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# One-way ticket to Rwanda ?

## Boris Johnson's cruel refugee tactic meets Kagame's shady immigration handling

Dirk Kohnert <sup>1</sup>

'One-way ticket to Rwanda' <sup>2</sup>



Source: [The Herald](#), 15 April 2022

**Abstract:** Boris Johnson's populist policy against immigrants and asylum seekers, dumped in detention camps in Rwanda, may not succeed because of legal constraints. Yet, his political agenda will probably work nevertheless, given the growing xenophobia among his electorate. Against expert advice, Home Secretary Priti Patel promised the autocratic ruler in Kigali, Paul Kagame, responsible among others for retribution killings of his army (RPF), to transfer an initial £120m to deter the migrants and to make them 'settle and thrive' in Rwanda. However, London would have to pay much more in the proposed 'economic transformation and integration fund' for the current cost. It is highly unlikely that Rwanda will be able to cope with additional immigrants as it is already struggling to accommodate its own more than 130,000 refugees. Moreover, in the past, also Denmark and Israel had tried in vain to execute similar policies to get rid of undesirable migrants and settle them in Rwanda and Uganda. Johnson's scheme reminded Britain's foremost historian of Nazi Germany, Sir Richard Evans, of Hitler's ploy to deport Jews to Madagascar. Thus, policies purported to aim at 'migration control' may not control migration, but reconfigure potential host societies along ethnic, racial, linguistic, and xenophobe lines. The burden of colonial heritage persists in attempts to reject 'strangers' through populist politics, culture and public discourse. This policy was revived and adjusted in the post-Brexit era, as exemplified by the preferential treatment given to Ukrainian migrants. Racism works best when it's overtly selective. Treating some migrants as "worthy" and others as "undeserving" avoids accusations of racism. It allows racist voters to be fooled into believing that they are personally virtuous while secretly or unconsciously indulging their basest instincts.

**Keywords:** [United Kingdom](#), [Rwanda](#), [immigration](#), [refugees](#), [African migration to UK](#), [postcolonialism](#), [peacebuilding](#), [identity politics](#), [nationalism](#), [xenophobia](#), [discrimination](#), [African poverty](#), [famine](#), [Sub-Saharan Africa](#), [human rights](#), [Boris Johnson](#), [Paul Kagame](#)

**JEL-Code:** E24, E26, E71, F22, F24, F35, F52, F54, F66, J46, J61, J71, K37, N17, N37, N47, N97, P16, Z13

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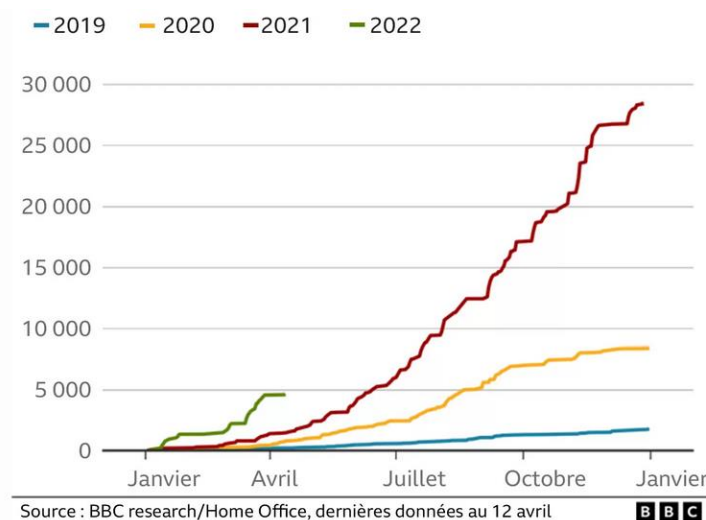
<sup>2</sup> UK Government's plans to send Channel migrants to Rwanda. Home Secretary Priti wants to reserve immigration for Whites only. – Source: [The Herald](#), (HeraldScotland.com), © (all rights reserved) [Camley's Cartoons](#), Steven Camley.

# 1. Introduction

British immigration policy, like immigration policy in most affluent OECD countries, courts the immigration of high-skilled immigrants, while it discouraged the immigration of low-skilled workers (Joppke, 2020). In a new move to fulfil his promises, the British Premier minister [Boris Johnson](#) announced in April 2022 that Britain would send 'tens of thousands of [Channel migrants](#) with a one-way ticket to detention camps in East African [Rwanda](#) to 'settle and thrive'. Yet, the human rights records of the country of destination are tarnished. For example, its armed forces (Rwanda Defence Force, [RDF](#)) had been blamed by UN investigators for the killing of tens of hundreds of civilians in the run-up to the 1994 genocide and the massacres' wake (Wrong, 2022).

