



**The Representation of African Illegal Migrants in British Media:
The Telegraph, Channel 4 and BBC as a Case Study**

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Abstract:

This article investigates British media representation of African illegal migration to European countries, mainly the United Kingdom. It focuses on selected media channels that represent African illegal migration post-Covid19 to demonstrate the United Kingdom's inability to handle the situation. It aims to concentrate on The Telegraph, BBC and Channel 4 and reflect on their points of views concerning the influx of illegal migration. This study relies on *discourse analysis* and Edward Said's *Orientalism* in order to examine the channels' attitudes and Western discourse. The findings revealed that British channels concentrate on African illegal migration from different standpoints. The journalists of The Telegraph rely on YouTube to depict migrants and emphasize the failure of the political parties to control the situation. Channel 4 explores the rising number of illegal migration and the issue of Rwanda plan. The primary goal of Channel 4 is to depict African illegal migrants as ordinary people who flee their countries to find refuge. BBC has also a number of news on North African migration. It shows its

concern about the rising number of illegal migration and the need for a solution.

Keywords: African illegal migrants; media broadcasts; threat; stop illegal migration.

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1. INTRODUCTION

African migration dates back to the mid-18th century. Over the years, African migration to Britain has been consistent as migrants and refugees continue to seek shelter there. Nowadays, both British politicians and citizens view the presence of illegal migrants from many nations as a problem. Therefore, British politicians emphasized the need to contain the number of illegal migrants in the United Kingdom. Media outlets play a major role in representing historical, economic, political and social topics on a national or international scale. This study analyzes British media's portrayal of African illegal migrants after 2020 to unveil the inability of British government to handle the situation following Covid-19. It relies on discourse analysis and Edward Said's *Orientalism* to scrutinize specific news from The Telegraph, Channel 4 and BBC. It also attempts to focus on these media channels in order to analyze their representations of African illegal migration. It also shows whether the rising number of illegal migrants has an impact on the portrayal of African illegal migrants.

2. The Historical Context of African Migration

2.1 Before Covid 19

Throughout history, humans have migrated between regions, countries, or continents for multiple reasons. Migration is the term used by many scholars to describe human movement. In this regard, Caroline Wanjiku Kihato (2018) argues:

Migration is a complex social phenomenon. It is shaped by multiple interesting historical, social, political, economic and climatic factors. In addition, people's mobility is often entangled in personal and communal decision- making frameworks that determine why, where and how people move (p.7).

From this excerpt, migration is depicted as a complex phenomenon since various conditions may cause people's movement. The decision to migrate to a different place can be either individual or societal, depending on the primary motive for migration. The types of migration include permanent, illegal, refugee, labor and "professional transient" (Appleyard, 1991, p.611). The twenty-first century has seen the development of academic research on African migration. In "African Migration: Continuities, Discontinuities and Recent Transformations," Oliver Blackwell and Hein de Hass (2007) describe Africans as "people on the move" from a historical and sociological perspectives (p. 95). However, modern myths about African migration have become widespread owing to the absence of contemporary studies on the topic. This situation remains



troublesome as long as these myths continue to propagate globally. In this context, Blackwell and Hass write, “As a result there is only limited knowledge about the forms and patterns of migrations across large parts of Africa” (p. 95). The dearth of expertise on this category can be hazardous due to their lack of definition.

Because Africans migrate to a variety of places, contemporary research on African migration concentrate on four distinct areas, namely North, East, West and South. Nonetheless, there are common causes for their migration. The history of North Africans and Saharans migration dates back to the pre-colonial era due to settlement, invasion, and conflicts (Blackwell and de Hass, 2007, p.96). In addition, from the 1960s to through 1990s, North Africans immigrated to France in search of employment both during and after colonialism. In this sense, Blackwell and Hass (2007) argue, “European governments have been compelled to grant legal status to large numbers of migrants” (p.98). Despite efforts by North African authorities to restrict migration to Europe, a number of European nations, including France, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Italy and Netherlands, have seen an influx of these people. The total number of migrants rose in the twenty-first century. Europe is home to millions of North Africans. For example, there were over four million North Africans and their families residing in Europe in 2004 (Blackwell and de Hass, 2007, p.99). Black Africans have distinct travel destinations in Europe, such as the UK, than do North African.

East Africans, West Africans and South Africans are all considered Black Africans. Blackwell and de Hass focus on these populations in their study because they have distinct experiences and travel goals. People from East African and the Horn, including those from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Sudan, were displaced due to social, political, economic and environmental issues (Blackwell and de Hass, 2007, p.100). More significantly, a number of populations from East Africa and the Horn Africa were compelled to relocate to other African countries during the British colonial era and the civil wars. In this context, Blackwell and de Hass (2007) put is, “There are significant levels of migration out of the region, most notably to the Gulf, South Africa, Europe and the United States” (p.102). This unveils that East, in contrast to, North Africans, East Africans and Horns found different places in Africa, Europe and America. Furthermore, a large number of West Africans left their country to find employment overseas as a result of political unrest and civil wars. Therefore, the majority of migration occurs in this region. Mass migration from Senegal, Ghana, and Nigeria to North America began to increase in the late 1980s (Blackwell and de Hass, 2007, p.105). South Africans fled their country because of conquest and apartheid. due to a wave of mass migration to the UK, South Africa began losing its educated population in the 1990s (Blackwell and de Hass, 2007, p.109).

