

The Political Economy of Nigeria-UK Migration in the Post-COVID-19 era

Olukayode A. Faleye,

Department of History and International Studies,
Edo State University, Uzairue, Edo State.

Emmanuel S. Okla,

Department of History and International Studies,
Edo State University, Uzairue, Edo State.

Ozekhome G. Igechi,

Department of Political Science,
Edo State University, Uzairue, Edo State.

Abstract

This paper examines the impact of the United Kingdom's (UK) Points-based Immigration System on Africa using Nigeria as an example in the post-COVID-19 era. While studies have examined the nature of South-North migration, the bulk of the existing literature focuses on the challenges surrounding the restrictive border policies of North American and European countries. The impact of the UK Points-based Immigration system and Nigerians' massive emigration to the UK in the Post-Covid-19 era is understudied. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the political economy of Nigeria-UK migration in the post-Covid-19 era. Based on the critical review of the literature, official records and media reports, the study concludes that the British Immigration programme would be detrimental to the development of Nigeria, if stringent measures are introduced against Nigerian immigrants in the UK.

Keywords: International Development; *Japa syndrome*; Nigerian Emigration; Points-based Immigration; UK Immigration-policy.

Introduction

The United Kingdom has always been the preferred destination for most African immigrants, especially those from Anglophone countries with the intent to school or work in the western world. This is predicated on the long historical ties established during the colonial era, a development that bequeathed a legacy of colonial heritage. The UK points-based immigration policy following the Covid-19 outbreak is primarily responsible for the upsurge in the number of Nigerian migrants settling in the country. This massive emigration from Nigeria to the UK in the COVID-19 era is called *Japa* in Nigeria's local parlance. The *Guardian newspaper* of 10 September 2022 defined the *Japa* phenomenon as a "mass emigration of citizens that may hurt Nigeria further".¹ As observed by

¹ Chijioke, Iremeka. "Japa. . . Mass emigration of citizens that may hurt Nigeria further". *The Guardian*, 2022, 10 September. Retrieved 23 January 2023 from <https://guardian.ng/saturday-magazine/japa-mass-emigration-of-citizens-that-may-hurt-nigeria-further/>.



the *Nigerian Punch newspaper* on 5 September 2022, the *Japa* phenomenon also implies a process in which “many middle-class Nigerians are heading abroad or say they plan to do so, hoping for a brighter future”. The word “japa” is a combination of two Yoruba words meaning “ja” (run) and “pa” (without looking back) – run, without looking back.² The emergence of the word is consequent upon the dire socioeconomic challenges bedeviling the Nigerian society in the post-COVID-19 era, amongst which are insecurity and hyper-inflation. Thus, in the context of public opinion, *Japa* in the Nigerian local parlance refers to the mass emigration of Nigerians for greener pastures elsewhere as a reaction to the poor performance of the Nigerian government.

The UK’s immigration policy known as the points-based immigration system was introduced in December 2020.³ The nature of the programme is affirmed as follows:

The points-based system is performing well, despite the inevitable impact of the global pandemic. The routes launched have supported UK businesses, our science, technology and education sectors to bounce back with strong post-pandemic economic recovery, by giving them access to talent from around the world. We have created a system which can adapt and meet the needs of a changing labour market if needed. Over the last twelve months we have welcomed scientists, plumbers, chefs, doctors, nurses, film directors, engineers, architects, musicians, butchers and senior care workers via the Skilled Worker Route. The number of visas issued across work and study routes is now exceeding pre-pandemic levels with 749,000 in the year ending March 2022 compared to 598,000 in the year ending March 2020.⁴

In the implementation of the British new immigration policy in Africa, it has been noted that the number of study visas issued to immigrants from Nigeria increased by 222.8 per cent; that is, from 20,427 issued VISAs in 2021 to 65,929 in June 2022.⁵ Indeed, the UK is deploying migration as a foreign policy tool to

² *Nigerian Punch*. “Nigeria’s ‘japa’ migration phenomenon”. 2022, September 5. Available at <https://punchng.com/nigerias-japa-migration-phenomenon/>.

³ C.J. McKinney, M. Gower, and G. Sturge. “The UK’s new Point-based immigration system”. 2022, 27 September. Retrieved 13 January 2023 from <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8911/CBP-8911.pdf>.

