



Were they Pushed or Did they Jump? The Rise in Sub-Saharan Immigration

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Theme: This analysis attempts to put the recent illegal border crossings in Ceuta and Melilla into perspective.

Summary: This analysis argues that the recent illegal border crossings in Ceuta and Melilla are just the tip of an iceberg. It sets out to show that immigration into Spain is changing and particularly argues that there are good reasons to believe that Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest potential for immigration to Europe. This means that immigration from the African continent must now be taken seriously and that the time has come to approach immigration from this part of the world differently than has been done in the past. Both economic and demographic data provide evidence that this is only the beginning of an immigration phenomenon that could evolve into one of the largest in history. The argument maintained in this paper is that the events in Ceuta and Melilla are merely a foretaste of the power of this new immigration phenomenon.

Analysis: Spanish immigration is changing. In the year 2000, 60% of the stock of Spanish immigrants was made up of people from other EU countries (40%) and from the Maghreb (20%). In 2005 the share of immigrants from the EU and the Maghreb is down to 35% of the total stock of immigrants (20 % from the former and 15 % from the latter), and this despite the recent EU enlargement. The greatest changes are due to the extraordinary upsurge of Latin American immigration, up from 20% to 40% of the total stock of immigrants in Spain between 2000 and 2005. However, the recent events in Ceuta and Melilla show that the Spanish immigration phenomenon is changing in other ways as well. These changes could be a first indication of a migration phenomenon that in the medium and long term might have far greater implications for Spain's approach to immigration than the peak in Latin American immigration of the past five years.

The phenomenon highlighted by the events in Ceuta and Melilla is immigration from Sub-Saharan countries. The following analysis attempts to highlight the Sub-Saharan area's potential as a source for future immigration, the driving forces underlying the phenomenon and the implications it might have on Spain's approach to immigration.

So far, Sub-Saharan immigration has to a large extent been treated as an immigration anomaly. The reason is that immigration into Spain from this part of Africa is still relatively limited and is often undergone at extreme risk to the lives of those attempting to immigrate. Crossing the Straits of Gibraltar in unseaworthy vessels or scaling over security

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fences in mass assaults on Ceuta and Melilla are telling examples of the small-scale but high-risk Sub-Saharan immigration.

Due to the fact that many Sub-Saharan immigrants die in their attempt to enter Spain, media coverage has tended to focus more on the way these immigrants enter the country than on the more pertinent question of why they do so. And, consequently, many of the policy responses to Sub-Saharan immigration focus on intercepting the immigrants when trying to enter Spanish territory, or simply making the crossing as difficult as possible, as is presently the case in Ceuta and Melilla.

The rationale behind this line of action is in large part due to numbers. Since the number of immigrants is relatively small the resources needed for interception are limited. However, the events in Ceuta and Melilla are part of the growing evidence that the potential for Sub-Saharan immigration is increasing in very substantial ways. This analysis tries to show that the potential is so strong that it cannot be ruled out that the currently employed methods of dealing with Sub-Saharan immigration will become both obsolete and extremely expensive.

The first argument in support of this hypothesis is obtained simply by looking at the historical development of Sub-Saharan immigration into Spain and contrasting it with the development of the measures put into place to reduce immigration from the region.

Ten years ago, in *El Pais* (19 October 1995), the then minister of Justice and the Interior in the Socialist government, Juan Alberto Belloch, was cited as having said in parliament that the frontier between Ceuta and Morocco would be made 'watertight' (*impermeabilizado*). The explicit intent of making the border 'watertight' was the result of the escalation of illegal border crossings throughout the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, as well as of the general demand for greater border control in preparation for the elimination of internal barriers within the European Union.

Mr Belloch's statement was the start of a wave of expropriations of land adjacent to the border to facilitate the construction of a security fence separating Ceuta and Melilla from Morocco. The fence was completed in 1998 by the then Popular Party (PP) government and to a large extent financed by the EU. Despite the fence's construction, illegal border crossings continued and have reached a crisis point in the autumn of this year. In response the current Socialist government has announced the installation of a reinforced fence to halt the mass crossing of mainly Sub-Saharan immigrants.

Simultaneously, the Spanish authorities have reinforced the surveillance of Spain's maritime borders. The *Guardia Civil del Mar* was made operational in 1993 with a view to, among other things, intercepting irregular immigration at sea. Subsequently, a joint EU programme of measures to combat illegal immigration across the maritime borders of EU member states became operational in 2003, with the so-called 'Operation Ulysses' being one of the programme's main elements. Finally, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union was established in 2005. These measures have been reasonably effective. The government estimates that the intensity of *patera* (the open boats used by illegal immigrants) traffic has been halved.

In sum, Spain has gradually reinforced its land and sea borders with Africa in order to deal with the irregular Sub-Saharan and Maghreb immigration in the 1990s and early 21st century, either by domestic means or in cooperation with other EU member states. The question is: how have these measures affected the migration flows from the African continent?