In “The Migration History of Black Africans to Britain,” Thomas Domboka (2017) categorizes Black African migrants into three stages. A limited number of Africans, primarily Ghanaians and Nigerians, traveled to the UK for study during the first phase, which took place in

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the 1960s and 1970s. Since Britain had previously colonized these Africans, they are fluent in English. As a result of joining the Commonwealth, African nations had positive relations with the “previous colonial power” because they became part of the Commonwealth (Domboka, 2017, p.189). During the second phase, which spanned the 1980s to 1990s, some migrants traveled with the same objective from other African nations. In the mid-1990s, the UK did not impose any restrictions on immigration. People who think of the UK as a haven because they are Africans and think the host nation would rescue them from poverty. It is important to remember that some Black Africans traveled for economic purposes, indicating their desire to start their own businesses and pursue entrepreneurial endeavors. In this regard, Domboka (2017) argues, “migrants who came to the UK for study purpose, asylum seekers, refugees and other categories of migrant seekers, for instance, are limited in terms of employment and forbidden from starting their own businesses” (p.188). Put differently, African migrants seek better chances and a way out of poverty. African migration is still increasing. According to Domboka, “new migrants came for various reasons” (p.193). To illustrate, in 2007, 176000 West Africans lived in the United Kingdom (Blackwell and de Hass, 2007, p.106).

The unfavorable conditions in African nations contributed to the rise in the migration of Africans in the twenty-first century such as economic issues or civil wars. It is important to remember that illegal African migrants go to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. Consequently, the wave of African migration to Europe peaked in 2015. Because of the enormous number of migrants, migration from Africa to Europe is therefore viewed as “exceptional” (Kihato, 2018, p.6). In this context, Caroline Wanjiku Kihato (2018) argues,

The Mediterranean crossing raised a furore around African mobility, and the EU responded by shutting down the Mediterranean routes and developing a combination of policy inventions and development aid packages to incentivize and coerce Africans to stay put, preferably in their country of birth. (p.5)

Stated differently, the European Union saw a problem with illegal migration from Africa and tried to limit it by blocking routes and providing financial assistance to African nations. 2015 saw a notable decline in the number of undocumented illegal migrants in Europe. Despite measures to stop African illegal migration, many Africans sought to escape their continent after 2015. For instance, one of the European nations that faces challenges with migration is the United Kingdom.

2.2 Covid 19 and the Rise of Illegal Migration

From 2019 to 2022, Boris Johnson served as prime minister of the United Kingdom. Johnson had to collaborate with the Conservative Party in order to contain the virus. He declared lockdown



in the first several months as precautionary measures. He also gave the British people the command to stay at home. He stated on March 23rd, 2020, “Without a huge national effort to halt the growth of this virus, there will come a moment when no health service in the world could possibly cope; because there won’t be enough ventilators, enough intensive care beds, enough doctors and nurses” (GOV.UK). His words entail that the British government relies on the citizens’ “effort” since it cannot control the pandemic if they do not follow the necessary measures. His speech also reveals how important it is for people to have social distance to save their lives from Covid 19 since the rising number of contaminated people can have a negative impact on the social health service. It also shows that Johnson’s aim is to raise the populations’ awareness. Throughout the months, Covid 19 had an adverse effect on the British healthcare, society, and economy.

Due to Covid 19, African illegal migrants experienced many obstacles. They were severely affected since a large number of them lost their employment and confronted several challenges. It is noteworthy that British inhabitants have good sentiments toward educated and highly skilled migrants, including African migrants (The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, 2021). This type of migrants was recognized because they provided assistance to the British population during the pandemic. They would also boost the British economy, which made the British people happy to have them. Generally speaking, African illegal immigrants, however, were seen as a problem by British society and government. Owners of media companies represented African migrants among other migrants in September 2022, mostly after Rishi Sunak was appointed British prime minister. In fact, media companies play a pivotal role in influencing public perception and portraying illegal migration. In this context, Kihato (2018) argues, “The media and political attention on the Mediterranean crossings has obscured a border understanding of who, how, where and why Africans move” (p.6). In a nutshell, Kihato focuses on how to analyze African migration to the European continent and relies on “who, how, where and why.” This means that Kihato concentrates on the reasons for their movement, and the means by which they leave their continent. It is significant to state that The Telegraph, Channel 4 and BBC depict both African migration and migrants from different perspectives.

2.3 Rishi Sunak and Illegal Migration

Rishi Sunak has been working to limit illegal migration, encompassing African migrants, in Britain since 2022. In July 2022, Sunak’s YouTube page uploaded a video of his campaign. It starts with news regarding thousands of illegal migrants arriving to the UK. These images are presented at the early beginning of the video to highlight the increasing number of migrants from all over the world. A few seconds later, he tackles illegal migration. He does not explicitly mention African illegal migration, as it falls inside the same category as Asian migration. Sunak stated, “We have to talk about immigration. Let’s be honest. Our system is broken. We don’t have



control of our borders. Every year, thousands and thousands of people come to the UK illegally” (Sunak, Jul 2022, 0:51-1:06). In his speech, Sunak employs short and straightforward sentences. He chooses the adjective “broken” to depict the British government’s inability to accommodate the influx of new migrants to the country. His statement, “We don’t have control of our borders,” indicates that the British government fails to stop illegal migrants from entering the UK. Economically speaking, the UK is affected by Covid 19 and cannot afford the responsibility of new illegal migrants. Therefore, at a discursive level, Sunak’s primary objective is to be elected prime minister; hence, he assures British citizens that he would eliminate illegal migration. This suggests that the aim of British politicians is to arrival of illegal migrants, including African migrants, from summer 2022. In his five minutes speech, Rishi Sunak seeks to convince the British inhabitants of the urgency to find a solution to illegal migration. He asserts that this problem “must stop” as the British system fails to handle the situation (Sunak, Jul 2022, 2:25-2:27). He therefore views illegal migration as a concern.

