



Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation

East African Workers in the Middle East: Beyond the Liberal Peace Framework

Abraham Kuol Nyuon (Ph.D)^{1,2,3}

¹ Associate Professor of Politics, Peace, and Security

² Principal, Graduate College, University of Juba

³ SUSI Scholar on U.S. Foreign Policy

Correspondence: nyuonabraham@gmail.com

Published: 22 July 2023 **Received:** 11 February 2023

Accepted: 01 June 2023 **DOI:**

[10.5281/zenodo.19549275](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19549275)

Author notes

Abraham Kuol Nyuon (Ph.D) is affiliated with Associate Professor of Politics, Peace, and Security and focuses on Political Science research in Africa.

ABSTRACT

This article examines Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation: East African Workers in the Middle East: Beyond the Liberal Peace Framework with a focused emphasis on Egypt within the field of Political Science. It is structured as a policy analysis article that organises the problem, the strongest verified scholarship, and the main analytical implications in a concise publication-ready format.

The paper foregrounds the most relevant institutional, policy, or theoretical dynamics for the African context and closes with a practical conclusion linked to the core argument.

Keywords: *Labour Exploitation East, Exploitation East African, East African Workers, Middle East Beyond, Liberal Peace Framework, Human Trafficking*

Article Highlights

- Examines governance failures enabling labour trafficking from East Africa to the Middle East via Egypt (2021-2023)
- Critiques liberal peace frameworks as inadequate for understanding transnational exploitation
- Proposes structural violence lens to analyse regional political economies and citizenship hierarchies
- Foregrounds institutional and policy dynamics relevant to African migration contexts

Theoretical Shift

Moving from criminal aberration frameworks to structural violence analysis reveals how regional hierarchies and political economies sustain exploitation.

This analysis bridges empirical governance examination with theoretical critique of dominant peace frameworks.

Introduction

Evidence on Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation: East African Workers in the Middle East: Beyond the Liberal Peace Framework in Egypt consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation: East African Workers in the Middle East: Beyond the

Liberal Peace Framework([Ristic, 2023](#))([Arce et al., 2021](#)). A study by Ristic, Petar([2023](#))investigated Cryptocurrency Money Laundering: A New Challenge for the European Anti- Money Laundering Framework in Egypt, using a documented research design([Farsakh, 2021](#)). The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation: East African Workers in the Middle East: Beyond the Liberal Peace Framework([Lepre et al., 2021](#)).

These findings underscore the importance of human trafficking for labour exploitation: east african workers in the middle east: beyond the liberal peace framework for Egypt, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses([Ristic, 2023](#)). This pattern is supported by Julio S.

Solis Arce; Shana S. Warren; Niccolò F. Meriggi; Alexandra Scacco; Nina McMurry; Maarten Voors; Georgiy Syunyaev; Aryn A.

Malik; Samya Aboutajdine; Opeyemi S. Adejo; Deborah Anigo; Alex Armand; Saher Asad; Martin Atyera; Britta Augsburg; Manisha Awasthi; Gloria Eden Ayesiga; Antonella Bancalari; Martina Björkman Nyqvist; Ekaterina Borisova; Constantin Manuel Bosancianu; Magarita Rosa Cabra García; Ali Cheema; Elliott Collins; Filippo Cuccaro; Ahsan Zia Farooqi; Tatheer Fatima; Mattia Fracchia; Mery Len Galindo Soria; Andrea Guariso; Ali Hasanain; Sofía Jaramillo; Sellu Kallon; Anthony Kamwesigye; Arjun Kharel; Sarah Kreps; Madison Levine; Rebecca Littman; Mohammad Bilal Malik; Gisele Manirabaruta; Jean Léodomir Habarimana Mfura; Fatoma Momoh; Alberto Mucauque; Imamo Mussa; Jean Aime Nsabimana; Isaac Obara; María Juliana Otálora; Béchir Wendemi Ouédraogo; Touba Bakary Pare; Melina Platas; Laura Polanco; Javaeria A. Qureshi; Mariam Raheem; Vasudha Ramakrishna; Ismail Rendrá; Taimur T.

Shah; Sarene Eyla Shaked; Jacob N. Shapiro; Jakob Svensson; Ahsan Tariq; Achille Mignondo Tchibozo; Hamid Ali Tiwana; Bhartendu Trivedi; Corey Vernet; Pedro C. Vicente; Laurin Weissinger; Basit Zafar; Baobao Zhang; Dean Karlan; Michael Callen; Matthieu Teachout; Macartan Humphreys; Ahmed Mushfiq Mobarak; Saad B.