⁴ Home Office. “The UK’s Point-based Immigration System. Presented to parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department”. July. Retrieved 6 January 2023 from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/899716/UK_Points-Based_Immigration_System_Further_Details.pdf.

⁵ D. Tolu-Kolawole. “Nigerian students, dependants contribute £1.9bn to UK”. *Punch*, 2022, 20 October. Retrieved 21 January 2023 from <https://punchng.com/nigerian-students-dependants-contribute-1-9bn-to-uk-report/#:~:text=Recent%20data%20released%20by%20the,the%20same%20period%20of%202021.>

attract skilled labour and facilitate capital inflow from around the world.⁶ The target of this points-based immigration policy includes not only Africa but also Asia. Elsewhere, Hong Kongans were offered refuge in the UK because of their precarious entanglement with the Chinese, the upshot of which is a regime of subjugation. It is in view of this geopolitical lacuna that the UK offered between 3 million and 5 million permanent residency VISA slots to willing and acceptable people from Hong Kong.⁷ This is expected to prompt huge currency inflow into the UK from Hong Kong – a policy intervention to abate the lingering financial crisis and skilled labour shortage following Brexit and the COVID-19 outbreak. It is also instructive to note that Hong Kong shares historical ties with the UK, the former being a dependent territory of the latter between 1841 and 1997. While many people in Hong Kong are reluctant to leave due to the decent socioeconomic conditions in the country, Africans appear to have embraced the call. For instance, the favourable response of Nigerians to their colonial master's call to service cannot be divorced from the lingering poor socioeconomic and security conditions at home. The UK points-based immigration package and its provision for applicants and their dependents catered for the Nigerian cultural milieu of family communalism and indivisibility. This shared sense of togetherness underscores the collective spirit of cooperation of the traditional Nigerian society.

While studies have examined the nature of South-North migration, the chunk of the existing literature focuses on the restrictive border policies and anti-immigrant movements in European and North American countries. In the UK, the 2015 European migration crisis prompted anti-immigrant narratives and political movements that sought to securitize the state border and international migration.⁸ Moreover, the existing studies on Afro-European migration focus on the European restrictive migration measures and the externalization of border policies in Africa.⁹ What has changed? Why the sudden liberal approach to immigration by European countries such as the UK? The suddenness of this UK/Europe liberal approach to immigration has inspired this paper to examine the political economy of Nigeria-UK migration in the post-Covid-19 era.

⁶ Okunade, Samuel Kehinde, and Oladotun E. Awosusi. "The Japa syndrome and the migration of Nigerians to the United Kingdom: an empirical analysis". *Comparative Migration Studies*, 11(27), 2023: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-023-00351-2>.

⁷ Ullah, AKM Ahsan, and Muhammad Azizuddin. "Colonial Hangover and 'Invited' Migration: Hong Kongers to the UK." *International Studies* 59(2), 2022: 180-191.

⁸ L. Chouliaraki, M. Georgiou, and R. Zaborowski. The European "Migration Crisis" and the Media: A Cross-European Press Content Analysis. Report. UK: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2017; T.A. Maniou, and M. Moutselos. Do media systems matter? A comparative study of editorials on the migration crisis in the UK, German and Greek traditional press. *Journalism*, 2023: DOI: 10.1177/14648849221148319..

⁹ T. Gammeltoft-Hansen, and N.F. Tan. "The End of the Deterrence Paradigm? Future Directions for Global Refugee Policy". *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 5(1), 2017: 28-56; Olukayode A. Faley. "Irregular Migration and the EU-External Border Policy in Africa: Historical and Philosophical Insights". *Filosofia Theoretica*, 8 (3), 2019: 59-75; I. Peterson, and G. Karyotis. "'We are, by nature, a tolerant people': Securitisation and counter-securitisation in UK migration politics". *International Relations*, 36 (1), 2020: 104-126..

Migration as Resource

The politics of international migration rests on the notion of national security. It has been observed that “migration rests on the nexus of geopolitical interests, material production and internal security”.¹⁰ These are issues of national interest in which economic factor is predominant. Hence, migration and border policies often serve the interest of the state either in preventing unwanted people from entering a national territory or in facilitating the immigration of needed human resources. In sub-Saharan Africa, migration is often a product of socioeconomic and environmental conditions.¹¹ The international political economy of this phenomenon is rooted in the unequal patterns of global developments over time.