After being elected, Sunak uploads his statement on illegal migration, where he brings up the matter in the British Parliament for the nation. The news camera focuses particularly on Sunak as he gives his speech in the parliament. According to Sunak, the British government’s attempts to pay asylums for these migrants is “unfair”. He employs specific diction in his speech such as the adjective “unfair” to show his attitude. Furthermore, he contends that “enough is enough” (Dec 2022, 1:44-1:48) and adds that they have to “stop people coming here illegally” (Dec 2022, 9:35-9:38). In his speech, Sunak uses active voice and direct simple sentences. The adverb “enough” is used to highlight the incapacity of the British government to handle illegal migration because of the pandemic. It is evident from the speech that Sunak starts with the British economic problems to the need to stop illegal migration. Hence, he has chosen his words and sentences carefully to call for action. This suggests that Sunak’s main objective is appeal the British government to take action.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Discourse Analysis

In order to analyze the discursive language and message of media outlets, it is necessary to define discourse analysis. Discourse analysis refers to the examination of the language used in a spoken or written text (Kamalu and Osisanwo, 2015, p. 169). It also refers to the study of an individual’s language use in light of a certain situation. In this regard, Ikenna Kamalu and Ayo Osisanwo (2015) explain, “Discourse analysis... studies the relationship between language (written, spoken – conversation, institutionalized forms of talk) and the contexts in which it is used” (p. 170). In other words, discourse analysis investigates language use within a particular situation. Moreover, as language conveys meaning to its listener or the reader, discourse analysis



focuses on the discourse that is employed in language. More significantly, discourse can be either direct or indirect. In this context, they argue, “The context of the utterance helps the hearer in making sense of an indirect speech act by separating the multiple functions of utterances from one another” (p. 172). Simply put, one can interpret the inferred meaning uttered words and phrases by evaluating a speech. Because individuals try to convey an oblique message, a speech can never have a clear message.

Some media studies scholars identify the role of media newspapers and outlets, which is to communicate a message or a set of messages to the audience. These messages can influence the audience’s perception of a given topic. According to Graeme Burton (2002), messages can be characterized by their content and how they are transmitted (p.31). The way every message is handled affects the audience’s perception. Furthermore, every message has a specific context since channels may delve into national or international social or political issues. In this account, Burton (2002) argues, “*All communication is carried on in some kind of physical or social context.* The context always affects how the communication is understood, and maybe how it is put together in the first place” (p.31). This means that the goal of media is to convey a news content from a particular context that may influence its representation.

Several linguists believe that discourse can be discussed in both media newspapers and media broadcasts, focusing on the structure of discourse or the function of the used language. The primary focus is the portrayal of society or the use “of ideology” (Collen and ben-Aaron, 2017, p. 45). This entails that the role of scholars is to scrutinize language and its function in news media. Besides, there exists various approaches to discourse analysis. In this sense, Collen Cotter and Dian ben-Aaron (2017) explain that

“Discourse analytic” approaches relate to stretches of language beyond the word or sentence level, taking into account the factors of participant, topic, and discourse structure; as well as media discourse phenomena that include reported speech, conversation, register, positioning and framing, stance, graphic display, visual communication, and so forth. (p.45)

Simply put, in order to apply discourse analysis, one has to take into consideration different aspects of the news media. A researcher can inspect the issue, interviewees, the organization of discourse, along with several phenomena.

In “Discourse Approaches: Language in Use and the Multidisciplinary Advantage,” Cotter and ben-Aaron explain how to investigate discourse in news media. If a news media includes an interview, the focus must be on the interview itself, its main parts, and the meaning. Moreover, media discourse encompasses “the narrative reframing of news stories as they are produced”



(Cotter and ben-Aaron, 2017, p.46). This means that the analysis of discourse addresses the significance of information, its organization, relationship between practitioners, and participants. The focus can also be on “ideologies and biases in the news texts” (Cotter and ben-Aaron, 2017, p. 46). This reveals that the objective of discourse analysis is to look into the intentions behind news media broadcasts and newspapers. In this context, they (2017) argue that “the critical examination of media... is still alive and well in critical discourse analysis” (p.46). In other words, research on news media continues to exist in the present era.

3.2 Edward Said's *Orientalism*

Edward Said is a literary theorist who defines Orientalism. Since antiquity, the West created the ‘Orient’ and represented it using Western discourse. To do this, Europeans depend on their knowledge and power. Furthermore, Orientalism is a man-made discourse, which is “a created body of theory and practice” (Said, 1978, p.6). In this context, Said (1978) explains, “Orientalism... is knowledge of the Orient that places things Oriental in class, court, prison, or manual for scrutiny, study, judgement, discipline, or governing” (p. 41). To put it simply, Western knowledge aids the creation of Europeans Western discourse on the East. As a result, the ‘Orient’ is constantly seen in terms of his inferiority, class, and race.

