intention, and opportunity. These lexical patterns demonstrate contrasting discursive orientations: crisis-management discourse in the European media and development-oriented discourse in the African media.

5.2. Narrative and Framing Practices

Although both African and European outlets identified economic hardship, political instability, and environmental pressures as the leading drivers of migration, their emphases have notably shifted. European coverage foregrounded security and humanitarian concerns,

highlighting border management, smuggling networks, and institutional responses. Migration is framed mainly as an external pressure that needs governance and intervention.

Unlike the European media narratives, African outlets presented migration as an intrinsic feature of socioeconomic life and regional mobility. The themes of intra-African labour migration, remittance economies, and diaspora involvement were prevalent, considering migration as a standard, livelihood-oriented practice rather than an exceptional crisis. Such thematic choices reflect the distinct sociopolitical contexts of each media bloc.

5.3. Discursive Authority in Migrant Representation

A noticeable gap emerged in the distribution of discursive authority. At the same time, European outlets privileged institutional actors, including EU officials, border agencies, and policy experts; migrant voices were limited primarily to brief affective quotations that illustrated humanitarian suffering. However, African outlets presented a more pluralistic distribution of voices, incorporating migrants, community representatives, and NGOs alongside political figures. For instance, BBC News (2021) included a single migrant statement: *"I fled my village and hope for a better life in Europe,"* which indicates a humanitarian need without providing sustained narrative participation. On the basis of firsthand migrant testimonies, the narratives gained interpretive richness, shifting the representational balance and making migrant agency more visible in the media discourse.

From a CDA perspective, these differences reflect structural asymmetries in power representation: the European media predominantly speak *about* migrants, foregrounding institutional authority, whereas the African media speak more often *with* migrants, redistributing discursive power and emphasising social and economic agency. This distribution of voice underscores the ideological function of the media in shaping public understanding and legitimising specific interpretations of migration.

5.4. Discursive Ideologies of Identity, Security, and Development

The analysis of the corpus demonstrates that different ideological orientations underpin news narratives across African and European outlets. Such ideological assumptions function implicitly through lexical patterns, narrative framing, and source selection, shaping how migration is represented and understood. In line with van Dijk's (2020) framework, ideology manifests not only in explicit evaluations but also in subtle discursive structures that foreground certain viewpoints while marginalising others.

European narratives generally reproduce a securitising and protectionist ideological stance. Migration was implicitly constructed as a potential threat to national coherence, welfare systems, and border integrity. For example, articles from the BBC and the Guardian UK repeatedly implied *pressure*, *risk*, and *instability*, depicting Europe as a vulnerable space that requires safeguarding. For example, *"uncontrolled migration putting pressure on European border systems"* (Le Monde, 2022) stressed the idea that migration is externally imposed and must be protected. This discursive pattern places Europe as the ideological centre of order, stability, and civic belonging, whereas Africa is subtly framed as marginalised and related unpredictability, crisis, or demographic anxiety.

African narratives, on the other hand, display a contrasting ideological orientation, grounded in mobility discourse, regional integration, and economic participation. Here, migration is

represented as a legitimate livelihood strategy and a booster to socioeconomic development. Media such as Mail & Guardian and Daily Nation portrayed mobility as a routine part of regional life, which is consistent with pan-African and developmental discourses. Statements such as “*cross-border mobility strengthens economic ties and regional integration*” (Mail & Guardian, 2023) implicitly position migration as linked to growth, resilience, and collective progress. In this ideological framing, Africa is not a passive point of departure but an active geopolitical space whose mobility flows are encompassed within broader regional transformations.

These competing ideological assumptions also shape how belonging is constructed. In this study, European narratives tended to highlight restrictive boundaries of membership, implicitly considering migrants as outsiders whose presence must be negotiated through policy, surveillance, and humanitarian mediation. With respect to African narratives, migrants are framed as insiders within broader regional identities (ECOWAS, SADC, or the African Union). Therefore, expanding the imagined community and challenging Eurocentric notions of belonging.

