

Asylum, Security, Neoliberalism and the Development of the Rwanda Plan

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Abstract

Why did the British government shift from its profitable commitments to mixed public/private domestic migration management to offshoring through its costly Rwanda Plan? This thesis contributes to critical immigration literature by exploring theoretical perspectives from security and neoliberalism studies as originally emphasized in literature on the Australian Pacific Solution. To study the development of the Rwanda Plan, this thesis conducts a historical comparison of immigration policy during the post-Brexit referendum period and after the Rwanda Plan's announcement as well as an international comparison with Australia's Pacific and Malaysian Solution(s). To do so this analysis engages directly with discourse from members of parliament through Critical Discourse Analysis and discusses secondary literature on Australian offshoring practices. This thesis argues that the development of offshoring practices aligns with established discursive and institutional patterns from the UK's formerly figurative, domestic, 'offshore'. In the UK and Australia, the construction of migrant identities as violent or insurgent threats escalates their exclusion from legal protections and allows for their maltreatment at the hands of private actors. This reliance on private entities consequently adds a layer of insulation from external scrutiny, reinforcing the discursive and structural logic of offshoring policies as well as its evolving marketization. These dynamics help reveal the underlying goals of offshoring policies and demonstrate the value of discourse-centred approaches in analysing their instrumentalization of security logics.

Table of Content

0. Introduction.....	1
0.1 Literature Review.....	3
0.1.1 Critical Security Literature.....	3
0.1.2 UK Asylum and Immigration Policy	5
0.1.3 Australian Offshoring Policy	6
0.2 On Contributions.....	7
0.3 On Methodology	8
0.4 Research Questions	10
1. Approach and Theories	14
1.1 Introduction.....	14
1.2 Thesis Approach and Critical Discourse Analysis	14
1.2.1 On Case Selection, Sources and Generalizability	14
1.2.2 On Critical Discourse Analysis	16
1.2.3 Building Tasks, Tools of Inquiry and Validity in Critical Discourse Analysis.....	17
1.3 On Securitization and Insecurity	19
1.3.1 On Securitization.....	19
1.3.2 Joining Securitization Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis.....	20
1.3.3 On Insecurity and Methodology.....	21
1.4 On Authoritarian Neoliberalism.....	23
1.5 Conclusion.....	25
2. Post-Brexit Developments Towards the Figurative Offshore	26
2.1 Introduction.....	26
2.2 May and Migrants' Access to Public Goods.....	27
2.2.1 No Recourse to Public Funds and Other Public Provisions	27
2.3 The Home Office and its Private Actors	30
2.3.1 The Home Office: Processes of Obscuring and Denying Migrants	31
2.3.2 Private Actors: Immigration Management Transparency and Accountability	33
2.4 Johnson and the 'First Safe Country Rule'	35
2.5 Conclusion.....	37
3. Shifting Towards the Rwanda Plan.....	38
3.1 Introduction.....	38
3.2 Shifting and Emerging Identities in Parliamentary Discourse	40

3.2.1 The Reformulation of Migrant Identities	40
3.2.2 The Judiciary in Parliamentary Discourse.....	41
3.3 The Legal Structure of the Literal Offshore Throughout the Legislative Process	43
3.3.1 Diverging Views on the Asylum Detention Estate	44
3.3.2 Bridging vs. Oversight, Differing Interpretations of the Literal Offshore	46
3.4 The Muddying of the Fiscal Picture, Development and Private Actions in Discourse	49
3.4.1 On Development	50
3.4.2 Obscuring the Figurative Offshore, a New Normal	52
3.5 Conclusion.....	53
4. Australian Offshoring in the Early 21st Century.....	55
4.1 Introduction.....	55
4.2 On the Legal Construction of the Australian ‘Offshore’	58
4.2.1 The Migration Legislation Amendment Act: Emerging Forms of Legal Denial	59
4.3.2 The Failure of the Malaysian Solution.....	61
4.3 Locating and Modulating the Referent Object of Security	62
4.3.1 Economic Identities.....	63
4.3.2 Criminal Identities.....	63
4.3.3 Terrorist Identities	65
4.4 Transparency and Understanding of the Pacific Solution	67
4.4.1 Divergences in Transparency and the Move to ‘Unaccounting and Unaccountability’	67
4.4.2 Unaccounting and Democratic Deficit in PNG and Nauru	68
4.5 Conclusion.....	69
5. Conclusion.....	72
5.1 Synthesizing the Offshore	74
5.2 On Contributions	76
5.3 On Future Research.....	77
6. References	81
Appendix A:.....	97
Core Concepts Table I (Chapter Three).....	97
Core Concepts Table II (Chapter Two).....	98
Core Concepts Table III (Chapter Four)	99
Core Concepts Table IV (Chapter Four).....	100
Appendix B:.....	102