On 9 May 2022, the CEO of the British [Refugee Council](#), Enver Solomon, responded to the move of the government by castigating it as a cruel, nasty and unprincipled treatment of refugees as human cargo. To expel them to Rwanda would also be completely unworkable and presumably unlawful (Cooney, 2022). Yet, neither the government in [London](#) nor in [Kigali](#) bothered about the fact that their agreement would almost certainly be illegal (Syal, 2022). However, according to Home Secretary [Priti Patel](#) this “*world-leading migration partnership with Rwanda*” had to be installed because “*Britain’s asylum system is broken as criminals exploit and smuggle people into our country at huge costs to UK taxpayers ... I will not be deterred from acting to deliver on the changes the British people voted for to take back control of our money, laws and borders.*” (Cooney, 2022). [Patel’s](#) ministerial direction overruled expert advice that the deportation plan, costing more than the £120m (€ 130 m), was a waste of money because it was unlikely to deter many people. The money transfer was part of an initial ‘economic transformation and integration fund’. However, London will have to pay additionally for substantial operational costs (Syal, 2022).

**Graph 1:** people crossing the [English Channel](#) by boat



Source: BBC-news (n.a.), 2022

The migrant's Channel crossings have been mostly arranged by [smugglers](#) who allegedly charged between £3,000 and £6,000 for a crossing attempt in small, often previously stolen boats. Although it is only a short distance, the crossing is dangerous because of strong currents and dense maritime traffic. According to the [International Organization for Migration](#), at least 52 migrants drowned in the English Channel trying to reach the UK between 2018 and 2021 ([English Channel migrant crossings \(2018–present\)](#), Wikipedia).

**Graph 2:** Distance between the UK and home country of refugees



Source: BBC-news (n.a.), 2022

According to Sir [Richard Evans](#), the leading historian of [Nazi Germany](#), the project reminds of Hitler's scheme of the Nazi '[Madagascar plan](#)', i.e. to deport European Jews to the then colony of [Vichy France](#), [Madagascar](#). Also, the [Archbishop of Canterbury](#), the principal leader of the [Church of England](#), denounced the project as ungodly. The [UNHCR](#) urged both Johnson and his counterpart, [Paul Kagame](#), to rethink their plans (Cotterill, & Schipani, 2022).

Moreover, Johnson's remarks obscured Rwanda's volatile treatment of refugees under similar offshore deportation programmes. Also, his initiative had a remarkable history of similar attempts of 'migration control'. For example, a 'voluntary' [Israeli](#) initiative in 2014 to send unwanted migrants to [Kigali](#) later collapsed. Again in 2018, another Israeli program failed, to 'outsource' African deportees, a lot of them [Eritreans](#) and [Sudanese](#) fleeing their very own repressive African regimes, to each [Rwanda](#) and [Uganda](#) (Wang, 2022). In 2017, the [UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#) cautioned that there was a lot of "secrecy surrounding this policy and the lack of transparency concerning its implementation" in Rwanda. Besides, also [Denmark](#) had tried to conclude a migration deal with Rwanda, but apparently, not a single migrant had been dispatched there up to now (Wang, 2022).

Last, but not least, the EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), created in 2015 to address the root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa, had adopted 2017 a controversial € 90 million programme. Officially, it was meant to step up the protection of migrants and reinforce migration management in [Libya](#) upon a proposal from the [European Commission](#) (EC, 2017). However, the fund has been evaluated critically by Human Rights Organisations like [OXFAM](#) (2017) because it apparently responded rather to European needs and a political sense of urgency. The scheme created a new and worrying trajectory for development aid by constituting close links with donors' migration policies aiming at stopping irregular migration to the EU. This posed a risk to development actors' ability to contribute to poverty and inequality reduction. [Non-governmental organizations](#) (NGOs) had been highly critical of the EUTF's narrative, goals and implementation. Yet, despite their disapproving position, many NGOs benefitted substantially financially from the EUTF as project implementing agencies (Raty & Shilhav, 2020; Szent-Ivanyi, 2021).

Generally, the essence of immigration policy changes in terms of openness or restrictiveness, do not differ significantly between democracies and autocracies. However, autocracies have more leeway than democracies to open (or restrict) immigration according to their economic, geopolitical, or domestic priorities (Natter, 2018). Moreover, the colonial heritage may reflect in identity politics in a complex and indirect way. For example, it manifests in controversies over the racialization of belonging and beauty, in the popular readings of how race, class, language and status intersect, and in the formation and dismissal of ‘new’ regionalisms (Purdeková & Mwambari, 2021).

Thus, colonial boundaries established territorial entities within which citizens were classified to belong. Racial and ethnic identities began to form, alongside the restriction of movement across given territories. This has been considered the introduction of immigration rules in Africa, taking case studies from [Kenya](#) and [Rwanda](#) as examples (Abuya, 2021). Thereby, media and security discourses can be ferocious weapons of propaganda, even a weapon of genocide, by redefining the roles played by the social representations of the ‘other’ the ‘foreigner’, for example, propagated by the extremist Rwandan newspaper [Kangura](#) that stoke ethnic hatred in the run-up to the Rwandan genocide from 1990 to 1994 (Fournier, 2020). Another example is the case of [Banyarwanda](#) immigrants in [North-Kivu](#) in the [Democratic Republic of Congo](#) (DRC) (Karaboue, 2017). Also, the treatment of Rwandan and Burundian immigrants in the DRC since 1960 and the xenophobic and discriminatory practices used against the nationals by indigenous Congolese people were obstacles to integration. Thereby, the derogatory, hegemonic, and disdainful behaviour and attitudes of these immigrants towards the host society showed that the borders between cause and effect are often blurred (Florent & Lebon, 2018).