Orientalism is also a school of thought that is created by the West to define and depict the East. In this context, Said (1978) argues,

The Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient in Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire. If this definition of Orientalism seems more political than not, that is simply because I think Orientalism a product of certain political forces and activities. (pp.202-3)

From the above-mentioned excerpt, the West invented the ‘Orient’ and used particular jargon to propagate biased images of it in order to further political goals like colonization. In addition, the West aims to emphasize differences between the West and the East. In order to do this, binary oppositions are always embraced, including West/ East, Occident/ Orient, us/ them, master/ slave, white/ black, superior/ inferior, and educated/ savage. For Westerners, non-Westerners have aberrant traits this is why they are subject to racism and inferiority complex (Said, 1978, p.43). These images can be found in different literary texts, quotations or references (Said, 1978, p.177). The ‘Orient’ is portrayed as romantic, exotic, dogmatic, remote, dangerous, primitive, barbarian, alien and spiritual background. European people and institutions can benefit from Orientalists’ knowledge of the orient.



The nineteenth century marked the rise of modern orientalism. The Westerners celebrated their theory because they believed they were better than the ‘Other’ (Said, 1978, p.121). According to Said, modern Orientalism can never be neutral because it is founded on earliest Orientalist rhetoric. Thus, it is “secularized, redispersed, and re-formulated” (Said, 1978, p.122). Put another way, while they used the same discourse, their approaches to representation were different. In addition, modern Orientalist tailored their discourse to the needs of the modern era. To illustrate, Western novelists badly portray Asians, Africans and South Americans. The West resorts to literature as one of the finest ways to disseminate stereotypical images about these nations. Hence, they demonstrate the necessity of civilizing mission among ‘Orientals’ in order to support colonialism. The ‘Orient’ is depicted as eccentric, backward, silent, feminine, mad, impoverished, and uncivilized (Said, 1978, pp.206-7).

Orientalism may be found in literary texts and media. Various media companies present other nations from a Western perspective. Said attacks American depictions of Arabs and Islam in *Orientalism* and *Covering Islam*. These depictions are not exclusive to American media outlets. In addition, “stereotypes are very culture specific” since several people can be badly portrayed (Kidd, 2016, p.26). These representations may be harmful because media have the power to shape the opinions of their audience. In this sense, Elfriede Fursich (2010) explains, “representations in the media... create reality and normalize specific world-views or ideologies. This view understands the concept of ideology as a hegemonic, normalizing force in contemporary societies” (p.115). Put differently, the West constructs certain images about other nations and standardize it for the audience.

4. Media Representation of African Illegal Migration

4.1 The Telegraph: From the Exposure of African Illegal Migrants to the Opposition of Illegal Mass Migration

The Telegraph is the British national media newspaper that covers daily news. The online version [Telegraph.co.uk](https://www.telegraph.co.uk) allows audience from different countries to read or watch news about the United Kingdom. The Telegraph posted a video titled “Moment migrant discovered in car box as couple return from France” in September 2020. It centers on a couple who heard noises coming from the vehicle box and alerted the British police. The police discover a Black African migrant who was trying to leave France illegally. This video aims to demonstrate how Africans travel to south European countries and subsequently the UK through a variety of routes. Hence, crossing borders is accessible for African migrants. More significantly, The Telegraph published a story on May 2021, titled “Ceuta: Migrant boy swims to shore with plastic bottles tied to himself.” It explores a Moroccan boy who makes a valiant effort to get into Spain. The Spanish police intercept him when he gets there. These two British news videos demonstrate how African illegal

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migrants manage to evade their continent by taking various routes. The Telegraph focuses on cross-borders tactics without making any explicit comments about them. Therefore, even before the increase in numbers, crossing borders has been a major challenge for the media. Besides, The Telegraph reveals the police's involvement in arresting these African illegal migrants in addition to taking the required measures. European countries' efforts to restrict illegal migrants from crossing borders are also evident by the presence of police.

Following the rise of illegal migration and Sunak's speech, The Telegraph addresses its concern about the issue. "Nigel Farage: I despise what the Conservatives have done to Britain" is a forty-two minutes interview, which was posted online on September 2nd, 2022. Nigel Farage, a former politician and member of Brexit Party, was invited by Steven Edginton to examine the Conservative Party's failure. From the interview's title, it seems that Farage hates the party because of its leaders were weak and the British economy collapsed. Edginton and Farage also discuss mass immigration in the country. According to Farage, a typical community has the same language, culture, and history and resides on the same street. The opposite may happen if migrants come from different places. It is because immigrants who come from different parts of the world and cultural backgrounds (Lewis, 2006, p.7). Farage does not explicitly mention African migrants because of the presence of several illegal migrants from Asia. In Telegraph studio, Farage explains,

When you replace one street like that with a street in which no one knows the names of their neighbors, they have never spoken to them, where many in that street don't have shared histories, don't have shared interests socially... many of them don't speak the same language, whose kids don't play together in the street or after school. Then, you have a community that cares less about each other and more about itself. (Telegraph, September 2022, 27:06-27:50)

From the speech, one can find different significant expressions like "shared histories," "shared interests," and the "same language" to demonstrate that Asians, Africans and Europeans do not share the background and identity. At a discursive level, the presence of both African and Asian illegal migrants has a detrimental impact on British citizens since they cannot create a homogenous community as a result of their lack of interaction. This affects the British community because its members fail to assist each other and disobey the law. This speech spreads stereotypical images and generalizations about both African and Asian illegal migrants. Simply put, his ideology is to emphasize cultural differences rather than calling for cultural diversity.