Migration has always served as a vehicle for human capital deployment. For instance, the enslaved, who were uprooted from Africa to South America, the Caribbean and North America, laid the foundation for plantation agriculture and mining in America. The labour of these uprooted African and South American populations consequently fueled the take-off of the Industrial Revolution in Europe.¹² Over the years, nations that have opened their borders to immigrants to come of their volition or have had to forcefully move people to their domains have done that because of the value of those they are importing. In the modern world, when nations throw open their borders, they are either doing so to acquire an essential labour force or to attract funds and investments, with the end game being the permanent pursuit of development. With the upswing in the norms of globalization and the ascendancy of the capitalist North, the flow of human capital from the less developed countries of the South to the former has become a recurrent decimal. However, the pattern of international migration is complex based on the uncertainty of global economics and politics. For instance, studies reveal the restrictive migration policies of the UK when the country was a member of the European Union in the pre-Covid 19 era. This was the case with the external border policy of the EU in Africa where African migrants were strategically trapped in inter-regional migration corridors such as Libya.¹³ The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the reality of Brexit reconfigured the international migration dynamics of Europe, with implications for South-North migration flows, especially the migration link between Nigeria and the UK.

¹⁰ C. Rudolph. “Security and the political economy of international migration”. *The American political science review*, 97 (4), 2003: 603.

¹¹ J.K. Akokpari. “The Political Economy of Migration in sub-Saharan Africa”. *African Sociological Review*, 3 (1), 1999: 75-93.

¹² J.M. Blaut. *The Debate on Colonialism, Eurocentrism and History*. New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1992.

¹³ Olukayode A. Faleye, “Irregular Migration and the EU-External Border Policy in Africa: Historical and Philosophical Insights”. *Filosofia Theoretica*, 8(3), 2019: 59-75 ; Olukayode A. Faleye, “Unveiling the Afro-European Common Geo-Cultural Space” In J.P. Laine, I. Moyo and C.C. Nshimbi (eds.) *Expanding Boundaries: Borders, Mobilities and the future of Europe-Africa Relations*. London: Routledge, 2020.

Migration is an engine of international development.¹⁴ This implies that a fair migration policy will favour the migrants, their countries of origin and the host nations.¹⁵ Unfortunately, this is not always the case as the selfish interest of nations have at various times subverted the expected collective or symbiotic gains from the process.¹⁶ Indeed, the 21st century zeitgeist reveals an International Political Economy that is replete with cut-throat competitive desires among states. For example, several decades of “brain drain” or “labour poaching” have decimated the African academic and medical sectors. As of 2007, about 44 per cent of Africans with tertiary education emigrated from Angola, Burundi, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Tanzania in search of employment in OECD countries. This includes about 20,000 Nigerian and 12,000 South African medical doctors.¹⁷ It has been established that the emigration of highly qualified personnel from Africa distorts the socioeconomic and political structure of the continent.¹⁸

Nevertheless, migrants acquire new knowledge and skill that are useful for their home countries.¹⁹ For instance, the African Diaspora, constituting mainly African students in the Western world, played a major role in the nationalist movement that preceded independence in many African states. Amongst such intellectual freedom fighters were Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe (Nigeria) and Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana). In addition, remittances of African migrants to high-income countries are vital to poverty alleviation in the continent.²⁰ In 2019, global diaspora remittances – from both inside and outside the continent – surpassed Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs).²¹ In as much as the benefits of remittances to sending nations are being celebrated, it has also been established that immigrants spend most of their incomes in their host countries, thus making the economy of the host nations to be more prosperous.²² This is a win-win situation for the migrants’ sending and receiving countries. Indeed, migration is a vital resource for international development, if border policies are formulated and implemented with fairness and respect for human dignity.

¹⁴ A. Laszio. “Labour Mobility in the European Union, the Inconvenient Truth”. 2014. Retrieved 13 January, 2023 from https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-14-115_en.htm.

¹⁵ United Nations (UN). Organized crime and irregular migration from Africa to Europe. New York: United Nations (UN), Office on drugs and Crime, July., 2006.