Table I: Building Tasks.....	102
Table II: Tools of Inquiry	104
Table III: Validity	106

0. | Introduction

The introduction of the UK's now-defunct Rwanda Plan presents a disruptive case within the study of extraterritorial immigration management amid the ongoing so-called 'refugee crisis'. Increased asylum seeker movement across the Dover Strait has intensified the political salience of immigration issues and lead to critical reflections on the potential failures of immigration policy.¹ The response of various Conservative government's to these issues has led to the implementation of gradually more restrictive measures and discourse against migrants which Davies et al. argue has created a domestic system in which irregular migrants have been relegated to a fictitious 'offshore' (2021).² Davies et al.'s prescient thesis is tied to their convictions that academic understandings of post-Brexit immigration policy should be reoriented in order to understand the relationship between the governments political strategy and the distinct imperial and racializing logics of the offshore it evokes.

The significance of a real or literal 'offshore' in Rwanda provides an opportunity to extend Davies et al.'s analysis in the study of British immigration policy to understand how such an unprecedented change emerged from existing policies. My goal for this thesis is to explore how offshoring has evolved through the lens of critical security and neoliberalism studies; I believe the insights of these approaches alongside the framing of Davies et al. can produce contributions to political research on future 'offshoring' immigration policy. Offshoring as a 'solution' has potential national and international consequences which could impact how the global North approaches irregular immigration and the refugee crisis. This thesis also engages with the introduction of the Rwanda Plan as inextricably connected to the earlier development of

¹ Throughout this thesis the references to the 'post-Brexit period' encapsulate the period following the June 2016 European Union membership referendum up until the announcement of the Rwanda Plan in April 2022.

² The term 'irregular migrant' has used in this thesis as a stable concept used to refer to migrants who have arrived in a state through unofficial means. As this thesis will explore this is also inherently a political choice as the way in which migrants are identified is significant and influences their ability to access rights such as the right to asylum which a majority do in the UK and Australia. I have made this choice to not broadly generalize the situation of these migrants, as some do not claim asylum and also avoiding the typology of states who classify them as 'illegitimate' or 'illegal' in order to justify their denial and in direct contravention of domestic and international law.

the Australian Pacific/Malaysian Solution(s); my analysis relies on this connection to explore the significance of offshoring and explore why it has been enacted.

As I will argue throughout this thesis, offshoring as a security practice has significant domestic consequences, the shift to offshoring in third countries necessitates the expansion of unilateral state powers over migrant lives and extensive reliance on private actors. These private actors through their management of immigration co-opt the states increased powers over migrants whilst simultaneously not absorbing the public responsibility of providing the rights they hold under domestic and international law. Private actors are broadly recognized as non-political actors and are not subject to accountability mechanisms developed in democratic settings such as freedom of information requests. Their interest in producing capital functionally runs counter to the provision of the most basic human rights and conditions which they should fulfil as proxies of the state. This thesis engages with the production of these inhospitable conditions in line with the theoretical arguments of Bruff & Tansel on ‘authoritarian neoliberalism’ who argue that the inclusion of private actors in the management of public life introduces a potential for states to neglect their constituents and produce authoritarian harm (2018).

Research on British immigration policy has yet to fully reckon with the consequences of the Rwanda Plan, likely due to its intentionally obscure design. It is my hope that this thesis can, in some small part, help convey the real long-term consequences of the Rwanda Plan. Khiabany and Williamson’s article “From ‘Stop the Boats’ to ‘Smash the Gangs’” (2025) paints a dire picture of how Rwanda Plan’s mechanisms continue to be employed by the current Labour government. The Starmer governments use of the mechanisms implemented to enact the Plan demonstrate that it is still alive and well all but in name, despite Labours militant dismantling of the formal agreements with the Rwandan government.

Offshoring policies exhibit growing popularity on an international level in the political programs of many countries of the global North and in practice in Italy and the US. Whilst my research does not attempt to develop a highly replicable approach or results, I believe that it would be unwise to consider the development of offshoring as having only domestic consequences. My account engages specifically with literature on policy transfer, particularly Legrand (2012; 2016; 2021), Smith et al.’s (2021) and Vucetic

(2011) arguments on the interconnectedness of policy in the Anglosphere. These countries enact immigration policy in a way which connects them as such I believe that the development of various offshoring policies by different states in the global North, particularly the United States, may be part of a broader interconnected movement towards offshoring.