To address this question it is necessary to turn to data from Spain's Population Register (or *Padrón*). The register provides a reasonable picture of the size of the stock of both regular and irregular immigrants in the country. Table 1 shows how the stock of immigrants has evolved by region of origin, controlling for immigration from two African subregions: the Maghreb and Sub-Sahara. The Table also gives percentage changes in the stock of immigrants from one year to another, across broad regions. To avoid misunderstandings, it should be noted that the increase in the stock shown for 1999 has been calculated on the basis of the figure for 1998, which is not shown.

As shown in the Table, African immigration has seen a substantial increase during the period, from 228,000 immigrants to just over 700,000. The yearly increases range from 38 to 10 percentage points. Compared with the increase in immigration from Latin America and non-EU European countries the increases in African immigration are relatively modest. In fact, judging by these data, African immigration is increasing at a lower speed than the total immigration into Spain throughout the period for which data are available. This indicates that the proportion of Africans among the total number of immigrants is declining.

However, the increase between 2004 and 2005 indicates that African immigration is becoming more important. With an increase of almost 22 % between 2004 and 2005, only immigration from Africa, Asia and non-EU European countries is increasing faster than the total immigration into Spain. What is more, controlling for the part of African immigration explained by North African immigration, it can be seen that Sub-Saharanans are among the fastest-growing immigrant communities in Spain today. To this should be added that immigration from non-EU European countries mainly originates in Bulgaria and Rumania. Both of these countries enjoy special visa requirements with the EU that make their legal entry into Spain less complicated than for nationals of most other countries outside the EU. Had these two countries not been subject to easier procedures, it would be reasonable to assume that European immigration from countries outside the Union would have been substantially lower.

Table 1. Stock of Immigrants by Region, January 1, 1999 to January 1, 2005 (% change in the stock of immigrants from one year to the next)

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
European Union	329.5 (18.6 %)	375.5 (13.9%)	417.3 (11.1%)	489.8 (17.4%)	587.7 (20.0%)	636.0 (8.2%)	766.7 (20.5%)
Europe (excluding EU)	36.5 (22.7%)	47.2 (29.3%)	106.1 (124.8%)	202.4 (90.7%)	335.9 (66.0%)	404.6 (20.4%)	561.5 (38.8%)
Asia	47.3 (9.7%)	56.5 (19.5%)	75.1 (32.9%)	98.9 (31.7%)	129.0 (30.3%)	142.8 (10.8%)	186.2 (30.4%)
Latin America	134.4 (18.1%)	184.0 (36.9%)	416.1 (126.2%)	720.2 (73.1%)	1,032.1 (43.3%)	1,219.7 (18.2%)	1,409.0 (15.5%)
Africa	174.4 (17.9%)	229.0 (31.3%)	317.2 (38.6%)	423.0 (33.4%)	522.7 (23.6%)	579.4 (10.8%)	705.9 (21.8%)
Sub Sahara	32.3 (9.2%)	43.4 (34.3%)	60.7 (39.9%)	79.8 (31.5%)	98.5 (23.5%)	109.9 (11.5%)	142.8 (29.9%)
Maghreb & Egypt	142.1 (20.1%)	185.6 (30.6%)	256.6 (38.2%)	343.3 (33.8%)	424.2 (23.6%)	469.5 (10.7%)	563.2 (20.0%)
Total	749.0 (17.6%)	923.9 (23.4%)	1,370.7 (48.4%)	1,977.9 (44.3%)	2,664.2 (34.7%)	3,034.3 (13.9%)	3,691.5 (21.7%)

One way of looking at the results in Table 1 is to conclude that Spanish border security measures in the south have been reasonably effective since African immigration has increased –relatively speaking– at a lower speed than the total immigration into Spain. In other words, more African immigration could have been expected had there been no fence in Ceuta and Melilla and no joint maritime efforts.

However, and to take just one example, in 2003 1,640 tourist visas and 352 residence visas were granted to Nigerian nationals. At the same time the stock of Nigerians increased by 3,500, from 17,000 to 20,500. That is, judging by this very crude measure, there is a difference of 1,500 –or 40 %– between the number of visas issued and the increase in the number of Nigerians in Spain’s population register. (Note that both irregular and regular immigrants are entitled and obliged to register with the population register, and that most irregular immigrants tend to register since this provides them with certain advantages). A difference of this magnitude suggests the possibility that a significant part of the increase in the number of Nigerian citizens in Spain is due to irregular immigration, ie, persons who did not have a valid visa at the time of their entry into Spain. Hence, it is probably an overstatement to say that Spain’s southern borders are ‘watertight’ despite the improved security measures.

Does this indicate a failure to safeguard Spain’s borders? Probably not. A more likely explanation for why Sub-Saharan immigration is rising is that at the same time that Spain is reinforcing its border controls the pressure of migration from Sub-Saharan Africa is increasing and, hence, there are more and more Sub-Saharans attempting to cross Spain’s borders than five or ten years ago. And, as is usually the case when this happens, the more people that try to cross a supposedly ‘watertight’ border, the more likely it is for an increasing number to succeed despite the ever greater efforts invested in preventing this from happening.