## 2. Immigrants and refugees in Rwanda

**Cartoon 2:** Pope Francis' cartoon  
*‘Hypocrisy on Rwandan tragedy’*



Source: Karabayinga, 2016<sup>3</sup>

The history of migrants in Rwanda started already in colonial times when first the German, and since 2016 the Belgian colonial powers treated the [Hutu](#) and [Tutsi](#) as different races with distinctive prerogatives. The ‘aristocratic’ Tutsi were considered similar to ‘feudal’ masters of

<sup>3</sup> Cartoonist: Mr. RAS, © (all rights reserved).

the Hutu peasants'. In 1935, this ascribed status was cemented by the Belgians by introducing identity cards, defining each Rwandan as either belonging to the Tutsi, Hutu, [and Twa](#) races or as Naturalised ([Rwanda history](#), Wikipedia).

In 1962, when Rwanda gained independence from [Belgium](#), about 200,000 Rwandan Tutsi had left their home country to seek exile in neighbouring states. [Ugandan](#) leaders who had previously supported the right of Tutsi refugees to remain on Ugandan territory were increasingly perceived as a threat to Ugandan national citizenship after independence (Long, 2011). Also, the hostility towards the refugees escalated because many Ugandans felt that they were being treated as second-class citizens in their own country (Otonnu, 1999). The denying of political rights for the Tutsi refugees in Uganda prompted their militarization (Long, 2011). Later on, in the mid-1990s, the Rwandan counter-genocidaires prevented largely Hutu civilian refugee populations from returning to Rwanda.

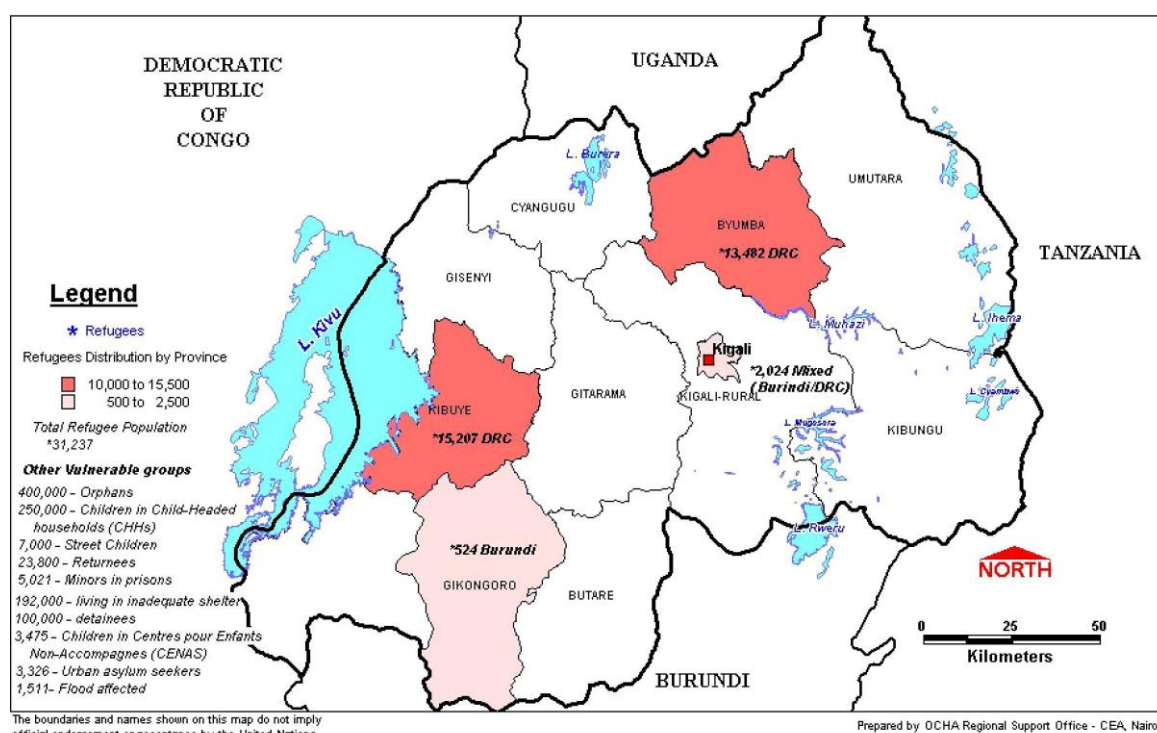
**Graph 4:** Refugee camps (incl. number of refugees) and population density, Rwanda, March 2020



Source: [Rwanda, Main Health Facilities and Population Density](#)  
OCAH, March 2020

These policies highlight the extent to which the supremacy struggles and demographic control have been part and parcel of Rwandan perceptions of political power since the state's independence (Long, 2011). In this context, 'coming home' had dissimilar meanings for different groups according to their historical relations to power and place: For the first group (those excluded by colonial boundaries) it meant 'home' as a cultural category attributed to external sources, sometimes the host state toward them. For the second, the colonial economic migrants, it had been a territory they had fled from that they sought to avoid. For the third, the political refugees of the early 1960s it was an imagined home they longed for and thought to regain. For the fourth, the refugees of the 1990s it was the country they had lost (Newbury, 2005).