0.1 | Literature Review

My approach to the subject of this thesis has been enabled by a range of different academic sources with various theoretical insights. I have grouped them into three categories which allowed me to thematically investigate existing academic literature during the early stages of my research. The first category of literature I explored is literature on critical security research; I approached this literature to develop my understanding of the relevant theories. I did so with a particular focus on research produced by the Copenhagen and Paris schools, whose academic adherents have produced a rich literature connecting security to immigration which has only become more useful as my research has progressed. The second relevant category is on the specific literature on the UK asylum/immigration policy which has given me insight into the policy context which precedes the development of the Rwanda Plan. The last category of literature reviewed was on the ‘Australian offshoring policy’ which has been helpful to my initial critical reflections on the Rwanda Plan and lead me to significantly deepen my understanding of how my cases are connected.

0.1.1 | Critical Security Literature

Securitization literature has been a core component of this thesis since its inception and allowed for my study of the developments and discursive process which facilitates offshoring. Ole Wæver’s efforts alongside Barry Busan and Jaap de Wilde, which introduced the concept of securitization as a critical security approach, have been particularly helpful. His approach to security theory observes the construction of security by actors who frame issues as existential to the state, resulting in mobilization. Securitization emerges through ‘speech acts’ that either ‘securitize’ and make threats exceptional, justifying their

depoliticization, or ‘desecuritize’ which allows for framed threats to become political again (Wæver, 2011). As Chapter One of this thesis will expand on; this process is reliant on the use of speech acts by prominent discursive actors to identify both the threat and what is being threatened.

Articles by Abdulhamid (2018), Demirkol (2022) and Krotký and Kaniok (2020) were also important to my research process as despite their varied approaches they demonstrate the development of securitization applied to their respective cases. Abdulhamid researches a shift away from racism to culturalism in immigration securitization since the founding of the EU (2018), Demirkol conversely looks at whether immigration securitization is effective (2022) and Krotký and Kaniok observe the use of security speech acts at the European Parliament (2020). Though their approaches vary and their theoretical engagement with securitization vary they all emphasize the use of speech acts by elites as well as the relationship between the securitizing actor and their audience.

The research of Williams (2015) and Emerson (2017) has informed the development of this thesis, as they separately engage with the genealogy of securitization as both an area of study and a tool to disrupt a ‘normal political state’. Williams argues that these securitizing speech acts have the potential to deeply upset how political orders function despite how deeply rooted collective perceptions may imagine a ‘normal political’ state to be (2015). Emerson’s account is particularly insightful as it attempts to approach securitization critically, going beyond the insights of the authors discussed in the previous paragraph (2017).

This thesis’ research was initially informed by securitization but as it has developed the significance of practices by governments and private actors became evident. Bigo (2002), Huysmans (2005) and Walters (2023) have been influential in forming my research’s understanding of how security issues are addressed through techniques of government managed and implemented by governmental actors (C.A.S.E. Collective, 2006).

This thesis also engages with the growing inclusion of private actors in the management of security as proxies of the state, the work of Abrahamsen and Williams (2009) and de Goede (2017) has been insightful for this aspect. Their work and its findings on how the introduction of private actors introduce

the marketization of public services which connects to the concerns of Bruff & Tansel and their work on ‘authoritarian neoliberalism’ and the decreased level of scrutiny for private actors acting in the place of states (2018). This reduced scrutiny and the conflicting interest of these actors produce a conflict in which their co-option of state power allows for them to inflict authoritarian harm to those they ostensibly serve. In addition to the findings of Golash-Boza (2009), who explores how the neoliberal marketization of public functions in immigration management allows for the creation of perpetual issues, I used these sources to consider the extent and issues of the growing place of private actors in immigration as a security issue.

0.1.2 | UK Asylum and Immigration Policy

Literature on the asylum/immigration policy in the UK has provided a foundation for the historic comparative aspects of my thesis. On one hand I have paid attention to the establishment of extractive practices in immigration control which benefit both private and public actors. With the Rwanda Plan potentially challenging the established means through which private actors extract value from the British immigration system. Additionally, I was interested in the origins of the Rwanda Plan and as such evaluated literature which points to Brexit as an important historic point of reference which led to increased irregular border crossings. With an increase in these border crossings comes the concept of an ‘offshore’ which distances irregulars border crossers both as threats and as *bona fide* asylum seekers.