Finally, both media outlets used ideological assumptions that yielded broader postcolonial asymmetries. European outlets often unconsciously considered themselves as arbiters of legitimate mobility, whereas African outlets articulated counternarratives emphasising autonomy, development, and self-representation. These ideological clashes shed light on how migration discourse functions not only as reporting but also as a site of symbolic power, where competing visions of identity, security, and development are negotiated.

6. Conclusion

In the context of migration between sub-Saharan Africa and Europe, the present study aims to provide an analysis comparing how African and European news media frame Sub-Saharan migrants and the policies adopted in response. The study employs a comparative qualitative research design, with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its primary analytical tool. CDA is selected because of its ability to link textual features to broader power relations and ideological structures (Van Dijk, 1998).

In practice, this study has analysed twelve news articles from African and European outlets that revealed significant divergences in how Sub-Saharan African migration is represented. European media predominantly employs careful lexical choices, crisis-oriented thematic frames, and institutional sources to construct migration as a challenge to social cohesion, security, and border integrity. In contrast, African outlets foreground socioeconomic and developmental dimensions, incorporate pluralistic voices, including migrants themselves, and neutralise mobility as an integral aspect of regional livelihoods and integration.

These differences are underpinned by distinct ideological assumptions: European narratives reproduce protectionist and exclusionary discourses, whereas African narratives emphasise agency, opportunity, and regional belonging. The comparative synthesis demonstrates that media discourse functions not only to report events but also to reproduce and contest broader power relations and postcolonial hierarchies.

Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of critically examining media representations to understand how migration is framed, whose voices are privileged, and how ideological assumptions shape public perceptions. It also highlights the value of incorporating

migrant experiences to achieve a more balanced and nuanced understanding of mobility across continents.

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Appendix 1 Comparative Analysis of African and European News Narrative Excerpts

Analytical Dimension	African Outlets (<i>Daily Nation; Mail & Guardian; The Guardian Nigeria</i>)	European Outlets (<i>BBC; The Guardian UK; Le Monde</i>)	Interpretive Implications (CDA Perspective)
1. Lexical Choices	• “Young workers are increasingly seeking opportunities in neighbouring countries to support their families” (Mail & Guardian, 2021) • Metaphors: <i>mobility corridors, diaspora networks</i>	• “European authorities struggle to manage the influx of illegal migrants arriving across the Mediterranean” (BBC, 2022) • Metaphors: <i>waves, surges</i>	• African outlets frame migration as socioeconomic mobility, whereas European outlets emphasise crisis and security pressures. • Lexical choices signal contrasting ideological orientations.
2. Thematic Focus	• “Regional unemployment is pushing many youths to seek cross-border employment” (Daily Nation, 2020) • Migration framed as a development and livelihood strategy	• “Rescue operations have become a pressing concern as smugglers exploit unstable regions” (The Guardian UK, 2023) • Dominant security and humanitarian frames	• African narratives normalise mobility; European narratives exceptionalize it as a crisis. • Thematic patterns reflect divergent sociopolitical priorities.
3. Discursive Authority in Migrants' Representations	• “We encourage our youths to explore opportunities within the ECOWAS region.” – Community leader (The Guardian Nigeria, 2022) • Expanded migrant testimonies included	• “I fled my village and hope for a better life in Europe.” – Migrant quote (BBC, 2021) • Institutional actors dominate coverage	• European media maintain institutional authority, while African outlets provide a more pluralistic voice distribution. • These patterns reveal structural inequalities in symbolic representation.
4. Ideological	• “Cross-border mobility	• “European nations	• African outlets

Assumptions	strengthens economic ties and regional integration in Southern Africa” (Mail & Guardian, 2023) • Mobility normalised; Europe is not presented as the sole destination	are under mounting pressure to safeguard borders against uncontrolled migration” (Le Monde, 2022) • Africa framed as a source of instability; Europe as a protected	promote developmental and integrative ideologies; European outlets reproduce protectionist and securitising discourses.
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