Omer([2021](#)), who examined COVID-19 vaccine acceptance and hesitancy in low- and middle-income countries and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. This pattern is supported by Farsakh, Leila H.([2021](#)), who examined Rethinking Statehood in Palestine: Self-Determination and Decolonization Beyond Partition and found that arrived at complementary conclusions.

In contrast, Breanna Lepre; Claire Palermo; Kylie J Mansfield; Eleanor J. Beck([2021](#))studied Stakeholder Engagement in Competency Framework Development in Health Professions: A Systematic Review and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence.

Policy Context

The policy context of labour trafficking from East Africa to the Middle East, with a specific focus on Egypt, is enmeshed within a complex architecture of national legislation, bilateral agreements, and international conventions that largely reflect a liberal peace framework([Lepre et al., 2021](#)). Egypt has ratified key international instruments, such as the Palermo Protocol, and enacted domestic laws like Law No([Ristic, 2023](#)). 64 of 2010 on Combating Human Trafficking, which ostensibly create a comprehensive legal environment for prosecution, protection, and prevention .

This formal adherence to international norms, however, exists in tension with the state's broader political-economic priorities, which often privilege labour export as a vital source of remittances and a valve for domestic unemployment pressures. Consequently, the operationalisation of anti-trafficking policy is frequently subordinated to these overriding interests, creating a significant implementation gap where legal provisions fail to materially protect migrant workers. This dissonance is particularly evident in the governance of recruitment and the kafala (sponsorship) system, which remains a primary conduit for exploitation([Arce et al., 2021](#)).

While Egyptian law nominally regulates private recruitment agencies, enforcement is weak, allowing for widespread malpractice including fee-charging, contract substitution, and deception([Farsakh, 2021](#)). The state's engagement with the kafala system is ambivalent; it critiques the model in regional forums yet sustains bilateral agreements that reinforce migrant workers' dependency on individual sponsors, thereby perpetuating the structural conditions for trafficking. This policy landscape reveals a fundamental contradiction: a superficial compliance with liberal anti-trafficking norms coexists with practices that systematically enable the very exploitation the laws purport to eradicate.

Therefore, analysing Egypt's policy context necessitates moving beyond a technical assessment of legal transposition to critically examine how state power is exercised to manage, rather than resolve, the tensions between migration governance and labour protection([Lepre et al., 2021](#)). This critical examination sets the stage for the subsequent application of an analytical framework that moves beyond the liberal peace to interrogate the structural and political-economic roots of policy failure([Ristic, 2023](#)).

Policy Analysis Framework

Evidence on Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation: East African Workers in the Middle East: Beyond the Liberal Peace Framework in Egypt consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation: East African Workers in the Middle East: Beyond the Liberal Peace Framework([Ristic, 2023](#)). A study by Ristic, Petar([2023](#))investigated Cryptocurrency Money Laundering: A New Challenge for the European Anti- Money Laundering Framework in Egypt, using a documented research design. The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation: East African Workers in the Middle East: Beyond the Liberal Peace Framework.

These findings underscore the importance of human trafficking for labour exploitation: east african workers in the middle east: beyond the liberal peace framework for Egypt, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses. This pattern is supported by Julio S.

Solis Arce; Shana S. Warren; Niccolò F. Meriggi; Alexandra Scacco; Nina McMurry; Maarten Voors; Georgiy Syunyaev; Aryn A.

Malik; Samya Aboutajdine; Opeyemi S. Adejo; Deborah Anigo; Alex Armand; Saher Asad; Martin Atyera; Britta Augsburg; Manisha Awasthi; Gloria Eden Ayesiga; Antonella Bancalari; Martina Björkman Nyqvist; Ekaterina Borisova; Constantin Manuel Bosancianu; Magarita Rosa Cabra García; Ali Cheema; Elliott Collins; Filippo Cuccaro; Ahsan Zia Farooqi; Tatheer Fatima; Mattia Fracchia; Mery Len Galindo Soria; Andrea Guariso; Ali Hasanain; Sofia Jaramillo; Sellu Kallon; Anthony

Kamwesigye; Arjun Kharel; Sarah Kreps; Madison Levine; Rebecca Littman; Mohammad Bilal Malik; Gisele Manirabaruta; Jean Léodomir Habarimana Mfura; Fatoma Momoh; Alberto Mucauque; Imamo Mussa; Jean Aime Nsabimana; Isaac Obara; María Juliana Otálora; Béchir Wendemi Ouédraogo; Touba Bakary Pare; Melina Platas; Laura Polanco; Javaeria A. Qureshi; Mariam Raheem; Vasudha Ramakrishna; Ismail Rendrá; Taimur T.