This suggests that understanding the recent events in Ceuta and Melilla, as well as the continuous *patera* traffic in the Straits of Gibraltar and between North-west Africa and the Canary Islands, is not only about understanding how to secure borders but also about understanding the mechanisms that generate emigration from Sub-Saharan Africa.

This leads to two questions: (a) what are the driving forces underlying Sub-Saharan emigration?; and (b) how are these forces likely to develop in the near future? As often occurs with migration, there are multiple answers. For reasons of space and simplicity, this paper focuses on the demographic and economic elements.

Rational demographic and economic theory has long argued that economic migration is the result of 'push' and 'pull' factors. Very briefly, 'push' factors are present when current and future prospects of successfully making a living in the country of origin become increasingly difficult, thereby pushing people into the decision to emigrate. An important 'push' factor is increased competition in the labour market. From a demographic viewpoint, the potential for increased competition in the labour market is particularly strong when the number of people active in the labour market increases at a faster pace than the creation of employment opportunities or when there is a structural shift, such as when a transition from a rural to an urban society is being experienced. That is, if the working-age population increases rapidly, or very rapidly, and/or if there is a shift from a rural to an urban society, the competition for employment opportunities can be expected to increase –unless the country is also experiencing strong and sustained economic growth–. This competition, in turn, is likely to provide a higher potential for emigration from the country of origin to a favoured destination, as is currently the case with Spain.

Similarly, 'pull' factors are present in situations where the current and future prospects of making a living in the country of origin, as well as the return obtained from engaging in economic activity –such as labour–, are better and brighter in a potential country of destination. This is especially so when the gap between the return and the present and future prospects of the country of origin and the potential destination is on the increase. In this case, economic incentives 'pull' people from their country of origin to that of destination.

Note, however, that as with any theory of social phenomena such as migration, this is a simplified model in so far that it is highly likely for other incentives to play an important part also in a person's decision to migrate. For example, it is known that the type of 'push' and 'pull' factors which are focused on here are generally speaking macro incentives. As such they are non-discriminatory and affect the population's migration decisions equally. However, since not everyone in the country of origin migrates at the same time, it is likely that micro incentives are also important explanatory factors as to why people choose to emigrate. Incentives of this type involve anything from an individual's education to his personal fortune and, last but not least, factors such as friendship and family ties to people who have already emigrated. Nevertheless, macro incentives of the type focused on here are an important part of the explanation for increasing migration flows/potentials from one country to another: macro level 'push' and 'pull' factors are a good proxy for the overall migration climate in a country or region in so far as they can be thought of as contributing to a 'tipping' effect for individuals who for personal reasons are already considering to migrate. To put it differently, all those who for personal reasons are considering emigrating from one country to another are probably encouraged to emigrate if

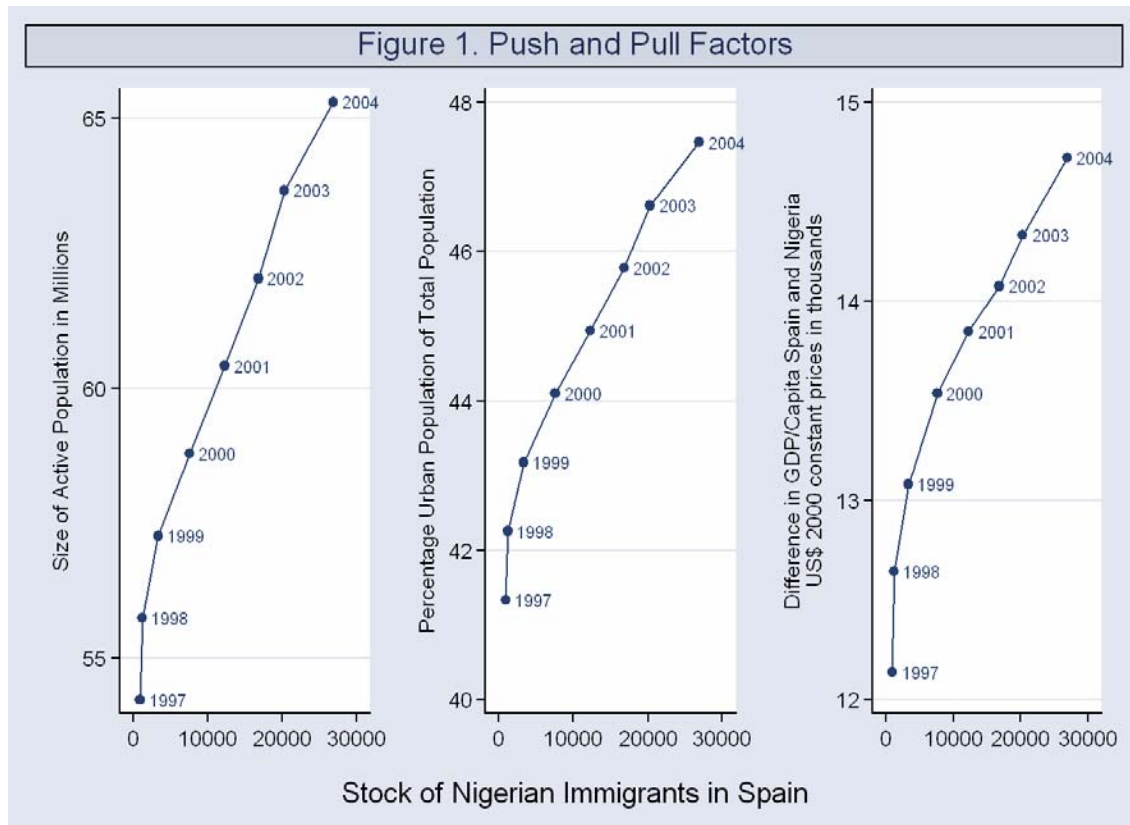
competition in the labour market worsens their prospects of finding a job, or if economic conditions are radically improving elsewhere.