This thesis and its approach to the issue of offshoring asylum claims engages partially with the issue of cost and the implementation of the Rwanda Plan. Burnette and Chebe and their research on the development of the UKs ‘charging regime’, which turned immigration into a profitable endeavour, has contextualized the drastic costly shift which offshoring constitutes. Wegera (2021) and Drakeley (2023) also help provide information on the context of changes in immigration policy. Wegera sees the capacity for securitization as it has increased in the post-Brexit era due to the UK regaining autonomy in its capacity to manage its immigration (2021). Drakeley also considers this and goes further, establishing that even prior to Brexit, immigration by means of asylum claims was already restricted if not criminalized (2023). Both authors converge on the ways in which the policy of the UK has constructed a *non-entrée* regime (Drakeley,

2023; Wegera, 2021). Their insights have informed my decision to understand the development of these policies as happening in a particular continuity which begins with the Brexit vote and intensifies with the introduction of the Rwanda Plan.

Davis et al. also observe the construction of the UKs *non-entrée* with the restriction (2021). Their argument that these measures have also produced the very conditions for the increase in irregular migration, leading to the development of a discursive ‘offshore’ framing which is used to figuratively deterritorialize migrants. This thesis has been significantly influenced by their almost prescient evaluation of immigration policy. It has also been developed by connecting this figurative offshore to the developments of immigration policy post-Brexit with the implementation of the Rwanda Plan acting as a disruptive attempt at materializing the denial of migrants abroad, in a ‘literal offshore’.

0.1.3 | Australian Offshoring Policy

This thesis also has been informed by an expansive body of literature on the Australian Pacific/Malaysian Solution(s). Pickering & Weber argue that the creation of the Australian externalization regime allows for a responsabilization of those wishing to migrate by irregular means. Rather than ‘classical deterrence’ which is punitive in nature, ‘neoliberal deterrence’ frames the inability to participate in the Australian economy as well as the costs paid to people smugglers as undesirable economic choices (Pickering & Weber, 2014). Smith also understands Australian externalization benefits from authoritarian neoliberalism which subjects migrants to the whims of private actors. Much like Davis et al., Smith argues that Australia has constructed its borders with historic racialized logics allowing for the externalization of certain migrants. Poon goes further and understands these logics as abstracting migrants to the point where they disappear entirely from political discourse and their means of entry becomes the only important aspect of them (2017). The insights of these authors and their focus on the projection of harm on migrants alongside private actors has not only been instrumental to this thesis’ international comparison but has also informed how I approach the development of offshoring in the context of the UK.

Strating's research into Australia as a purported international champion for democracy critically observes its support for the autocratic behaviour of its Pacific neighbours to appease their elite political class who play a pivotal role in its control of illegal immigration (2020). In this way Strating observes the exceptional nature in which Australia not only indiscriminately violates human rights domestically but supports its neighbours' transgressions to prop up its externalization regime (2020). Strating's insights have also informed my analysis particularly in my international comparison of the British and Australian offshoring schemes and their influence on the jurisdictions they rely on for the detention of migrants.

My international comparison is further supported by the research produced by Smith et al. who discuss the historic development of immigration policies in the UK and Australia in the 20th century, who throughout this period introduced immigration measures influenced by the failures and successes of the other (2021). Their contributions have brought allowed me to begin to piece together the greater scale on which immigration policy and offshoring is facilitated, the platform provided by the idea of an 'Anglosphere'. The international comparisons I make throughout this thesis are informed by the research agenda proposed by Vucetic in *The Anglosphere* (2011). In line with this research agenda the research produced by Legrand (2012; 2016; 2021) informs the connections drawn in this thesis as instances of policy transfer between the UK and Australia.

0.2 | On Contributions

According to Davies et al., the 'offshore' operates as a conceptual mechanism through which the perceived existential threat of migrants is neutralized via deterritorialization enacted by quasi-authoritarian institutional practices. The Rwanda Plan would prospectively be a drastic departure from what they termed to be the figurative offshore, rooted in the domestic infrastructure for processing and detention, toward a literal offshore by relocating immigration and asylum management to Rwanda. This transition acquires added significance considering the dominant role of private actors in the domestic management of immigration and asylum, a context in which earlier reliance on these actors shifted towards policy initiatives critical of public/private partnerships.