**Graph 5:** Rwanda, refugees, affected populations by prefecture, 2003

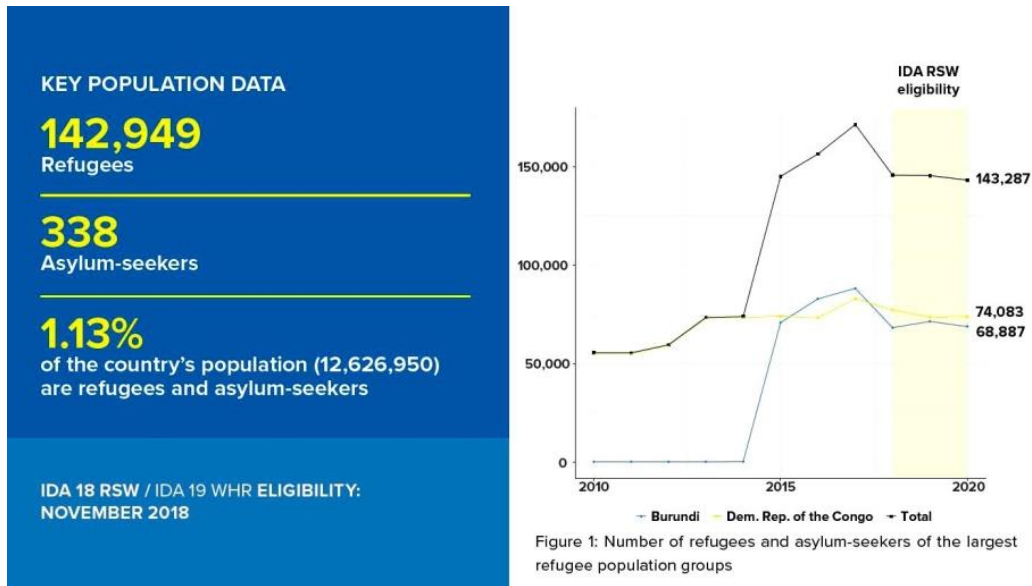


Source: UN, OCHA regional support office, CEA, Nairobi

As of December 2020, 164,000 people were granted refugee status in Rwanda according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (Manirambona, E. et al., 2021). Most of them came since 1996 from the [DRC](#) and [Burundi](#). The majority of Burundian refugees reached Rwanda over the past five years due to [election-related violence in Burundi](#), which increased the number of refugees significantly by 70,000. Most refugees live in six camps which are dispersed throughout the country (UNHCR, 2020). It has been observed that greater (economic) interaction between the refugees and the local host community increased trust between the groups over time. Besides, residents claim that economic and social support given to refugees plays a key role in reducing and preventing conflict between the two groups (Fajth et al., 2019). Moreover, over time refugee economies result from cooperation inside each camp. The structures of these markets mirror the economic setting in the neighbourhood of these camps. The refugees closely interact with the host community although they often were traumatized by forced migration and living in destitute conditions. By their [agency](#), the interacting refugees create a divergence of refugee households' income above the assistance they receive. As a spill-over effect, a shift from emergency aid in-kind to cash aid appears to augment refugee welfare and strengthen market linkages between camp and host economies (Alloush et al, 2017).

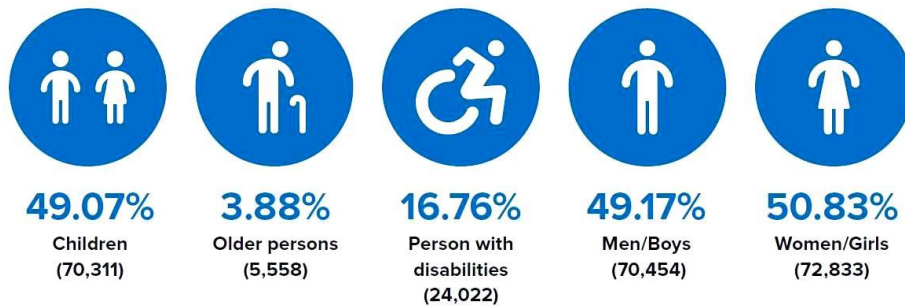
However, the global impact of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) also led to a decline in donations to the United Nations [World Food Programme](#) (WFP). This in turn reduced the food rations of refugees significantly. The aftermath is likely to impact the inmates of refugee camps who depend on humanitarian aid to meet their basic food requirements. They will be exposed to hunger and starvation, putting their lives in danger by triggering forced returns, infections, social conflicts and thus higher morbidity and mortality (Manirambona et al., 2021).

**Graph 6:** Number of refugees and asylum-seekers of the largest refugee population groups



Source: UNHCR, 2020: 2.