Other factors at the macro level, such as legislation on immigrants and immigration in a potential country of destination, are also important. For example, the decision on where to emigrate hinges not only on economic factors but also on the prospects of being able to enter and remain there. Hence, legislation on immigration is an important factor in determining which country of destination is likely to exert the greatest 'pull'. It is likely to be of even greater importance when there are many rich potential countries of destination that are in a similar state of economic development, such as in European Union and the OECD. As far as legislation is concerned, it has been implicitly indicated elsewhere that there is evidence that Spain is currently one of the OECD and EU countries to receive the highest number of new migrants in relative terms, and that this could be signalling that immigration policies are more liberal in Spain than in other EU and OECD countries (see Rickard Sandell, *Spain's Quest for Regular Immigration*, in this series.)

From a theoretical point of view, the fact that micro incentives in the countries of origin, legislation in the countries of destination countries and other political measures, such as visa regulations, can exert a strong influence on the volume of migration between one country and another implies that it is highly unlikely to find a linear relationship between macro level 'push' and 'pull' factors, such as a country's economic and demographic development and the volume of migration between them.

A vivid example of how policies can distort the underlying trends in migration is provided by the way the migration flow from Ecuador to Spain has evolved in response to minor changes in legislation. It rose sharply between 2000 and 2002 but, following the introduction of new visa regulations prompted by the EU in mid-2003, the volume of migration from Ecuador to Spain was reduced to a fraction of the flow of previous years. The decline was a direct result of the new visa regulations since neither macro nor micro incentives for emigration from Ecuador to Spain are likely to have changed at the time of their introduction. Simply put, the new regulations made it far more difficult to migrate to Spain from Ecuador, while the incentives to emigrate remained the same.

However, as mentioned earlier, macro level incentives are necessary to explain the potential for emigration between two countries. Nigeria can be taken as a good example to illustrate the logic behind this line of argument. Figure 1 shows how the flow of Nigerian emigrants to Spain has developed in recent years, and how the evolution of Nigerian immigration into Spain is correlated with the development of the 'push' and 'pull' factors discussed above.



The trends shown in Figure 1 are easily discernible. With respect to the ‘push’ factors, the larger Nigeria’s active population becomes, the greater the potential for competition in the labour market and the larger the stock of Nigerian immigrants in Spain. Similarly, as Nigeria’s urbanisation ratio increases, so does the level of competition in the Nigerian urban labour market; in turn, this increase is positively correlated with the increase in the stock of Nigerian immigrants in Spain. The same type of correlation can be seen for a ‘pull’ factor –the difference in per capita GDP–. As the difference in per capita GDP between Nigeria and Spain increases, the stock of Nigerian immigrants in Spain rises.