According to Farage, illegal migration can contribute to an increase in crime in the United Kingdom. This indicates that Farage refutes both legal and illegal migration on the grounds that they pose a threat. In this sense, he says, “There is no prospect, no hope of community cohesion of integration going on” (Telegraph, 2022, 28:10- 28:18). Farage employs specific expressions, especially “no prospect” and “no hope,” to portray the impossibility to create one homogeneous society. Farage’s emphasis on the impossibility to integration, assimilation and contribution to the British society. Therefore, Farage’s ideology is to put emphasis on cultural differences. Cultural difference refers to different cultural statements about other cultures that assert difference because these cultures are considered the ‘Other’ (Bhabha, 1995, p. 206). Homi Bhabha (1995) considers this Western discourse discriminatory (p. 206). Moreover, Farage wants to demand an immediate solution for illegal migrants. From his statement, illegal migrants from Europe, Asia and Africa may disrupt British order and way of life. This means that Farage uses Western discourse to represent illegal migrants. This may strengthen stereotypical images about the ‘Other,’ who is inferior, barbarian and uneducated. It seems that African and Asian illegal migrants never be perceived as typical British citizens. It is also evident that Farage does not name the illegal migrants in his speech because he treats African and Asian illegal migrants alike.

“Border Crisis: The Tories have betrayed Britain on Mass Migration” is another news video, which was posted online on November 2023. Popy Coburn, The Telegraph assistant editor, discusses illegal mass migration and its effect on British radical development. She claims, “the number is too high” while the British politicians fail to restrict the number and work border crisis (The Telegraph, 2023, 3:23-3:30). Coburn makes use of the adjective “too high” to emphasize the continuous entry of illegal migrants from Asia and Africa to the United Kingdom. This means that The Telegraph media owners lay blame on politicians to demonstrate the inadequacy of the Conservative Party to handle the situation. Furthermore, she refers to illegal migrants’ support of the Palestinian case. In this context, Islam is a symbol of “terror, devastation, the demonic, hordes of hated barbarians” (Said, 1978, p.59). Coburn argues, “The result of this failure has been clear. After October 7th massacre in Israel, we have seen weeks of hate marches where people openly support terrorism” (The Telegraph, 2023, 3:37-3:42). In her speech, Coburn characterizes African and Asian marches as “hate marches” because of their public endorsement of Palestinian case. She utilizes the adjective “hate” to convey a specific image about pro-Palestinian protesters. One can notice that Coburn used discursive language in her portrayal of illegal migrants. Her sentences indicate the inability of the British government to eradicate illegal migrants that led to the presence of pro-Palestinian protests. Consequently, Coburn presents biased stereotypes of illegal migrants to the audience such as ‘Orient,’ savages, dogmatic, terrorists, and anti-Semitic. This means that this assistant editor spreads generalizations about all illegal migrants. Her concluding sentence is about who will spearhead the anti-migration campaign in the United Kingdom. This unveils that African and Asian illegal migrants are put in the same category by The Telegraph. As

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a result, illegal migrants are considered as the ‘Other’ and alien. Thus, the channel adopts an orientalist perspective about these illegal migrants. The Telegraph’s ideology is to appeal for anti-migration campaign in the country.

The Telegraph raised the issue of African illegal migration early on without examining it. The channel criticized the Conservative Party for its inability to manage the thousands of African and Asian illegal migrants that enter the United Kingdom each year. Edginton and Coburn use discursive language to portray illegal migration, relying on adjectives, adverbs and expressions. Their main goal is to construct generalizations and stereotypes. Therefore, African illegal migrants are represented illegal migrants who come from other continents as the ‘Other’. This shows its Western orientalist attitude about this category of people. The Telegraph’s primary ideology is to appeal the British government to take action and stop African and Asian illegal migration.

4.2 Channel 4: From the Representation of African Illegal Migrants to the Opposition of Rwanda Bill

Channel 4 is a prominent British media broadcast that covers the topic of African illegal migration prior to the election of Rishi Sunak. In 2017, it represented how African illegal migrants risked their lives to escape slavery from Libya. In the beginning, it concentrated its footage on British measures in the rescue of African illegal migrants. It also refers to the number of African illegal migrants to show that it is a “humanitarian crisis” (Channel 4 News, 2017, 1:45-1:47). The expression indicates that European countries grapple with the critical number of these illegal migrants. Paraic O’Brien argues that these African illegal migrants were rescued from boat sinking (Channel 4 News, 2017, 04:25-04:27). This indicates that O’Brien focuses on the European different attempt to rescue African illegal migrants from sinking in the sea. In June 2021, the channel explored African illegal migration and asylum seekers. He argues, “In recent years the number of people claiming asylum are actually down but this way of getting into the country illegally is becoming more and more popular” (Channel 4 News, 2021, 0:33-0:46). The primary problem with asylum seekers is that the British government has reduced the number since 2020. The focus is on Sudanese illegal migrants who enter British borders by boats. They are arrested by the police, underwent Covid 19 testing, and then taken into detention center. Therefore, Channel 4 showcases the safety protocols implemented by the police amid the pandemic. This implies that the reporter’s primary concern is to highlight the huge number of African asylum seekers. Therefore, the reporters repeat the word “number” in their news media to illustrate that the British government is unable to manage the increasing influx of African illegal



migrants. This means that their ideology is to concentrate on the number of African illegal migrants entering the United Kingdom.