**Graph 7: Characteristics of registered refugees and asylum-seekers in total refugee population in Rwanda as of 30 June 2020**



Source: UNHCR, 2020: 12

### 3. The migration policy of Paul Kagame

[Paul Kagame](#), a [Rwandan](#) politician and former military leader, is since 2000 the [president of Rwanda](#). Though Rwanda has been lauded as a 'development dictatorship' by the West (Verwimp, 2000; Nahmias, 2011; Andersen, 2010), Kagame is intrinsically tied throughout his tenure as vice president and president with murders and disappearances of political opponents, both in Rwanda and abroad (Friedman, 2012; [Paul Kagame](#), Wikipedia).

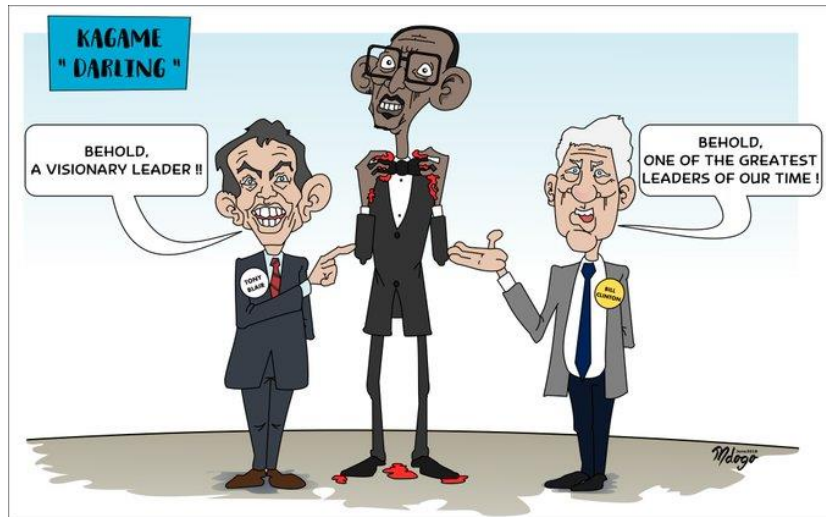
Reports of the [U.S. state department on Human Rights](#) on Rwanda, [Amnesty International](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#) documented unlawful or arbitrary killings, along with forced disappearances and torture by the Rwandan government, harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary detention; political prisoners or detainees, serious restrictions on free expression and media, including threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists, censorship etc. (U.S. Department of State, 2022; Human Rights Watch, 2022; Amnesty International, 2022).

Kagame's tarnished reputation was confirmed when he, already in 2014, entered a questionable confidential agreement with Israel that sparked international controversy.



Apparently, [Tel Aviv](#) had offered African asylum seekers the choice between being placed in detention or a paid one-way journey to two countries presented as safe: Rwanda and Uganda. Having little choice, nearly 4,000 [Eritreans](#) and [Sudanese](#) returned to Africa between December 2013 and June 2017, which was labelled as ‘voluntary departures’ according to the UNHCR (Broulard, 2022).

**Cartoon3:** ‘Paul Kagame, the darling dictator of the West’



Source: Mdogo et Thomas Verfuss,  
7 June 2018· Twitter Web Client ), © (all rights reserved)

In the past years, [Kigali](#) had agreed to take part in an [African Union](#) (AU) scheme to rescue refugees and asylum-seekers from war-torn [Libya](#). Yet, finally, it took only about 190 of an original pledge of 30,000 immigrants. It had also offered to receive [Afghan](#) girls following the [Taliban](#) takeover of the country in 2021. But, according to the [UNHCR](#), Rwanda was at pains to host the over 130,000 refugees by the end of 2021, most of them had fled from neighbouring [Democratic Republic of Congo](#) and [Burundi](#) (Cotterill, & Schipani, 2022). Some refugees in Rwanda had not received enough money to buy enough food or healthcare according to a senior officer with the ‘Burundian Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Living in Refugee Camps’. Allegedly, there were even people who just starved. In 2018, Rwandan police had arrested more than 60 refugees, mostly from DRC, who had protested over cuts in their food rations, charging them with "spreading false information with the intent to create a hostile international opinion against the Rwandan state". According to Lewis Mudge, the central Africa director at [Human Rights Watch](#), Rwanda respected neither the rule of law nor some of the most fundamental human rights. Anyone even perceived as critical of the government or its policies could be targeted (Cotterill, & Schipani, 2022).

Currently, [Kigali](#) offers migrants rejected by the [United Kingdom](#) three solutions: Firstly, to return to their country of origin. Secondly, departure for a third country, and thirdly, regularization and settlement in Rwanda. [Paul Kagame](#) promised those migrants who decide to stay, decent housing, access to social assistance and the country's almost universal health insurance fund, as well as the right to work. All this would have to be funded mainly by Britain (Broulard, 2022). But it is questionable whether London would be prepared to pay for the follow-up cost beside the envisaged initial payment of £120m which rather resembles a form of budgetary aid.

Also, few deported refugees would like to stay in Rwanda under these conditions. On the contrary, such agreements are likely to create more illegal migration, since many of the migrants may decide to return to the Mediterranean to reach their preferred EU host country, by taking the land route through [South Sudan](#), [Sudan](#) and [Libya](#), which would be a far more dangerous journey than crossing the [English Channel](#). In short, the purported agreement smacks of pious wishes and a certain dose of cynicism on both sides. Notwithstanding, Kagame is said to be in discussions also for a similar project with [Denmark](#) (Broulard, 2022).