Parliamentary critiques of public/private immigration arrangements have consistently focused on their ineffectiveness; however, the Rwanda Plan's lowest estimated cost substantially exceeds the expenses associated with such partnerships. This discrepancy introduces potential challenges to longstanding assumptions regarding the neoliberal orientation of British policy. The shift in policy direction carries implications not only for the profitability of private enterprises but also for the Home Office's financial strategy, particularly in relation to the surplus generated by UK Visas and Immigration and its operational expenditures. Few articles and publications to date have actually reckoned with the significance of the Plan, as such my exploration through this thesis is a contribution to the existing body of literature on the UK's asylum and immigration policy which attempts to fill a gap left by the obscure establishment of the Plan and its sudden undoing by the current Labour government.

This thesis is also on a broader level an attempt at connecting theoretical approaches from critical security and neoliberalism research, whilst both distinct areas of study in their own respect engage on a significant level with immigration 'issues' they often do so in their own terms. My research as such is a new addition to their combined study aimed at trying to understand the development of offshoring policies as political designs which security and neoliberalism intersect.

0.3 | On Methodology

This thesis at a basic level is an exploration of the Rwanda Plan which I am using to identify its underlying causes. It does not do so to produce generalizable theories to use to understand future attempts at offshoring comprehensively but rather explores the Rwanda Plan and the Pacific Solution to find the key aspects which have allowed for their development to give insight into 'what' can be known about these policies and 'how' it can be understood.

As a researcher, my approach to the subjects examined in this thesis is grounded in the conscious understanding that the knowledge it produces is the result of a layered series of constructed 'facts', including the process I refer to as 'offshoring'. As a constructivist I argue that the Rwanda Plan, along with similar efforts, represents a deliberate political construction made possible by the shaping of subjective

realities. Central to this construction is the strategic use of discourse by political actors, which enables the normalization of exceptional securitizing measures. Parliamentary discourse provides a key entry point for understanding how offshoring has been legitimized and sustained. I employ the concepts of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore parliamentary discourse, my use of CDA allows me to closely examine how language constructs social meaning. This methodological choice is complemented through thematic engagement with critical security and neoliberalism studies, which help situate parliamentary discourse within broader institutional and ideological contexts.

In addition to my use of CDA my research in this thesis is conducted to draw an international comparison with the Australian Pacific and Malaysian Solution(s) through secondary sources. This comparison is made in my thesis with the key findings of the historic comparisons of the pre- and post-Rwanda Plan periods of immigration policy in mind and to explore their potential origin. The British and Australian construction of offshoring policy are central to this thesis due to continuity I draw between them, rather than being two analogous instances of offshoring I believe that they are connected. My argument for the connection of these policies is attached to the arguments of Smith et al. (2021) and other researchers on policy transfer in the Anglosphere, who have drawn connections between the development of policies in my cases. My research will develop on these assertions and argue for the existence of a discursive link between my cases within which the meaning of their subjects, immigration, security, terrorism, etc., is connected.

The non-identical nature of my analysis raises another important aspect of the nature of my research, as I have emphasized and will continue to emphasize throughout this thesis its findings are entirely reliant on the social contexts I am approaching. I have selected my comparisons in this thesis to explore how discourse has been produced to install offshoring as a practice in the UK historically and how its implementation has been influenced by the Australian case as a single social context. Whilst my direct findings may be beneficial to researchers who are also attempting to understand the convergence of these contexts the comparisons I have made in this thesis; I believe that my approach to how meaning is built is much more valuable.

0.4 | Research Questions

As I have elaborated above offshoring as a growing trend for the management of immigration warrants investigation due to its growing popularity in various social contexts. I believe that not engaging with the consequences of the now defunct Rwanda Plan also removes the possibility of developing future research on developing offshores as a problem intersecting security and neoliberalism. Accordingly, I have posed the following central research question: ‘Why has there been an exceptional shift from a *‘figurative’ offshore* in the UK to an attempt at the creation of a costly, *‘literal’ offshore* in Rwanda?’

I engage with the overall research question in this thesis, after explaining my methods (Chapter One), in three contents chapters (Chapters Two, Three and Four) each with their own distinct sub-question. My aim with this thesis is to connect these questions to understand why the *literal offshore* almost came to be.