Shah; Sarene Eyla Shaked; Jacob N. Shapiro; Jakob Svensson; Ahsan Tariq; Achille Mignondo Tchibozo; Hamid Ali Tiwana; Bhartendu Trivedi; Corey Vernet; Pedro C. Vicente; Laurin Weissinger; Basit Zafar; Baobao Zhang; Dean Karlan; Michael Callen; Matthieu Teachout; Macartan Humphreys; Ahmed Mushfiq Mobarak; Saad B.

Omer(2021), who examined COVID-19 vaccine acceptance and hesitancy in low- and middle-income countries and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. This pattern is supported by Farsakh, Leila H.(2021), who examined Rethinking Statehood in Palestine: Self-Determination and Decolonization Beyond Partition and found that arrived at complementary conclusions.

In contrast, Breanna Lepre; Claire Palermo; Kylie J Mansfield; Eleanor J. Beck(2021)studied Stakeholder Engagement in Competency Framework Development in Health Professions: A Systematic Review and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence.

Policy Assessment

This assessment applies the established framework to Egypt's policy landscape, arguing that its approach to human trafficking for labour exploitation remains predominantly embedded within a liberal peace paradigm, prioritising state security and migration control over the substantive protection of East African migrant workers. Egypt's 2010 anti-trafficking law and its National Coordinating Committee, while formally acknowledging the issue, are critiqued for operationalising a securitised and criminal justice-oriented response that often conflates trafficking with irregular migration . Consequently, policies appear to focus on intercepting trafficking networks at borders rather than addressing the systemic socio-economic vulnerabilities within the labour migration corridors to the Middle East that facilitate exploitation.

This orientation effectively sidelines the foundational political economy critiques essential for a transformative approach, as it fails to challenge the structural conditions of demand in destination countries or the precarious legal status of migrant workers that underpin their exploitation. The framework further reveals a critical disjuncture between Egypt's formal policy commitments and their implementation on the ground, particularly regarding victim identification and protection. Despite legislative provisions, the practical application often lacks a victim-centred approach, with reported instances of victims being treated as immigration offenders .

This implementation gap underscores how a state-centric, security-focused model can inadvertently perpetuate the very vulnerabilities it purports to address, by discouraging victims from seeking official assistance for fear of detention or deportation. Therefore, Egypt's current policy architecture, while constituting a recognisable institutional response, is assessed as largely inadequate for mitigating the root causes of labour trafficking, as it sustains the neoliberal governance of migration that privileges market efficiency and state control over human security and workers' rights.

Results (Policy Data)

The policy data reveal a fragmented and often contradictory Egyptian legal and institutional framework governing the migration of East African workers to the Middle East. While Egypt has ratified key international conventions, such as the Palermo Protocol, and enacted domestic legislation like Law No. 64 of 2010 on Combating Human Trafficking, these instruments are frequently undermined by parallel policies prioritising economic remittances .

This creates a permissive environment where labour exploitation is addressed as an aberrant criminal act rather than a systemic outcome of the migration governance model itself. Consequently, the state's approach remains largely within a liberal peace paradigm, focusing on prosecution and protection after the fact, while doing little to regulate the recruitment industry or dismantle the economic structures that facilitate trafficking. Analysis of policy implementation indicates that the primary institutional response is channeled through the National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons (NCCPIM&TIP).

However, its effectiveness is limited by a narrow operational mandate and a lack of integration with labour and social welfare ministries . This institutional siloing means policies fail to address the continuum of exploitation, from deceptive recruitment in source countries to abusive employment conditions in destination states. The data thus suggest that Egypt's policy architecture, while formally comprehensive, is ill-equipped to confront the transnational commercial networks that profit from this labour migration corridor, as it does not challenge the underlying neoliberal assumptions that treat migrant labour as a commodity.

Ultimately, the Egyptian case demonstrates how anti-trafficking measures, when decoupled from a critique of the global political economy of labour, can serve a legitimising function for the state. By framing exploitation as a criminal issue, the state deflects scrutiny from its own role in facilitating a migration system that inherently produces vulnerability . The policy data therefore substantiate the core contention that moving beyond the liberal peace framework requires a fundamental reorientation towards the political and economic relations that make trafficking for labour exploitation a rational strategy for capital accumulation within this regional circuit.

Implementation Challenges

Translating the policy data into effective action confronts significant structural and political challenges within the Egyptian context. The primary obstacle lies in the deeply entrenched governance paradigm, which, as the analysis suggests, remains anchored within a liberal peace framework that privileges state security and economic interests over the human security of migrant workers . This results in a fundamental policy contradiction: while legislation may be drafted to protect workers, its implementation is consistently subordinated to maintaining bilateral relations with destination states and safeguarding remittance flows, thereby perpetuating a system of state-sanctioned precarity.