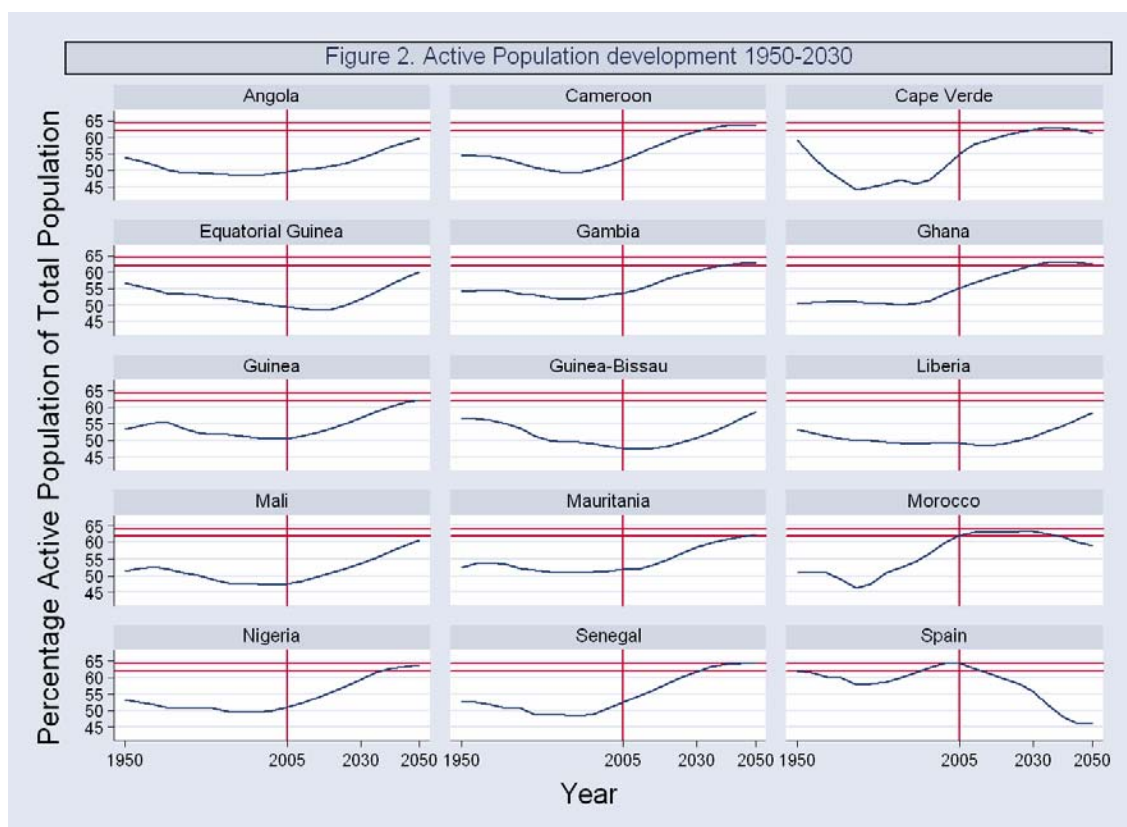
However, as explained at some length above, these measures have no direct explanatory value since there are many other intervening factors that must be considered in order to predict the magnitude of migration from Nigeria to Spain. They should rather be interpreted as proxies of the potential trend in Nigerian migration to Spain. That is, if the active population, urbanisation ratio and difference in GDP continue to increase it is highly likely that there will be a rise in the potential migration from Nigeria to Spain and other EU countries. Whether or not immigration actually increases is and will depend on a range of other variables, such as national and international immigration policies, in combination with these three measures.