My first sub-question ‘How does parliamentary discourse reflect the framing and practices that constitute the *figurative offshore*?’ aims at exploring what Davies et al. initially termed as ‘the offshore’. I do so in Chapter Two by looking at parliamentary debates between the Brexit referendum in June 2016 and the announcement the Rwanda Plan in April 2022 to understand how the discourse of parliamentarians reflects the ideational and practical implementation of offshoring policies. With this research question I will establish the first part of the historic comparison which I am attempting to use for this thesis, by looking at context from which the Rwanda Plan emerged from I have been able to more effectively understand some of the similarities and differences between the *figurative* and *literal offshore*. Through this chapter I argue that parliamentary discourse reflects how increasingly restrictive access to rights and means in the post-Brexit period constitute a figurative form of offshoring which attempts to minimize migrants and obscure violations of their rights at the hands of private actors working for the British government. The restrictive measures around migrant’s rights have been enacted alongside language which emphasizes irregular migrants as economic threats creating strains on the British welfare state, thus not only justifying their exclusion but also the employment of private actors as cost effective solutions. The use of private actors in

this *figurative offshore* is marked by their recursive use of authoritarian power against migrants often ignored or leading to these actors being shuffled between contracts with little to no punishment.

My second sub-question ‘How does parliamentary discourse influence and reflect the policy changes which were developed to support the transition to a *literal offshore*?’ is the other half of the historic comparison I am making with my thesis throughout Chapter Three. This sub-question is a conscious step forward which I use to build upon my findings in Chapter Two, whilst I use my first sub-question to understand how the *figurative offshore* is ‘constituted’ I use this second question to look consciously at how discourse reflects the specific changes enacted after the announcement of the Rwanda Plan in April 2022 until the dissolution of Parliament in late May of 2024 ahead of the general election. The whole picture drawn through my exploration of figurative and literal offshoring in the UK also is the first half of the international comparison I am making in this thesis with the Australian case. Whilst in Chapter Two I argue that migrants are primarily identified as economic threats this changes with the implementation of the Rwanda Plan, my exploration of my second sub-question has led me to the conclusion that the implementation of the Plan was justified by the re-identification of irregular migrants as violent threats alongside their categorization as criminals. My engagement with parliamentary discourse has led me to the conclusion that whilst this rationale behind the Plan is prominent it is only part of the picture: whilst *figurative offshoring* allowed for migrants to be obscured, they remained well within the jurisdiction of courts which threatened the control of the British government when abuse inflicted upon migrants became public knowledge. The discursive elevation of the threat migrants posed to the British public thus serves the purpose of removing them from the UK and placing them in the care of the Rwandan government with no possibility of appeal or return. The Rwanda Plan’s implementation also came with significant increases in the unilateral power for domestic actors including the Home Office and its private actors demonstrating that whilst ostensibly aimed at providing an extraterritorial solution the Plan also concretely developed the existing *figurative offshore*. This unchecked expansion and the lack of parliamentary debate around its significance also mean that the authoritarian power projected by private actors against migrants has only increased in capacity since the post-Brexit period.

My third and final sub-question ‘What can the similarities and differences between the Pacific Solution and Rwanda Plan reveal about the establishment of *offshoring* policies?’ is the final step in my thesis and closes out the two different comparisons I make in order to address my central research question. Using my understanding of the *figurative* and *literal offshoring* policies of the UK I use my analysis in Chapter Four in order to more finely engage with the most consequential aspects of offshoring and which have justified its establishment. Throughout this chapter my understanding of the implementation of certain decisions made to implement the Rwanda Plan gain additional context. My focus on the relationship between how migrants are identified as escalating threats is exemplified by the extremes in the logic of the Australian Pacific Solution whose architects relied on the characterization of irregular migrants as potential terrorists. I also argue in Chapter Four that the respective British and Australian government’s focus on removing accountability to their management of immigration policy is a hard-baked fact of their offshoring approaches. These governments in doing so have taken advantage of various sources of funds, including development funds, in order to maximize the control, they exert over offshoring whilst minimizing their responsibility to the migrants they have displaced. The approach of these governments combined with their use of these new pliant jurisdictions also adds another potential dimension to the privatized and authoritarian aspects of offshoring, allowing for the already obscured use of private actors to be made ‘unaccountable’.

Returning to my central research question through the process of researching and writing this thesis my conclusion is that the attempted shift from the *figurative* to a *literal offshore* with the Rwanda Plan has been a continuous effort in order to create unassailable and deterritorializing conditions for irregular migrants. Offshoring is connected but not entirely explained by the articulation of migrants as varying forms of security threat through speech acts, these speech acts form the basis for the denial of migrants. I contend that whilst the Rwanda Plan makes little sense on a practical and fiscal level, it has tacitly allowed for the increased denial of migrant’s rights precariously stranding them somewhere in-between the UK, Rwanda and the hands of private actors.