¹⁶ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). International migration and development – Implications for Africa New York: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. February 8., 2006

¹⁷ UNECA, “International migration and development”.

¹⁸ D. Kohnert. African Migration to Europe: Obscured Responsibilities and Common Misconception, Hamburg: GIGA, 2007.

¹⁹ OECD. International Migration Outlook 2006. Paris: OECD, 2006.

²⁰ Faley, “Unveiling the Afro-European Common Geo-Cultural Space”.

²¹ Brookings. “Keep Remittances Flowing to Africa”. 2021. Retrieved 13 January, 2023 from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2021/03/15/keep-remittances-flowing-to-africa/>.

²² F. Kuwonu. “Ending Forced Displacement in Africa, a Collective Effort”. *African Dialogue Series*. United Nations, 2020. Retrieved 13 January, 2023 from <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/web-features/ending-forced-displacement-africa-collective-effort>.

Nigeria-UK Migration: A Historical Overview

The United Kingdom (UK) has always utilized migration as a tool of development. This is the case of the exportation of its surplus population to the Americas, India and Australia, among other places at the onset of the modern era.²³ The European empire was built and consolidated with colonialism in Africa in the late nineteenth century. Migration between the UK and Nigeria dates back to the period before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Though the Portuguese were the first Europeans to interface with Africa in the 15th Century and were also the first to initiate the slave trade across the Atlantic, the British and French, who later joined the bandwagon, became the dominant force. Prior to the establishment of British colonies in America, there were a few African populations acquired through Arab slave merchants involved in the Trans-Saharan Trade in the United Kingdom.²⁴ Until 1663, before the formal declaration of interest by the British royal crown to participate in the booming Trans-Atlantic slave trade, merchants from Britain were already frequenting the coasts of Africa to source tropical produce. However, with the establishment of plantations in the colonies of Central and North America, the need for farm labourers increased. To acquire the needed farm hands from the Portuguese and Dutch (who were the leading slave traders on the Atlantic) was expensive. Against this background, the British embraced the challenge and plunged headlong into the slave trade by deploying merchant ships under the auspices of the Royal African Company (RAC) to the coastal areas of West Africa and, in particular, Nigerian communities such as Calabar, Bonny, Opobo, Warri, Benin and Badagry. The British, therefore, became the dominant nation in the purchase and trafficking of the African enslaved. Between 1672 and 1713 the RAC transported some 100,000 enslaved Africans across the Atlantic.²⁵ The trade lasted for about 400 years with over 10 million Africans traded and forced into servitude.²⁶

The advent of the Industrial Revolution in the UK and other European nations meant, to some extent, the replacement of human labour with machine labour. This development followed the official abolition of slave trade in Britain in 1807. The UK thus changed from the acquisition of slaves from Nigeria and other parts of Africa to tropical agricultural produce. To this effect, the number of British merchants coming to Nigeria increased as there was a need to move beyond the coast and explore the hinterland where most of the resources needed in Europe could be found. The interaction at this stage further deepened the crisis of development due to massive importation that stunted indigenous industries in Nigeria.

The third phase of the migration between the UK and Nigeria began with the formal colonization of the country. This pattern of migration witnessed the influx of British personnel into the service of the colonial establishment, and

²³ T.J. Hatton. Emigration from the UK, 1870-1913 and 1950-1998. *European Review of Economic History*, 8 (2), 2004: 149-171.

²⁴ H. S. Klein. *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

²⁵ R. Blackburn. *The Making of New World Slavery*. London: Verso, 1997.

²⁶ Britannica. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Transatlantic Slave Trade Key Facts". Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020, 23 November. Retrieved 20 January 2023 from <https://www.britannica.com/summary/Transatlantic-Slave-Trade-Key-Facts>.

Nigerians who were desirous of further studies began to travel to the UK.²⁷ The country, during the colonial era, continued to serve the interests of the UK as a source of raw materials, market for finished goods and an area of profitable investment. This was an age of the British emigration into Nigeria in search of opportunities. As Ayodeji Olukoju puts it: the British merchants and other European business men “dominated the colonial economy given the huge capital (relative to indigenous merchants) at their disposal and ... [due to] their affinity with the imperial power”.²⁸ On the other hand, significant emigration of Nigerians to Britain occurred during the World Wars. These were Nigerians enlisted in the British military during the First and Second World Wars.²⁹ Examining the nature of personnel mobilization in the Second World War, it becomes clear that “Nigeria, British West Africa’s largest colony, contributed the most significant military contingent to the West Africa Command during the war.”³⁰ Here, Nigerian combatants were merely conscripted to fight for the interests of the United Kingdom.