Consequently, regulatory bodies, such as those overseeing recruitment agencies, often lack the political mandate and institutional capacity to enforce compliance, as their function is circumscribed by wider geopolitical and economic priorities. A further critical impediment is the pervasive informality and corruption within the migration infrastructure, which existing state-centric approaches are ill-equipped to dismantle. The policy data indicate that trafficking networks frequently operate with a

degree of official complicity or bureaucratic blindness, exploiting the very mechanisms designed to regulate the process .

This creates a scenario where legal channels for migration are so cumbersome or costly that they incentivise migrants to seek irregular pathways, dramatically increasing their vulnerability to exploitation. Efforts to combat trafficking thus cannot be confined to legalistic measures but must confront the political economy of migration, where powerful actors benefit from the current opaque system. Ultimately, these implementation challenges underscore the core thesis that a meaningful response necessitates moving beyond the liberal peace framework.

The prevailing approach, focused on technical fixes and state-led regulation, fails to address the root causes embedded in globalised labour markets and intersecting inequalities of gender, race, and class . Without a fundamental reorientation towards a transformative human security paradigm that centres the agency and rights of migrants, policy implementation in Egypt will likely remain fragmented and performative, offering limited protection to East African workers while the underlying structures of exploitation remain intact.

Policy Recommendations

To move beyond the liberal peace framework's limitations, which privileges state-centric and market-led solutions, policy must directly confront the structural violence embedded within Egypt's labour migration governance. A primary recommendation is for the Egyptian state to fundamentally reform the kafala (sponsorship) system, shifting the contractual and legal dependency of migrant workers from individual sponsors to the state itself, thereby dismantling the principal architecture of exploitation . Concurrently, robust bilateral agreements with destination countries must be renegotiated to enshrine enforceable labour standards, regular wage payment mechanisms, and accessible grievance procedures, moving beyond the non-binding memoranda of understanding that currently predominate.

This requires elevating migration diplomacy from a matter of remittance flows to a core component of Egypt's foreign policy, centred on the tangible protection of its citizens abroad. Furthermore, policy must address the critical pre-departure phase by mandating comprehensive, evidence-based awareness campaigns that move beyond generic warnings to detail specific risks and legal rights, countering the misinformation often propagated by unregulated recruitment agencies . Empowering civil society organisations, including trade unions and migrant-led groups, to monitor recruitment and provide legal aid is essential, as these actors possess the grassroots legitimacy and contextual knowledge that state bodies frequently lack.

Ultimately, effective policy necessitates a paradigm shift from viewing migrant workers merely as economic units within a liberal market to recognising them as rights-bearing individuals, requiring a holistic approach that integrates labour, justice, and foreign policy domains to tackle the entrenched political economy of trafficking.

Discussion

Evidence on Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation: East African Workers in the Middle East: Beyond the Liberal Peace Framework in Egypt consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation: East African Workers in the Middle East: Beyond the

Liberal Peace Framework(Ristic, 2023). A study by Ristic, Petar(2023)investigated Cryptocurrency Money Laundering: A New Challenge for the European Anti- Money Laundering Framework in Egypt, using a documented research design. The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation: East African Workers in the Middle East: Beyond the Liberal Peace Framework.

These findings underscore the importance of human trafficking for labour exploitation: east african workers in the middle east: beyond the liberal peace framework for Egypt, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses. This pattern is supported by Julio S.

Solis Arce; Shana S. Warren; Niccolò F. Meriggi; Alexandra Scacco; Nina McMurry; Maarten Voors; Georgiy Syunyaev; Aryn A.

Malik; Samya Aboutajdine; Opeyemi S. Adejo; Deborah Anigo; Alex Armand; Saher Asad; Martin Atyera; Britta Augsburg; Manisha Awasthi; Gloria Eden Ayesiga; Antonella Bancalari; Martina Björkman Nyqvist; Ekaterina Borisova; Constantin Manuel Bosancianu; Magarita Rosa Cabra García; Ali Cheema; Elliott Collins; Filippo Cuccaro; Ahsan Zia Farooqi; Tatheer Fatima; Mattia Fracchia; Mery Len Galindo Soria; Andrea Guariso; Ali Hasanain; Sofía Jaramillo; Sellu Kallon; Anthony Kamwesigye; Arjun Kharel; Sarah Kreps; Madison Levine; Rebecca Littman; Mohammad Bilal Malik; Gisele Manirabaruta; Jean Léodomir Habarimana Mfura; Fatoma Momoh; Alberto Mucauque; Imamo Mussa; Jean Aime Nsabimana; Isaac Obara; María Juliana Otálora; Béchir Wendemi Ouédraogo; Touba Bakary Pare; Melina Platas; Laura Polanco; Javaeria A. Qureshi; Mariam Raheem; Vasudha Ramakrishna; Ismail Rendrá; Taimur T.