As such the Rwanda Plans cost must be understood, not as a political misstep, but instead as a deliberative move to definitively finding a tenable price for the erasure of irregular migrants' existence through the different *offshores*. The authoritarian denial of the rights of migrants under these private actors is a constant in the *figurative offshore* and only expanded with the use of ancillary Rwanda Plan policies implemented by the government of Rishi Sunak. The potential for harm and control over the public existence of migrants may also have significantly expanded with the implementation of the *literal offshore* in line with what research on the Pacific Solution indicates.

1. | Approach and Theories

1.1 | Introduction

This chapter introduces the methodological and theoretical foundations of the research produced in this thesis. I will begin by outlining the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which enable the investigation of how discourse produces and legitimizes political action. This chapter will also discuss how the critical security frameworks of securitization and insecurity will be used in this research. The Copenhagen Schools securitization theory explains how political actors frame irregular migration as an existential threat requiring exceptional measures. In contrast, the Paris School's focus on insecurity emphasizes the everyday practices and professional actors who maintain and expand security regimes. The following discussion will highlight the compatibility between CDA and these security approaches through their shared focus and history. Finally, this chapter will address how critiques of neoliberalism employed in this research, namely 'authoritarian neoliberalism' will provide insight into the growing role of private actors and market logics in asylum management. These overlapping frameworks support a detailed analysis of how offshoring policies are justified, normalized and embedded in the transformation of asylum policy.

1.2 | Thesis Approach and Critical Discourse Analysis

1.2.1 | On Case Selection, Sources and Generalizability

This thesis project approaches the subject of the offshore as it emerges discursively in the UK and Australia. These cases have been selected to study the development of the Rwanda Plan first through a historic comparison of immigration policy in the UK. This comparison will be explored in the second and third chapters of this thesis through the development of policy after the Brexit referendum and after the introduction of the Rwanda Plan as distinct periods of policy development. The developments under these periods have been researched by coding Hansard transcripts from debates and speeches made in the House of Commons. As will be discussed later in this chapter the joining of discourse and security analysis undertaken in this thesis benefits from a direct approach to what producers of discourse are saying and how it connects to security practices. The selection of transcripts from the House of Commons has been made

to observe how ministers in charge of immigration policy argue for the development of offshoring policies. These arguments have been studied by coding excerpts with in NVivo 14 alongside the recombination of Gee's Tools of Inquiry and Building Tasks.

This thesis will also explore an international comparison between the Rwanda Plan and the Australian Pacific/Malaysian Solution(s) in Chapter Four considering the connections drawn by policy transfer literature on the Anglosphere. This comparison will be conducted through a secondary analysis of Australian offshoring policy looking at literature which engages with the theoretical concepts central to this thesis discussed in the following sections on discourse analysis, security and neoliberalism. Additionally, sources which highlight parliamentary developments and engage with the discourse and practices of the government. This choice was made to ensure the feasibility of this research project, as offshoring in Australia has developed essentially uninterrupted since the start of the millennia and to maintain its focus on the developments in the UK.

The addition of this second angle of comparison in this thesis is a deliberate decision made with the research of Legrand (2012; 2016; 2021), Smith et al. (2021) and Vucetic (2011) on how policy in the 'Anglosphere' is interconnected. This interconnectivity allows for cases in the Anglosphere to be examined in a single social context wherein the political figures and bureaucracies of states in the 'Anglosphere' work together. The relationships which form the Anglosphere are not strictly codified but rather the result of the intersubjective identification of a mutual 'Anglo-Saxon' heritage as an exceptional connection (interchangeably) between the US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In Wendtian terms these states as social actors understand this commonality as a means to deal with the insecurity they experience as a result of their identification of exogenous threats on the international stage. They act then as a security community who are joint in their approach to the goal of collective security (Wendt, 1999).

In this thesis the connections I draw out between the Rwanda Plan and Pacific/Malaysian Solutions are underlined by this understanding of an Anglosphere as an international setting for coordinated action and policy learning. My analysis is as such unitary and accounts for, at a minimum, the idea that the now

historic development of offshoring policy in the UK and Australia must be understood as occurring in a single social context wherein these states jointly seek solutions to the refugee crisis.