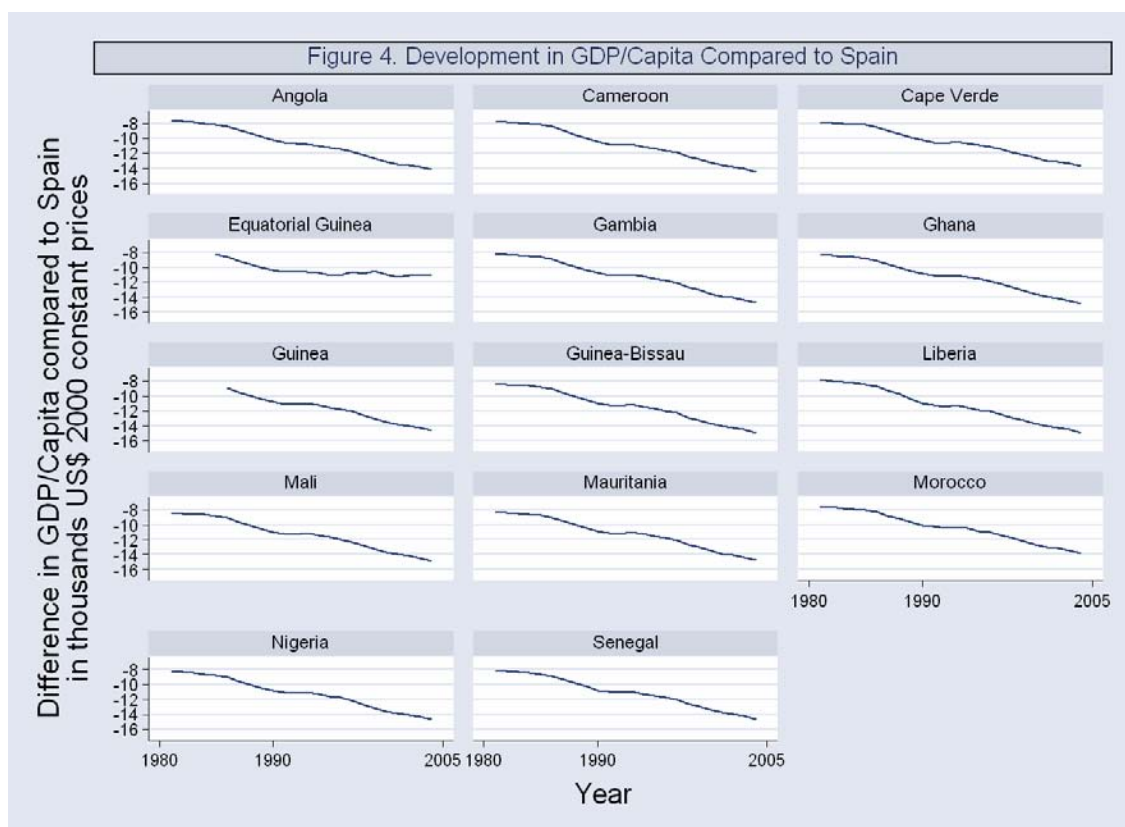
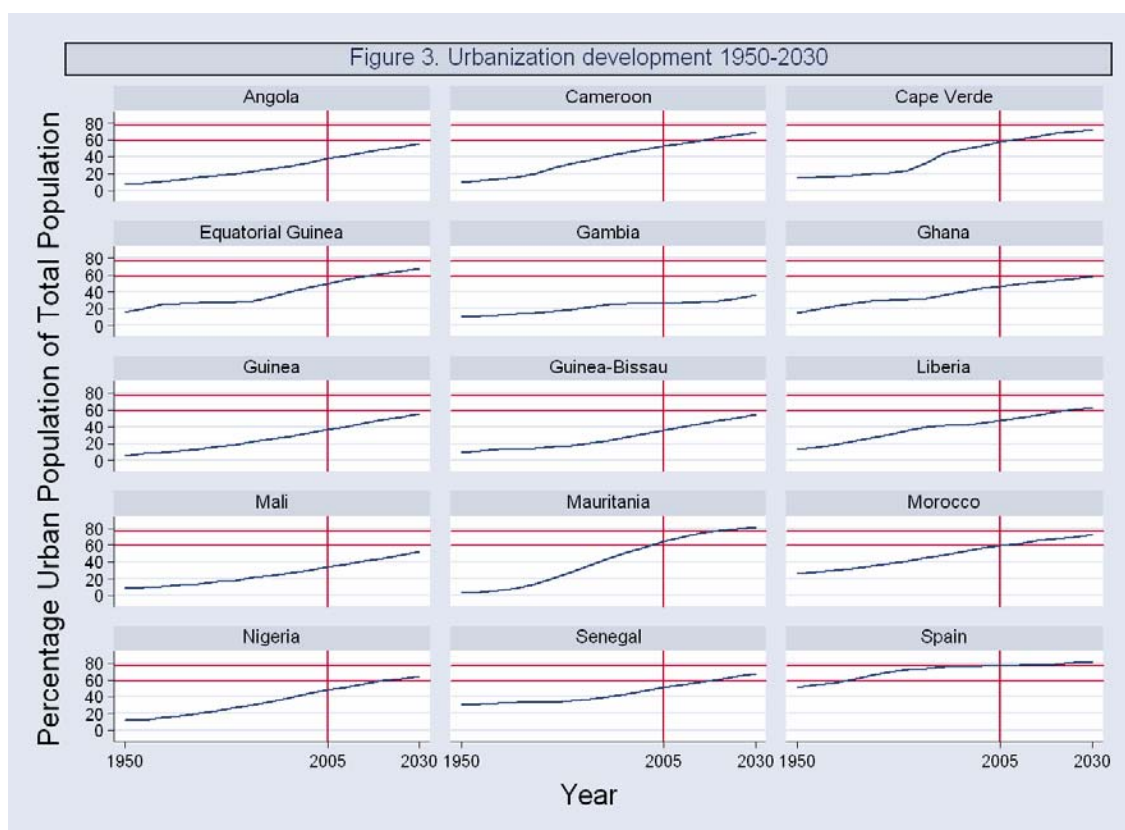
Having established that the ‘push’ and ‘pull’ focused on here are likely to be influential with respect to the immigration potential between two particular countries, it is now important to ask: what lies ahead? How are the ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors affecting Sub-Saharan Africa likely to evolve, or rather, what is the future immigration potential into Spain and Europe from this region?

To answer this question it is necessary to rely on forecasts. This is relatively unproblematic in the case of demographic trends, but less so in the case of economic data. Nevertheless, a

great deal of information about the near economic future can be obtained by simply looking at the recent past, since the economic gap between Spain and Sub-Saharan Africa is relatively trend dependent, at least in the short term.

The relevant information is presented in Figures 2 to 4 below. However, they only refer to Sub-Saharan countries for which immigration data into Spain are available. Figures 2 and 3 present information from Morocco and Spain as a baseline (horizontal red lines). The data concerning the evolution of differences in GDP are only historical –ie, no forecasts are shown–.