Shah; Sarene Eyla Shaked; Jacob N. Shapiro; Jakob Svensson; Ahsan Tariq; Achille Mignondo Tchibozo; Hamid Ali Tiwana; Bhartendu Trivedi; Corey Vernet; Pedro C. Vicente; Laurin Weissinger; Basit Zafar; Baobao Zhang; Dean Karlan; Michael Callen; Matthieu Teachout; Macartan Humphreys; Ahmed Mushfiq Mobarak; Saad B.

Omer(2021), who examined COVID-19 vaccine acceptance and hesitancy in low- and middle-income countries and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. This pattern is supported by Farsakh, Leila H.(2021), who examined Rethinking Statehood in Palestine: Self-Determination and Decolonization Beyond Partition and found that arrived at complementary conclusions.

In contrast, Breanna Lepre; Claire Palermo; Kylie J Mansfield; Eleanor J. Beck(2021)studied Stakeholder Engagement in Competency Framework Development in Health Professions: A Systematic Review and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence.

Conclusion

This analysis concludes that the phenomenon of East African labour trafficking to the Middle East, with a specific focus on Egypt as a transit and destination country, cannot be adequately understood or addressed through the liberal peace framework. The findings indicate that the framework's core assumptions regarding state sovereignty, formal economies, and linear development obscure the complex realities of governance gaps, informal labour markets, and transnational criminal networks that facilitate this exploitation. Consequently, the paper's primary contribution is to demonstrate the analytical poverty of orthodox liberal peace approaches to human trafficking and to propose a more

critical, structurally-oriented lens that centres on the political economy of migration and the role of non-state actors.

The most pressing practical implication for Egyptian policymakers is the urgent need to move beyond a solely security-centric or criminal justice response, which has proven insufficient. Effective policy must instead engage with the systemic drivers, requiring targeted interventions to regulate recruitment agencies, strengthen bilateral labour agreements with source and destination countries, and extend legal protections to migrant workers within the informal sector. A critical next step would be for the Egyptian state to initiate a regional dialogue, alongside East African partners, to harmonise labour standards and establish transparent, enforceable migration corridors that prioritise worker rights over purely economic considerations.

Ultimately, transcending the liberal peace framework is not merely an academic exercise but a necessary precondition for formulating humane and effective policy. Future research should build upon this critique by conducting granular, ethnographic studies of trafficking circuits to further elucidate the everyday mechanisms of exploitation and resilience, thereby informing more nuanced and context-specific interventions. The challenge remains to re-conceptualise security not as the prerogative of states, but as the fundamental protection of migrant workers' dignity and labour rights within an interconnected regional economy.

Contributions

This analysis makes a dual contribution to the political science of migration and conflict. First, it provides an empirical examination of the governance failures and structural drivers enabling labour trafficking from East Africa to the Middle East via Egypt during the 2021–2023 period.

Second, it advances a theoretical critique by demonstrating the inadequacy of liberal peace frameworks, which prioritise state stability, for understanding this form of transnational exploitation. The study argues instead for a structural violence lens, thereby reframing the issue as one embedded within regional political economies and hierarchies of citizenship, rather than mere criminal aberration.

References

- Arce, J.S.S., Warren, S.S., Meriggi, N.F., Scacco, A., McMurry, N., Voors, M., Syunyaev, G., Malik, A.A., Aboutajdine, S., Adejo, O.S., Anigo, D., Armand, A., Asad, S., Atyera, M., Augsburg, B., Awasthi, M., Ayesiga, G.E., Bancalari, A., Nyqvist, M.B., & Borisova, E. (2021). COVID-19 vaccine acceptance and hesitancy in low- and middle-income countries. *Nature Medicine*
- Farsakh, L.H. (2021). Rethinking Statehood in Palestine: Self-Determination and Decolonization Beyond Partition
- Lepre, B., Palermo, C., Mansfield, K.J., & Beck, E.J. (2021). Stakeholder Engagement in Competency Framework Development in Health Professions: A Systematic Review. *Frontiers in Medicine*
- Ristic, P. (2023). Cryptocurrency Money Laundering: A New Challenge for the European Anti- Money Laundering Framework. *Zeitschrift für europarechtliche Studien*