Already in December 2021, Denmark had agreed in principle with [Kosovo](#) on a deal to rent 300 jail cells in Kosovo to ease prison overcrowding by migrants subject to deportation after serving their sentences. The treaty was signed in April 2022. Since 2015, the prison population in Denmark had jumped by nearly 20 % and the number of prison guards dropped by the same proportion, causing issues with overcrowding. The deportation to the prison in [Gjilan](#), located some 50 kilometres from the capital [Pristina](#), was meant to start in 2023. [Copenhagen](#) will pay a fee of €15 million p.a. (€ 210 m at full term) to rent the cells (Joly, 2021; Martens, 2022).

**Cartoon 4: 'Visas for Rwanda'**

*'Paul Kagame spares, once again, the Anglophone goat and the Francophone cabbage'*<sup>4</sup>



Source : [Damien Glez](#), 2020, © (all rights reserved)

#### 4. The migration policy of Boris Johnson

[Boris Johnson](#), an American-born (New York City, 1964) British journalist and charismatic politician of the [Conservative Party](#), became Prime Minister of the UK on July 24, 2019. Before, he served as the second elected mayor of London (2008–16) and as secretary of state for foreign affairs (2016–18) under Prime Minister [Theresa May](#). In the 12 December 2019 election, the populist leader fetched the Conservative Party's biggest victory since 1987. Johnson's almost dysfunctional dominance makes him a tough and effective leader. His often unconventionally behaviour and contentiousness render his actions difficult to predict

<sup>4</sup> Damien Glez is an internationally renowned Franco-Burkinabe cartoonist and columnist. The cartoon refers to Kagame's demand at an Africa-UK summit in London on 21 January 2020, focused on the international consequences of [Brexit](#), at the International School for Government at King's College, in a very diplomatic speech on the "community of values" or the opportunity to "reinvent global trade and investment agreements", for the exemption from payment of visa fees for citizens of the [Commonwealth](#), the [Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie](#) (OIF) and the [African Union](#) (AU) (Glez, 2020).

(Landtsheer & Hollander & Maene, 2021; Biography ‘Boris Johnson’, [Britannica](#)). In a [Machiavellian](#) manner he does not hesitate to use ‘[alternative facts](#)’ and even blunt lies when it comes to the crunch, as shown in the [Brexit](#) ‘leave’ campaign (Kohnert, 2018; 2021a). When still working as a journalist, he was known in [Brussels](#), as the British correspondent who wrote fake or fantasy articles about the EU, and as a Brexiteer who allegedly wrote one ‘Remain’ and one ‘Exit’ version of his speech at the time of the referendum (Landtsheer & Hollander & Maene, 2021).

Johnson’s Brexit referendum was largely, if not entirely, about reducing immigration (Joppke, 2020). London’s post-Brexit immigration policy courted high-skilled immigrants while opposing migration routes for low-skilled workers and trying to control Britain’s borders (Zotti, 2021).

Already during the [Brexit](#) leave campaign in 2016, [Boris Johnson](#) pledged to take back control over immigration by restricting it substantially (Kohnert, 2018). He recommended introducing a points-based ‘[Australian-style](#)’ immigration system by 2020 and thus regaining correspondingly control over vital aspects of the [British social security system](#). Yet, the Australian-style points-based system was not the novelty as which Johnson presented it. It had been in place since 2008. Only, over time it had devolved from a system of ‘tradable points’ into one where successful applicants had to ‘meet all criteria’, most importantly, skills and a job with a minimum salary. British immigration policy, as immigration policy in most rich [OECD](#) countries, courted high-skilled immigrants, while discarding a migration route for low-skilled workers (Joppke, 2020).

Moreover, the then acting Premier [David Cameron](#) countered that [Australia](#) had more migration per head than the UK. Therefore, he thought this would be the wrong approach. [Carolyn Fairbairn](#), then director-general of the [Confederation of British Industry](#) (CBI), added that the UK had already a points-based system for non-EU migrants. Apparently, Johnson’s move was less orientated by ‘fairness’ than by ‘exclusion’ in heating up populist-nationalist and xenophobic emotional sentiments (Mason & Stewart & Asthana, 2016).

Johnson qualified [Rwanda](#), the single most densely populated state in Africa, as “one of the safest countries in the world, globally recognised for its record of welcoming and integrating migrants”. However, a similar ploy had failed almost 20 years before, when Prime Minister [Tony Blair](#) unsuccessfully tried to persuade [Tanzania](#) to process British asylum claims (Cotterill, & Schipani, 2022). In 2009, Rwanda had been admitted to the [Commonwealth](#) along with [Mozambique](#), the second nation without formal historical ties to Great Britain, in a move to become more independent from France 15 years after the [Rwanda genocide](#). Foreign relations with [Paris](#) had been temporarily suspended in 2006 following the indictment of Rwandan officials by a French judge (Kron, 2009). Thus, the policy of the Rwandan leader Paul Kagame was not only directed at ‘migration control’ but also at reconfiguring the Rwandan state along ethnic, racial, linguistic and socio-political lines (Bloom, 2019).