The results presented in Figures 2 to 4 point to two slightly different views regarding the development of the 'push' and 'pull' factors that are likely to be influential in the migration between Sub-Saharan Africa and Spain. On the one hand is the development of

the size of the active population and, on the other, the development of the Sub-Saharan countries' economies and urbanisation ratios. As for the latter, it is clear that the process of urbanisation has been going on for quite some time. Many countries are approaching the same urbanisation ratio as Morocco, and some even exceed it. This means that a large-scale restructuring of the economies of Sub-Saharan Africa is in progress, with a shift from primarily rural to primarily urban societies. This, in turn, implies that more people are entering the urban than the rural labour market each year, and that as a result increasing competition for jobs in the latter should ensue. While urbanisation is not a new phenomenon, the changes ahead are still very significant. Hence there is evidence that the urbanisation 'push' factor for emigration will continue to increase as the urbanisation process moves ahead. As for the 'pull' factors, here represented by the difference between Spain's per capita GDP and that of any particular Sub-Saharan country, the past trend is indisputable. For as long as data are available, the difference in per capita GDP between Spain and virtually all Sub-Saharan countries has been increasing. The only exception is perhaps Equatorial Guinea, where the difference is still huge but not in a process of rapid deterioration. The increasing differences are not so much due to declining per capita GDPs in Sub-Saharan Africa, although this is frequently the case, but rather to an exceptional increase in Spain's. Obviously, a development of this type suggests that the economic outlook of a life in Spain is increasingly attractive for many in Sub-Saharan Africa. Hence, the 'pull' factor implied by Spain's rising per capita GDP is becoming increasingly important over time, and there is nothing in the immediate future that suggests that this will change. The conclusion so far is that both 'push' and 'pull' factors are likely to have been present for some time in the migration from Sub-Saharan Africa to Spain and that it is not unlikely for these factors to grow in importance in the years to come.

Finally, Figure 2 shows the last measure of the 'push' factors on which this analysis is focused: the size of the active population. Of the three, this is the measure that shows the greatest tendency for change in the years to come. So far, most of the Sub-Saharan countries included in this analysis have had a relatively mild increase in the size of their active populations (those aged between 15 and 59). However, without exception, as population growth in Sub-Saharan countries is now starting to encompass the age groups that make up the active population, very substantial increases are now being registered in the number of people of active age.

To understand the magnitude of the changes it is useful to look at the raw numbers. In 2005 the total active population of the Sub-Saharan countries referred to in this paper was estimated at 118 million, and is expected to reach around 304 million by 2050. That is, in the next 45 years the active population of these countries is projected to increase by close to 186 million. Comparing this with the raw increase in the active population in the 55 years between 1950 and 2005, which was around 87 million people, it can be seen that the growth in the active population of this part of the world is expected to be extraordinarily large in the next 45 years. From now on, and in contrast with the past, Sub-Saharan Africa's active population will for the first time grow at the same pace or faster than the rest of the population. Assuming that a large part of the active population, which at the same time is an increasingly urban population, is interested in finding a job as a means to survive, Sub-Saharan Africa will be facing one of its greatest challenges to this date. Taking on this challenge means that the region must be prepared to create new employment opportunities at a rate never before seen in these societies. If the region fails in this task the result will clearly be an unparalleled rise in the competition for employment

opportunities and, as a result, an unprecedented rise in the 'push' factors that have been highlighted as important indicators of the emigration potential from these countries.

In view of the data presented in this paper it is possible to conclude that a new period is being entered as regards the potential emigration from Sub-Saharan Africa to Spain and other developed countries. 'Push' and 'pull' factors have certainly also been present in the past, but the future development of the size of the active population in these countries, especially in view of their poor economic performance, means that region's present and future emigration potential should become a serious cause for concern.

Conclusion: To return to the question posed by the title of this paper –Were they pushed or did they jump?– the data presented here indicate that there are good reasons to believe that the dramatic border crossings which took place in Ceuta and Melilla this autumn could be interpreted as an attempt to 'jump'. That is, the extraordinary rise in Spain's 'pulling' power as a result of its strong economic development compared to Sub-Sahara Africa, both now and in the past, is sending out a strong signal that the grass is greener on the Spanish side. Hence, any Sub-Saharan African in doubt about whether or not to emigrate could easily be swayed into taking the dangerous decision to cross Spain's borders in search of a better life.

But just as there are good reasons to believe that they 'jumped' the data presented here provide equally good reasons to believe that many were also 'pushed' into making up their mind to cross Spain's borders. The structural shift in recent years from a predominantly rural to a predominately urban economy implies that the rules for survival in Sub-Saharan Africa are changing fast, and that it is not unlikely that it is becoming increasingly difficult to compete for employment opportunities in countries that are having problems in absorbing the changes caused by the shift from a rural to an urban society.

However, the data presented in this paper also tell us that there are good reasons to believe that those who attempt to cross the border were 'pushed' rather than 'jumped'. After all, the huge economic differences between Spain and Sub-Saharan Africa have been enormous for quite some time and urbanisation is well underway. However, emigration from Sub-Saharan Africa to Spain has not been considered an important issue until very recently.

The difference with the situation in the past is that for the first time in recent history there are very significant increases in the active populations of the Sub-Saharan countries: any new generation entering the active population implies a significant increase in the total active population. To avoid a situation of disproportional competition in the labour market as a result of this increase, it is necessary to create employment opportunities that match the increase in supply for each year that passes. There is little evidence that this is happening at the moment; instead, reports in the field indicate a sense of despair when addressing the outlook for employment in the region. Given the large increases predicted by the forecasts presented above it is unlikely for the situation to improve over the next few decades. Hence, the mass assault on Spain's African border may just be a first warning of what to expect of the future. The situation is so serious that the possibility of a mass exodus if the African states fail to absorb their rapidly increasing working age population should not be ruled out. Nor can we rule out the possibility of armed conflict as a result of the political unrest that is likely to follow from a lack of effective management of the unprecedented increase in the labour supply.