Channel 4 starts with the various procedures taken by the British government. It also focuses on Mahomed as one of the new Sudanese illegal migrants in the United Kingdom. He is satisfied since he can survive in the student accommodation block. During the interview, Mahomed argues that these migrants “want to do something you know, to be like good people in their life, because they were in their countries” (Channel 4 News, 2021, 3:30-3:38). Mahomed’s statement indicates that he is one of the African illegal migrants who fled the difficult conditions in Africa. Since these illegal migrants were good people in Africa, they can be good people in the United Kingdom. This shows that Channel 4 describes Sudanese migrants as poor people and victims whose aim is to find an improved quality of life. However, Channel 4 claims that the increase in the number of illegal migrants receiving assistance worsened dysfunction during the pandemic (Channel 4 News, 2021, 5:47-6:00). The incapacity of government to manage the influx of illegal migrants and asylum seekers has a negative impact on the UK. The channel also highlights the British government’s failure to address the situation prior to the increased number of illegal migrants in 2023. As a result, even though Channel 4 does not show any racist attitudes, its main goal is to portray that illegal migrants have a serious effect on the British economic system. In this sense, Paraic O’Brien contends that “the system is broken” and the pandemic has “exacerbated the dysfunction” (Channel 4 News, 2021, 5:58-6:06). O’Brien uses the adjective “broken” to represent the present state of the British government. He also utilizes the word “dysfunction” to denote its inability to offer support. The speech emphasizes that the pandemic adversely affects the British economic structure, which subsequently impacts asylum help services. His discursive language implies that the British government seeks an urgent solution to the growing number of illegal migrants because of its economic downturn.

In July 2023, Parker Brian received an invitation from Channel 4 to discuss African illegal migration and border crossing through the Mediterranean Sea. The majority of the African illegal migrants are from Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria. These Africans can easily find smugglers via social media, who are going to be paid around five hundred pounds to transport them from Sfax, Tunisia. According to Brian, they risk their lives to flee from Tunisia as it “is becoming a real hot spot” (Channel 4 News, 2023, 1:08-1:11). This shows that the illegal migrants rely on Tunisia as their main route to reach Europe. In spite of various initiatives to control African illegal migration, the EU and Tunisia continue to face difficulties in this crisis. In this sense, Brian argued, “It was a crisis for people drifting in and out of consciousness. It’s a crisis for their families waiting to hear what they’ve made or not” (Channel 4 News, 2023, 24:17-24:25). Brian stresses on the term “crisis” in the news media multiple times to stress the lack of control over the situation. This reveals that African illegal migration is an international crisis that is not

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maintained by both African and European countries. Their failure to offer a permanent solution negatively affects Africans, as they may die before reaching European borders. By showing African illegal migrants at risk, Channel 4's main ideology is to advocate for an immediate solution for this issue.

Because of the rise of migration, Channel 4 exposes the issue of mass migration. To illustrate, "UK net migration from 2022 revised up from 606000 to a record 745000" is a segment of news that highlights the rise in migration and its impact on healthcare sector. The journalist argues that despite the British government pledge to decrease the number to 212000 in 2019, the net migration figure actually hit 745000 (Chanel 4 News, Nov 2023, 0:00-0:08). India, Nigeria and China have the highest numbers in that order. Among the migrants who wish to pursue education or work in the UK are Africans. Members of Parliament express concern about the rising migration numbers, as illegal migrants are working in healthcare services for low wages while British citizens remain unemployed. In this vein, Yvette Cooper is a Member of Parliament who argues, "We do think last the net migration figures should come down... The figures are three times high that were last year. But they also reflect the big increase in work visa immigration for work because they've just not tackled... the problem at home" (Channel 4 News, 2023, 7:23-7:51). In the interview, Cooper insists on the surge of illegal migration in the UK by using specific expressions such as "high" and "big increase." She points to the necessity to decrease the number, saying that the number "should come down." At a discursive level, the speech emphasizes the urgency of decreasing the number of both African and Asian migrants, including those who are illegal. As a result, Cooper insists that there should be restrictions on their presence in the UK. Channel 4's role is to convey the Parliament Members' worries and anxieties, prompting a response from the British government.

In its news programs, Channel 4 plays a pivotal role in questioning British policy such as including Rwanda Bill. The latter is a proposal suggested by British government to relocate refugees and asylum seekers to Rwanda. For the British government, it is the best way to stop boats that transport illegal migrants to the UK. James Cleverly, a member of Parliament, is interviewed by Channel 4 on December 5, 2023. Cleverly, who approves Sunak's project, claims that "Rwanda has now established a strong reputation for human and professional administration of a refugees and migrants" (Channel 4 News, 2023, 2:35-2:46). In his speech, Cleverly employs the adjective "strong" to represent Rwanda's reputation. He also portrays its administration members as "professional" to demonstrate that Rwanda is a safe country. The channel's main discourse is to highlight the safety of Rwanda and its ability to offer individuals a safe refuge for illegal migrants. Moreover, on December 6th, 2023, Edward Leigh, a Member of Parliament, argues, "the only thing that will stop people from coming is that when they land on these shores,



they are detained” so as to send back them home or Rwanda (Channel 4 News, 2023, 6:48-7:00). From his sentence, Leigh is one of the members of the parliaments who supports sending back illegal migrants to their native countries or Rwanda. Therefore, the channel primarily emphasizes the Rwanda Bill as the main strategy to decrease the influx of African and Asian illegal migrants in the UK. This shows that the channel’s primary discourse at the beginning was to offer a positive image of Rwanda Bill.