Johnson’s deportation scheme was to be back-dated to cover all those irregular immigrants who arrived in the UK since the beginning of 2022. On 15 April 2022, the Prime minister pledged the first flights could take off within just six weeks (Barrett & Stevens & Pyman, 2022).

Yet, an analysis of government figures revealed that fewer than 200 people who came to the UK without authorisation could have been sent to Rwanda last year if the deal had been in place already. It estimates that in 2022 the number would not likely be much higher. All this

challenged Johnson's claim that 'tens of thousands' who arrived in the UK without authorisation could be given a one-way ticket to Rwanda (Syal, 2022). The director of the identity and integration think-tank [British Future](#), the former [general secretary](#) of the internationally renowned [Fabian Society](#), remarked that in general, the support among the British population for reducing migration has not been lower for decades (Maguire, 2022).

Johnson's announcement caused an upsurge of irregular immigration to the UK after a period without significant numbers of Channel crossings because of bad weather. In April, several hundred people made the journey, bringing the total to more than 7,000 in the first month of 2022. This happened for the first time since the [Nationality and Borders Bill](#), which set out the general policy framework, had been passed by the British Parliament in July 2021 (Walker, 2022). The bill was finally passed by the [House of Lords](#) on 27 April 2022 and was poised to become law, at the same time the first legal actions against Johnson's Rwanda deportation ploy had been filed (Syal, 2022).

## 5. Conclusion

[Least developed countries](#) (LLCs), notably the poor in Africa and the Middle East, will suffer most of the consequences of Putin's war in Ukraine, notably the effects of the use of food and hunger as a weapon of war. They have already been agonized by the aftermath of drought, the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) and [Islamist terrorism](#). Their already weakened position will be exacerbated by the spill-over effects of Russian aggression in Ukraine, which will further worsen hunger and poverty in Africa. This, all the more so, as international [development aid](#) for Africa is likely to decrease by a massive redirection of aid to rearmament. All this will accelerate the movement of refugees to Europe, including the UK (Kohnert, 2022).

The wave of Ukrainian refugees, displaced by the ongoing war, created unexpected and unprecedented solidarity among neighbouring European states. Even the right-wing [Visegrád Group](#) of the EU, which hitherto refused to co-operate with EU immigration policy and to receive refugees, showed exemplary unanimity in welcoming the Ukrainians, mostly young women, children and elderly.

The UK has been widely criticised for not allowing as many Ukrainian refugees to enter as other European countries. For example, they had been thwarted by excessive paperwork. Thus, Ukrainian refugees were advised to apply at a Visa Application Centre (VAC) in countries like [Poland](#), [Romania](#), [Hungary](#) and [Moldova](#), including the provision of biometric information, such as fingerprints. Refugees with a Ukrainian passport were offered an online application with biometric information provided after arrival in the UK. Yet, as of 7 April 2022, Britain had issued 28,500 visas under this scheme from 36,300 applications. Only 10,800 have arrived under this scheme so far (BBC, 2022).

Compared with the restrictive handling of other refugees, notably Non-Whites from Africa, Ukrainian refugees nevertheless got preferential treatment although they did not belong to the officially courted high-skilled immigrants. On the contrary, they fitted in the group of low-skilled workers or dependent and elderly people who would certainly burden the British social security system.

This may indicate that the British government, following popular sentiments among its electorate, tolerated or even implicitly promoted racist tendencies in its immigration policy.

On the other hand, the rejection of migrant workers from Eastern European countries ([Romania](#), [Bulgaria](#), and [Poland](#)), belonging to the same European cultural sphere, was one of the major issues of Johnson's populist election campaigns. The rhetoric of saving money by restricting their benefit claims was a strong point in the ['Leave' campaign](#) that preceded the [Brexit vote](#) (Bejan, 2019).

Romanian and Bulgarian migrants in the UK, estimated to amount to half a million in 2019, have a long history of labour discrimination (Bejan, 2019). They were labelled A2/EU2 migrants when Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union in 2007. London immediately imposed transitional migration limits aimed at preventing them from freely accessing domestic labour markets for a period of seven years. Moreover, EU2 nationals were allowed to work only as self-employed and were confined to specific sectors of the labour market, notably construction and the hospitality industry. The majority of Romanian and Bulgarian migrants in Britain (61 %) were employed in low-paid work, compared to 43% of locals. Also, 61 % of A2 nationals worked more than 40 hours a week, compared to 32% of their British counterparts (Bejan, 2019).

Johnson and Priti Patel's deportation scheme smacks of policy racism against vulnerable refugees, emerging from a cynical calculation regarding electoral racism which has long informed the strategy of the [Conservative party](#) (Shaw, 2022). The idea to exploit racism in conjunction with immigrants became fashionable among the political right in the 1950s, backed by populist mass media, and appeased by the [Labour party](#), according to the political needs of the time. This policy has been revitalized and adapted in the post-Brexit era, as the example of the preferential treatment of Ukrainian migrants shows, because racism works best if it is openly selective. Treating some migrants as 'worthy' and others as 'undeserving' helps to avert the charge of being racist. It allows admitting and implicit racist voters alike to believe that they personally are virtuous while backing furtively or unconsciously their worst instincts (Shaw, 2022).