The “Politricks” of the Nigeria-UK Migration in the Post-Covid-19 Pandemic

The pattern of migration between Nigeria and the UK since the post-colonial era has been largely determined by the forces of neocolonialism and patronage politics. Nigeria, like most former African colonies, attained flag independence but was in several ways tied to the apron strings of western capitalism. On the other hand, state capture by the political elites is vividly illustrated by the massive illicit financial flow from corrupt Nigerian government officials to banks in the UK.³¹ Indeed, neocolonialism, corruption and its associated underdevelopment of Nigeria have created the required local conditions for mass emigration from the country. The flow in the tide of migration reveals that currently, more Nigerians are heading to the UK compared to the size of UK citizens coming to the country. The available statistics put the number of Nigerian students among the foreign students’ population at 7 per cent. Moreover, it has been reported that 34,000 Nigerians received the UK study VISAs along with 31,898 dependants. Also, 8,972 Nigerians were issued work VISAS along with 8, 576 dependants.³²

²⁷ G. Chuku. “African Intellectuals as Cultural Nationalists: A Comparative Analysis of Edward Wilmot Blyden and Mbonu Ojike”. *The Journal of African American History*, 99 (4), 2014: 350-378.

²⁸ A. Olukoju, “Anatomy of Business-Government Relations: Fiscal Policy and Mercantile Pressure Group Activity in Nigeria, 1916-1933”. *African Studies Review*, 38 (1), 1995: 24.

²⁹ J.K. Matthews. “World War I and the Rise of African Nationalism: Nigerian Veterans as Catalysts of Change”. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 20 (3), 1982: 493-502; E.N. Mordi. “Recruitment of Nigerians for Military Service during the Second World War, 1939-45”. *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 98 (394), 2020: 276-303.

³⁰ Mordi. “Recruitment of Nigerians for Military Service”, 276.

³¹ Faley, “Unveiling the Afro-European Common Geo-Cultural Space”.

³² *Vanguard Newspapers*. “Over 10,000 doctors left Nigeria for UK in last 7yrs - NMA”. 2022, October 25. Retrieved 12 January, 2023 from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/10/over-10000-doctors-left-nigeria-for-uk-in-last-7-yrs-nma/>.

The emigration of people from Africa is gaining momentum in the face of unfavourable local conditions.³³ The work students VISA policy has led to huge capital flights from Nigeria to the UK as the condition for eligibility for admission is largely hinged on one's capacity to pay huge tuition fees, accommodation and other bills. The situation of the average Nigerian migrants in the Covid-19 era succinctly reinforced the argument that "the poorest of the poor cannot migrate, as migration involves costs".³⁴ Thus, those Nigerians who migrate to the UK are people of relative means, who invest heavily in their trips and risk tremendous loss of resources in their quest to relocate abroad.

The post-Brexit and Covid 19 eras glaringly revealed the contribution of immigration to the survival of the United Kingdom's economy and social institutions. The exit of the UK from the European Union has led to the gross depletion of the critical skilled labour force, especially in the health sector and Information Communication Technology. The UK also witnessed a sharp drop in student enrollments due to the fallout of Brexit as the country became less attractive to non-British European students. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic further exacerbated the situation as a result of the massive deaths of workers and students. The estate and housing sector of the UK economy was the hardest hit by these developments as it suffered a decline in patronage due to either death of tenants or their emigration. To fill the vacuum created by the exit of European Union professionals and students and to inject life into the UK property and estate industry, it became imperative for the UK government to open its border. These many tricks found expression in international migration policy, and they reflect the "politricks" of unequal international development.