What can be done to remedy the situation? First, it is important to recognise that demographic developments are to a great extent irreversible. Hence, the 'pushing' power represented by these demographic developments can only be offset by improving Sub-Saharan Africa's capacity to absorb its very rapidly increasing active population in the future. This is also what the Spanish government has highlighted as a political priority of both Spain and, more recently, the EU for the coming years. Any strategy addressing the potential increase in migration from Sub-Saharan Africa must consider such measures.

However, while this is likely to be the most effective strategy in the long term, it should be accompanied by a short- and medium-term strategy to address the increasing emigration potential that is likely to surface while Spain and Europe are busy building the foundations for a more economically prosperous Sub-Saharan region in the future.

As for short-term remedies to prevent large-scale Sub-Saharan immigration into Spain and Europe, the standard measures are probably close to have been exhausted. As implicitly indicated at the beginning of this paper, Spain's African borders are with few exceptions the most closely guarded in Europe. In addition, current visa regulations, both long and short term, are highly restrictive towards Sub-Saharan countries. Hence, it is probably not an overstatement to say that migration from Sub-Saharan Africa to Spain and Europe is difficult or even very difficult compared with migration from many other countries. Because both legal and irregular immigration into Spain and Europe from Sub-Saharan countries is already so difficult, an increasing emigration potential from the latter is likely to translate almost automatically into more clandestine migration and more frequent border crossings of the dangerous type encountered today. It could even be said that as long as the potential for emigration from Sub-Saharan Africa is on the increase, the more that is invested in short-term preventive activities the more dangerous and dramatic will clandestine immigration be. It should also be considered that a rising demand for crossing an increasingly 'watertight' border presents a golden opportunity for traffickers in human beings.

To this should be added another odd but nevertheless very important problem. Despite all the efforts to prevent illegal and irregular immigration from Sub-Saharan Africa, or for that matter from any other developing country, the only real obstacle to successfully immigrating into Spain or many other EU member states is and continues to be 'crossing the border'. Once the potential immigrant has overcome this obstacle he is likely to succeed. Spanish immigration policies have been particularly permissive in this regard (see *Spain's Quest for Regular Immigration*, cited above, for a more detailed discussion of the problem). Hence, while Spain and other European countries are greatly concerned by those who try to cross our borders illegally, they are at the same time sending out a message to those who –against all the odds– make it across that success is amply rewarded. The only way to come to terms with the problem, and in view of the evidence that the potential for emigration from Sub-Saharan Africa is likely to rise substantially in the first half of this century, is to seriously reconsider Spain's and Europe's approach to the problem.

It is high time to recognise that Sub-Saharan Africa is likely to be one of the largest sources of potential emigration in the future. So far, immigration into Europe from this part of the world has been relatively limited compared to other regions. One way of easing the pressure on Europe's borders in the future is to put in place mechanisms that allow for more instead of less legal immigration from this part of the world than is currently the

case. The reason why such a strategy is likely to be beneficial is that increased immigration is not only a way of improving immigrants' lives, but also of those left behind since immigrants directly –through remittances– or through increased interaction between the countries of origin and destination in just about any social and economic dimension. Remittances alone usually contribute more economic resources to the countries of origin than most international aid programmes, and Sub-Saharan Africa is no exception to this. Large scale legal immigration is at the same the only effective means –besides the long-term measures mentioned above– for reducing the growing excess labour supply.

However, large-scale legal immigration mechanisms alone will not do the job. Illegal border crossing and irregular immigration are currently being rewarded because many of those who are undetected are allowed to stay and actually manage to make a living despite their status as irregular immigrants. This is a sign of poor domestic control in the countries of destination rather than of poor border control.

Regardless of whether the country of destination has been entered legally or illegally, being an irregular immigrant is only possible if life is sustainable. As long as illegal employment and the black market economy are tolerated, the option of irregular immigration is reasonably attractive for any potential immigrant, thereby increasing the 'pulling' power of the country of choice. It goes without saying that the continued regularisation of irregular immigrants raises the incentives for irregular immigration if, and only if, it is unaccompanied by a new political strategy to deal more effectively with irregular immigration and illegal contracting (see the reference above for a full discussion of this). That is, any successful short-term strategy designed to promote large-scale legal immigration from Sub-Saharan Africa, or any other region of the world for that matter, must take into consideration the incentive structure for irregular immigration. As long as there is a reasonably good chance of succeeding as an irregular immigrant, regular immigration strategies are likely to fail, and there is the risk of further destabilising border security. Coming to terms with this problem implies, first and foremost, coming down hard on the black market economy. But it also involves developing the necessary bilateral and multilateral agreements for the repatriation of irregular immigrants, as well as a more coherent policy on how to detect and deal with irregular immigrants on a domestic basis.