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**Résumé :** La politique populiste de Boris Johnson contre les immigrés et les demandeurs d'asile, jetés dans des camps de détention au Rwanda, risque d'échouer en raison de contraintes légales. Pourtant, son programme politique fonctionnera probablement néanmoins, étant donné la xénophobie croissante parmi son électorat. Contre l'avis des experts, le ministre de l'Intérieur Priti Patel a promis au dirigeant autocratique à Kigali, Paul Kagame, responsable entre autres des meurtres en représailles de son armée (FPR), de transférer un montant initial de £120m pour dissuader les migrants et les faire « s'installer et prospérer » au Rwanda. Cependant, Londres devrait payer beaucoup plus dans le « fonds de transformation et d'intégration économiques » proposé pour le coût actuel. Il est très peu probable que le Rwanda soit en mesure de faire face à des immigrants supplémentaires car il a déjà du mal à accueillir ses propres 130 000 réfugiés. De plus, dans le passé, le Danemark et Israël avaient également tenté en vain d'exécuter des politiques similaires pour se débarrasser des migrants indésirables et les installer au Rwanda et en Ouganda. Le plan de Johnson a rappelé au plus grand historien britannique de l'Allemagne nazie, Sir Richard Evans, du plan d'Hitler de déporter les Juifs à Madagascar. Ainsi, les politiques censées viser le « contrôle de la migration » peuvent ne pas contrôler la migration, mais reconfigurer les sociétés d'accueil potentielles selon des critères ethniques, raciaux, linguistiques et xénophobes. Le fardeau de l'héritage colonial persiste alors que la politique populiste, la culture et le discours public cherchent à repousser les « étrangers ». Cette politique a été relancée et ajustée dans l'ère post-Brexit, comme en témoigne le traitement préférentiel accordé aux migrants ukrainiens. Parce que le racisme fonctionne mieux quand il est ouvertement sélectif. Traiter certains migrants comme « méritants » et d'autres comme « indignes » évite les accusations de racisme. Cela permet aux électeurs racistes d'être trompés en leur faisant croire qu'ils sont personnellement vertueux tout en se livrant secrètement ou inconsciemment à leurs instincts les plus bas.

**Zusammenfassung:** Boris Johnsons populistische Politik gegen Einwanderer und Asylsuchende, die in Ruanda in Internierungslagern inhaftiert werden sollen, droht an rechtlichen Zwängen zu scheitern. Dennoch wird seine politische Agenda angesichts der wachsenden Fremdenfeindlichkeit unter seiner Wählerschaft wahrscheinlich trotzdem funktionieren. Gegen den Rat von Experten versprach Innenminister Priti Patel dem autokratischen Führer in Kigali, Paul Kagame, der unter anderem für die Vergeltungsmorde seiner Armee (RPF) verantwortlich ist, eine Anfangsfinanzierung von £120m, um Migranten abzuschrecken und sie dazu zu bringen, sich in Ruanda „niederzulassen und zu gedeihen“. Allerdings müsste London für die laufenden Kosten deutlich mehr in den vorgeschlagenen „Fonds für wirtschaftliche Transformation und Integration“ einzahlen. Es ist höchst unwahrscheinlich, dass Ruanda mit zusätzlichen Einwanderern fertig wird, da es bereits Schwierigkeiten hat, seine eigenen 130.000 Flüchtlinge unterzubringen. Darüber hinaus hatten Dänemark und Israel in der Vergangenheit ebenfalls erfolglos versucht, eine ähnliche Politik durchzuführen, um unerwünschte Migranten loszuwerden und sie in Ruanda und Uganda anzusiedeln. Johnsons Plan erinnerte den führenden britischen Historiker von Nazi-Deutschland, Sir Richard Evans, an Hitlers Plan, Juden nach Madagaskar zu deportieren. Daher kann eine Politik, die angeblich auf „Migrationskontrolle“ abzielt, die Migration möglicherweise nicht kontrollieren, sondern potenzielle Aufnahmegesellschaften entlang ethnischer, rassistischer, sprachlicher und fremdenfeindlicher Linien neu konfigurieren. Die Last des kolonialen Erbes besteht fort im Bestreben, „Außenseiter“ durch populistische Politik, Kultur und öffentlichen Diskurs abzuweisen. Diese Politik wurde in der Post-Brexit-Ära wiederbelebt und angepasst, wie das Beispiel der bevorzugten Behandlung ukrainischer Migranten zeigt. Denn Rassismus funktioniert am besten, wenn er offen selektiv ist. Einige Migranten als „würdig“ und andere als „unwürdig“ zu behandeln, vermeidet den Vorwurf des Rassismus. Es ermöglicht rassistischen Wählern glauben zu machen, dass sie persönlich tugendhaft sind, während sie heimlich oder unbewusst ihren niedrigsten Instinkte frönen.