Many Nigerian professionals have migrated to the UK.³⁵ Moreover, Nigerians who saw enrollment in British higher institutions as an opportunity for employment have also left the shores of the country in droves for the United Kingdom. The number of Nigerian students enrolled in various programmes in the UK has risen to 13,020 in the 2019/2020 academic session and 21,305 in the 2020/2021 session. This increase in higher institution enrolment represents a 64 per cent rise per annum.³⁶ Each of the students paid an average of 18,000 British pounds. The tuition fee may be higher in some institutions. For instance, the Annual Course Fee for an overseas student interested in an M.Sc. programme in Archaeology at the University of Oxford in the 2022/2023

³³ Stremiau N. and Tsalapatanis A. "Social Media, Mobile Phones and Migration in Africa: A Review of the Evidence". *Progress in Development Studies*, 22 (1), 2022: 56-71.

³⁴ Zaun, Natascha, and Olivia Nantermoz. "The use of pseudo-causal narratives in EU policies: the case of the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa." *Journal of European Public Policy*, 29 (4), 2022: 510-529.

³⁵ *Vanguard Newspapers*. "Over 10,000 doctors left Nigeria for UK in last 7 yrs - NMA". 2022, October 25. Retrieved 12 January, 2023 from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/10/over-10000-doctors-left-nigeria-for-uk-in-last-7-yrs-nma/>.

³⁶ *Business Hallmark*. "Population of Nigerian Students in UK up by 64% in one year". *Business Hallmark*. 2022, 26 May. Retrieved 22 January 2023 from <https://hallmarknews.com/population-of-nigerian-students-in-uk-up-by-64-in-one-year/#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20Nigerians%20studying,UK's%20Higher%20Education%20Statistics%20Agency.>

academic session is GBP30, 910.³⁷ This is an overly cash-driven British higher education system.³⁸ Indeed, one could then imagine the magnitude of funds leaving an already depressed economy in Africa. Unfortunately, the push factor is poor governance that found expression in local insecurity and economic instability. Stories abound about families selling important assets to fund the education of their wards in the UK. This capital flight has led to a FOREX crisis and continuous depreciation of the Nigerian national currency (the Naira) in the global financial system.

The Nigerian immigrants are hoping that their investment in the “immigration venture” will yield returns quickly. There are various narratives by Nigerian immigrants in the UK calling attention to the challenges encountered in the foreign land. This is due to an unfavourable environment undermining the integration of Nigerians into the UK society despite the huge cost of migration.³⁹ However, existing theories of migration perceive migration as a long-time investment. The neo-classical paradigm sees migration as a longtime investment whose dividend is dependent on the ability of the immigrants to acculturate to the ways of the host countries by acquiring the required education and language skills. The irony of the current wave of migration to the UK is that most of the migrants are in their middle age, family heads seeking the means to handle family expenses. It has been established too that apart from a few highly specialized professionals, most migrants, including those trained in UK universities, suffer from the scourge of underemployment as they are mostly engaged in menial jobs. The question to ask is, what then is the essence of the degree certificates issued by western universities which are often brandished as bait to attract African immigrants?

Immigration has always served as a tool for powerful nations of the world to further their economic and geo-strategic interests. After suffering massive casualties during the Second World War, France opened her borders to immigrants from every part of the world.⁴⁰ In the 21st Century, nations such as the USA, Canada, and Australia, amongst others, have benefited tremendously from immigration in their attempt to shore up their population and attract professionals and experts in critical fields of human endeavour. Similarly, the UK points-based immigration programme has triggered an unprecedented rise in the migration of professionals and students from Nigeria to the UK within a relatively short period. The professional group at the forefront of the ongoing migration from Africa are medical practitioners such as doctors, nurses,

³⁷ University of Oxford. “M.Sc. in Archaeology”. 2022. Retrieved 20 January 2023 from <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/msc-archaeology>.

³⁸ University of Bristol, “Money and your visa documentation”. 2022. Retrieved 13 January 2023 from <https://www.uwe.ac.uk/courses/international-study/visa/applying/documentation/money-and-your-visa..>

³⁹ B. Victor. “I’m Moving Back to Nigeria after 12 Months of Studying in the Uk”. YouTube, 2022, 21 December. Retrieved 23 January 2023 from <https://youtu.be/YF4QKjFhUbs>; Also see W. Olatunji, “I Am Moving Back To Nigeria - Here's the Truth No One Told Me”. YouTube. 2022, 8 November. Retrieved 23 January 2023 from <https://youtu.be/6PRRxcnctil>.