Channel 4 interviews the Rwandan principal who oversees the project to identify the conditions in the country. The journalist interviews spokesperson Yoland Makolo on December 5, 2023. She explains that Rwanda is a developing, safe country that aims to collaborate with the UK on business. In addition, she does not want to lose African talents to the North. Hence, she declares, “We are doing what we can with our partners in the UK to make it work” (Channel 4, 2023, 7:32-7:36). Makolo is a supporter of the project in her country to provide illegal migrants a shelter, safety and employment opportunities. It is evident that Channel 4 seeks to reveal Rwandan politicians’ attempt to work with British one to provide mutual support. It also casts doubt about Rwanda’s ability to enforce international law. On the other side, Channel 4 interviews Rwandan citizens in order to uncover cases of abuse and discrimination that occurred all around the country. To illustrate, Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza is interviewed by the company to showcase that Rwanda is unsafe for individuals. She asserts, “I feel bad because I’m one of victims of the humanitarian rights violation of our country. I spent eighteen years in prison” owing to her political views (Channel 4 News, December 10th, 2023, 4:42-4:55). Simply put, Channel 4 relies on Rwandan citizens to stress the lack of freedom in Rwanda. It attempts to uncover the humanitarian violations in Rwanda to draw attention to the absence of freedom in Rwanda. Channel 4’s main discourse is to assert that Rwanda is an unsafe country for illegal migrants since it is unable to respect international law. This may indicate the channel’s orientalist stance about Rwanda, as it is implicitly portrayed as unsafe, backward, and uncivilized.

Channel 4 expresses concern about the safety of illegal refugees following the United Kingdom’s decision to transfer all illegal migrants and asylum seekers to Rwanda after winning the Rwanda Bill. The channel interviews numerous individuals who have experienced discrimination in Rwanda. Abdulkarim Ali discusses the actual circumstances. He argues, “Rwanda is not safe. Rwanda is exactly like Russia” (Channel 4 News, 2024, 00:04-00:08). Abdulkarim Ali describes Rwanda as “not safe” since it looks like Russia. This shows that Rwanda is a dogmatic country that does not allow the freedom of speech. Additionally, Rwandans who opposed their government were imprisoned and silenced (Channel 4 News, 2024, 1:40-2:13). Hence, the channel concentrates on Rwandan migrants who endured persecution by their government, even while residing in the UK. These migrants remained anonymous for safety measures. Thus, the channel relies on an interviewee to construct biased images and

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generalizations about Rwanda. The representation implies that Rwanda is unsafe because it is part of the East. Hence, Rwanda is associated with primitiveness, uncivilized nation, unsafety, and dogmatic politicians. At a discursive level, Channel 4 is against Rwanda Bill; therefore, it endeavors to offer stereotypical images to the audience. The channel's use of stereotypes and generalizations demonstrate its orientalist position about Rwanda since it is an African country.

Channel 4 depicts the British government's concern with the rising numbers of both African and Asian illegal migrants during the pandemic. It also demonstrates the United Kingdom's incapability to control the increasing number of illegal migrants. It explicitly expresses the inability to financially support African and Asian illegal migrants. As a result, its main discourse is to decrease the number of illegal migrants due to the British economic downturn following the pandemic. Besides, the channel focuses on Rwanda Bill and characterizes Rwanda as an unsafe country for illegal migrants. Therefore, Channel 4 attempts to critique Sunak's decision-making, which received backing from British members of the Parliament. Its discursive language suggests that Rwanda Bill is insufficiently researched, as it fails to take into consideration the safety measures of illegal migrants. This indicates Channel 4's orientalist approach when exploring Rwanda and its bill.

4.3 BBC: From the Representation of African Illegal Migrants and Rwanda bill

BBC is another British channel that delves into the portrayal of African illegal migration before Covid 19. To illustrate, it focused on Nigerians' movement to Italy through Libya in 2019. After the pandemic, BBC exposed African illegal migration to both European and Asian countries. BBC emphasizes their different destinations depending on their nationality. For example, in 2021, a BBC documentary represents Ethiopians' long route to escape poverty to Saudi Arabia. The reporter argued, "They have to put their trust, their money, and their lives in the hands of smugglers" (BBC News Africa, 2021, 2:42-2:51). This means that smugglers are in charge of the African illegal migration to other continents. Therefore, Ethiopians are shown as victims as they travel on foot for several weeks. They struggle with food, water and death in the desert of Djibouti or Red Sea. These illegal migrants can also be held and tortured in Yemen by smugglers especially if they do not have money (BBC News Africa, 2021, 21:00-24:40). Hence, only a few African illegal migrants can pursue their journey since they are targeted by smugglers. At a discursive level, BBC presents the audience with stereotypical images of these illegal migrants, emphasizing prejudiced representations such as poverty, uneducated, uncivilized and smugglers. The focus on their inferiority reveals the channel's Western orientalism attitude about Ethiopians.



BBC represented African continuous illegal migration to Britain. To illustrate, Sudanese attempt to escape their country, looking for a better life in the United Kingdom. The news starts with a direct footage of border crossings where several African illegal migrants steal pedalos to cross British borders. Julian is one of the Sudanese who is interviewed by the BBC. The channel depends on an interview to report his opinion. He claimed, “I see my dreams in England. And I love the city of Manchester so much. I want to go to England” (BBC News, October 2021, 1:49-1:55). The channel reveals that Sudanese individuals may escape the various adversities in their country. This denotes that the UK signifies “dream” and “hope” for some African illegal migrants. Besides, it represents their ability to reach the beaches without their inability of being stopped by the two police. Thus, some African illegal migrants can cross borders because the police fail to stop all the illegal migrants. One can notice that BBC attempts to focus on the British borders and British safety measures.

BBC News exposes British concern with the rising number of illegal migrants in Europe. In August 2023, the journalist argues,

The number of people who have crossed illegally into European Union so far this year has risen by thirteen percent. It is thirteen percent higher than the same period in 2022. The agency says the increase was entirely driven by the number of people who arrived after travelling across the Mediterranean which more than doubled. (BBC News, 2023, 0:03-0:26)

This entails that 2023 marks the rise of African illegal migrants from Egypt, Guinea and Ivory Coast. African illegal migrants flee war and persecution through Tunisia. Therefore, they do not care about the dangerous Mediterranean route because their purpose is to find a better lifestyle. Moreover, BBC investigates the main solutions provided by the Italian government and European Union to maintain African illegal migration from Tunisia to Italy. In this sense, Sofia Bettiza, an Italian reporter, claims that the Italian government promised “to crackdown on illegal migration” (BBC News, August 2023, 3:39-3:45). Bettiza employs the verb “crackdown” which refers to the future severe regulations and laws to certain behaviors. In the context of African illegal migration, her main discourse is to control the coming of thousands of illegal migrants to its borders. This means that the channel represents their urgent need to find solutions.

In October 2023, BBC tackles Africans’ illegal migration to European countries, mainly Italy, France and Britain. In this news programs, the reporter focuses on several illegal migrants, including African illegal migrants. They find different ways to reach European countries because it symbolizes hope and dream. They can risk their lives through the forests and sea. In this sense, Professor Nando Sigona is interviewed by the channel to explain the current issue. He believes that desperate people are the new form of illegal migration whose aim is to survive. He argues,

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“The tension is growing and migrants are often used as a weapon in this sort of European-wide political battle” (BBC, October 2023, 5:46-5:54). It appears that African illegal migration is a Euro-African social and political problem, which remains unsolved in the current period. BBC focuses on Africans’ continuous illegal migration to show European countries’ struggle to restrict illegal migrants.

BBC uncovers European countries’ different attempts to stop illegal migration. In 2021, it focuses on Greek police’s use of violence to stop illegal migrants. In this sense, the reporter argues, “Greece is keeping migrants out” (BBC News, July 2021, 3:19-3:21). This reveals that the police’s aim is to push back illegal migrants. Furthermore, BBC showcases the inaction of the European Union to stop the abuse of these illegal migrants. The European Union members assume that there is no evidence of discrimination against them. Furthermore, Ylva Johansson advocates for the repulsion of African illegal migrants emphasizing the necessity to protect their borders. In this context, she argues that “when we are protecting our borders, we are protecting our values” (BBC News, July 2021, 3:48-3:52). In her speech, Johansson stresses the protection of European borders because African illegal migrants do not have a legal status. Her emphasis on European “values” indicates a lack of cultural diversity and emphasis on cultural difference. In this context, BBC demonstrates the continuous violations and opposition of African illegal migrants face by Greek police. The channel’s primary objective is to show its objectivity. They also aim to transmit truth to both national and international audience.

BBC tackles Rwanda bill for asylum seekers. In June 2023, BBC relies on breaking news to transmit what happened in the Royal Court of Justice. Most illegal migrants are from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Vietnam, Sudan and Albania. This shows that Africans are always part of illegal migration in the United Kingdom. The High Court judge argues, “They arrived to the United Kingdom irregularly by crossing the English channels from France in small boats” (BBC News, 2023, 0:42-0:48). Put differently, illegal migration is considered as a problem for Britain; therefore, it approves Rwanda bill so as to stop it as soon as possible. Additionally, there is a controversy about the safety of Rwanda for illegal migrants. The court judge claims that “Rwanda was treated as a safe third-country” that can handle the situation (BBC News, 2023, 1:41-1:46). The British High Court uses the adjective “safe” to depict Rwanda. In other words, as the channel points out the significance of identifying a solution, it portrays Rwanda’s ability to assume responsibility for illegal migrants. Therefore, it relies on discursive language to persuade British citizens to approve Rwanda bill.

BBC represented African illegal migrants in the United Kingdom, Italy and Greece. It provided different examples such as Ethiopians, Sudanese, and Egyptians. These illegal migrants



flee their countries owing to the bad circumstance. Moreover, BBC comments on the rising number of African illegal migrants in Europe, especially the United Kingdom. It also delves into the British government's different attempts to maintain illegal migration. For this reason, its main ideology is to support Rwanda bill in order to decrease the number of African illegal migrants. Unlike The Telegraph and Channel 4, BBC does not show any orientalist attitudes.

5. CONCLUSION

To conclude, this study investigated the depiction of African illegal migrants in British media broadcasts, including The Telegraph, Channel 4, and BBC. It introduced African migration to Europe since the mid-18th century to the present era to show that Africans faced displacement because of the living conditions in African countries. This research depended on discourse analysis and Edward Said's *Orientalism* as a theoretical framework. This research reached some significant findings. The Telegraph addressed African illegal migration, but without providing a detailed analysis. Due to the failure of the British government to control illegal migration, Steven Edginton and Popy Coburn use discursive language relying on adjectives, adverbs, and expressions to depict illegal migration. Coburn formulates generalizations and stereotypes about African and Asian illegal migrants, showing her Western orientalist stance. The Telegraph's aim is to urge the British government to take action against African and Asian illegal migration. Channel 4 exposes the rising number of African illegal migrants in the UK during the pandemic. Despite the European and African efforts to stop African illegal migration, the UK records an influx in African illegal migration. The channel's primary discourse is to reduce the number of these illegal migrants due to the British economic recession. It also aims to concentrate on Rwanda Bill and its inability to provide safety measures for illegal migrants. It is evident that the channel adopts an orientalist approach. BBC also played a major role in depicting African illegal migrants to some European countries, especially the UK. It concentrates on the increasing these illegal migrants and the British government's efforts to maintain control of the situation. Its primary discourse is to endorse Rwanda bill as the main resolution.



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