⁴⁰ Zincone, Giovanna, Rinus Penninx, and Maren Borkert, eds. *Migration policymaking in Europe: The dynamics of actors and contexts in past and present*. Amsterdam University Press, 2011.

pharmacists, physiotherapists and laboratory scientists. Another vital question is this: what is UK's interest and what does it (the UK) stand to gain from her immigration policy in the Covid-19 era by putting a price tag on the VISA eligibility process for African migrants? The COVID-19 pandemic had a serious economic and spatial impact on the United Kingdom in the context of business failure and the consequent layoffs.⁴¹ Hence, it is obvious that the primary intention of the UK VISA policy is attracting funds to fix the ailing UK economy that has been on a downward slide since Brexit and the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Beyond neocolonialism, the transformation of democracy to kleptocracy and state capture has led to high inflation and poor social services in Nigeria. The local response to this crisis is the *Japa* emigration phenomenon in contemporary Nigerian history. The consequences of all these are poverty and insecurity in Nigeria, and the associated mass emigration from the country. In the long-run, the *Japa* syndrome could create social problems such as family disintegration in Nigeria and the "Afrophobia" prejudice in the UK.⁴² Apparently, the unequal economic matrices between the United Kingdom and Nigeria continues to be the focus of the UK recruitment and immigration drive, making Nigeria one of the leading emigrating nations in Sub-Sahara Africa.⁴³ The capital flight involved in this process and its implication for the African dwindling economy is humungous considering its adverse effects on foreign exchange and the currencies of the sending nations.

However, the migrants who embraced the UK immigration programme with the intention of giving their families, especially their children, a head start in education may be heading for a nightmare as the UK government is already contemplating the introduction of austerity measures in this regard.⁴⁴ If implemented, most immigrant families from Nigeria will have a tough time sponsoring their children's education and paying essential bills in the UK. Could it be that the UK government, having achieved its aims, merely needed an alibi to start repatriating Nigerian immigrants after collecting their life savings? If so, this will be emboldened in the history books as one of the greatest official scams of the twenty-first century. What becomes of Nigerian migrants who have resigned from their appointments in Nigeria and have also sold their properties to secure their VISAs to settle in the UK? The implementation of the contemplated austerity measure by the UK government would transform the skill and education-based immigration programme from a legitimate venture to a dubious scam in the post-Covid-19 era. In the end, the economic benefit of

⁴¹ Brown, Ross, and Marc Cowling. "The geographical impact of the Covid-19 crisis on precautionary savings, firm survival and jobs: Evidence from the United Kingdom's 100 largest towns and cities." *International small business journal* 39 (4), 2021: 319-329.

⁴² See Okunade and Awosusi. "The Japa syndrome and the migration of Nigerians to the United Kingdom".

⁴³ L. Qirui, and C. Samimi. "Sub Saharan Africa's international migration constrains its sustainable development under climate change". *Sustainability Science* 17, 2022:1873-1897.

⁴⁴ *Time Magazine*. "As Rcession Bites ,Britain Is Embracing Austerity Once More. That Could Backfire". 2022, November 17. "Retrieved 13 January 2023 from <https://time.com/6234665/uk-austerity-sunak-hunt/>.

international migration through the much-anticipated remittances from Nigerian immigrants in the UK may become a mirage.

Conclusion

This paper reveals that the UK, for several centuries, has exploited migration as a major driver of its development. In the post-COVID-19 era, the UK immigration programme, like several other capitalist policies, has been calibrated to enhance the exploitation of both human and financial resources of the so-called “Third World”, especially Nigeria. The UK from all indications is not keen on overseas investment in the 21st Century, having established herself as a hub of global commerce, education and medicare. Nevertheless, the *Japa* migration phenomenon may be helpful in reducing the level of unemployment and population pressure in Nigeria. Moreover, Nigerians in the Diaspora could help alleviate poverty in their home country through remittances and knowledge transfer. However, the paper shows that so long as the UK remains a centre of attraction, especially to the people of Nigeria, due to the global uneven developments brought about by neocolonialism and poor governance, its immigration process will be self-serving. Therefore, we opine that the UK could be the sole beneficiary of its new VISA programme if austerity measures are introduced against Nigerian immigrants in the UK.

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