These two forms of comparison have been selected for this thesis, not to argue for a greater theory which explains the growing trend towards the offshoring of migrants but rather understands them as occurring within an enclosed context which can be explored through descriptive analysis. As such this thesis will not argue that its findings are directly applicable to other contexts where offshoring is growing in popularity such as the US' growing interest in detaining migrants internationally. This thesis may however serve as a useful point of reference for similar research which engages with the intersection of discourse, security and practices.

1.2.2 | On Critical Discourse Analysis

Context and discursive formation remain necessarily interlinked in this thesis through my use of CDA, which allows for British immigration policy it to be reviewed for theoretically relevant content. This project's analysis in the upcoming chapters depends on a detailed understanding of the contexts the relevant parliamentary and political discourse exists in. It does so by looking at norms around the acceptable treatment of migrants under offshoring policies by observing the development of intersubjective and unilateral discourse to also analyse the significance of policy changes.

The selection of CDA follows several specific and deliberate considerations. As elaborated in the following sections, discourse is important to the theoretical orientation of this thesis, particularly in relation to the conceptual frames of securitization and insecurity. The developments connected to the Rwanda Plan also occurred entirely within parliamentary debates and legislative procedures, which have actively reformulated norms to rationalize the exclusion of migrants. This limitation, along with the frequent references by British and Australian politicians linking migration to security, discourse centric security approach valuable.

The decision to use CDA for this thesis was not a response to limited information about how offshore facilities in Rwanda or the Pacific operate in practice. Given the similarity across both cases the

lack of information on offshoring practices appears to be a characteristic of the offshoring model rather than a serendipitous coincidence. In light of present developments and the growing appeal of offshoring as a policy solution, CDA can be used to understand, not only the practical contours of offshore arrangements but, also the underlying rationale used to justify their implementation.

The theoretical insights provided by James Paul Gee and Norman Fairclough have significantly shaped this project's analytic foundation. Consequently, the project reflects their shared conviction that language functions not merely as a medium for meaning but also as an active component of social/political practices (Fairclough, 2010; Gee, 2011). Although both scholars have left a substantial mark on the methodological underpinning of this research, Gee's analytic framework in his *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis* (2011) has been a particularly strong influence during my exploration of the primary source material.

1.2.3 | Building Tasks, Tools of Inquiry and Validity in Critical Discourse Analysis

Gee's explains that the way language forms meaning in social reality can be researched through what he terms 'Building Tasks' which are various dimensions which the subject of discourse can be looked at through and 'built' upon. For this thesis the building task of 'Identity', through which language serves to delineate the relation between the socially constituted identities, is of extreme importance (Gee, 2011). Through language, speakers construct, organize and connect identities to produce a logical narrative framework that imbues statements with self-coherent veracity (Gee, 2011).

The primary sources used in the next two chapters, which focus on the British immigration system before and after the Rwanda Plan's introduction, include Hansard transcripts from debates in the House of Commons. This primary material enables close engagement with the official parliamentary discourse surrounding immigration policy, specifically to extract meaning through the theoretical lenses of securitization and insecurity. The primary for data for these chapters has been drawn from the discourse of Tory ministers, often frontbenchers, whose contributions, delivered either as stand-alone interventions or in response to structured questions from their parliamentary colleagues, reflect the institutional framing of

immigration and asylum through ideational constructions of ‘Identities’. I have included a sample of my approach whilst coding transcripts in Appendix B *Table I: Building Tasks* which presents the structure basic structure of questions I posed to explore Building Tasks.

Gee’s analytic model includes various mechanisms that enable the enacting of Building Tasks thorough language, which he identifies as ‘Tools of Inquiry’. These Tools consist of situated meaning, social languages, figured worlds, intertextuality, Discourses and Conversations (Gee, 2011). The analysis of primary texts reveals recurring and intersecting uses of these Tools in relation to the Building Tasks. Among these, the ‘Figured Worlds’ and ‘Discourses’ Tools appear with the greatest regularity and significance to this thesis. ‘Figured Worlds’, as conceptualized by Gee, represent the normalized imaginaries projected by discourse participants within specific contexts. Gee distinguishes between discourses (lowercase), which refer to the multiplicity of conversational forms in everyday life and ‘Discourses’ (uppercase), which refer to socially shared narratives and practices rooted in collective socialization (Gee, 2011). Interpreted more simply, ‘Figured Worlds’ within the context of British and Australian immigration debates represent liberal-egalitarian frameworks, wherein the arrival of irregular migrants is constructed as antithetical to framed core societal values such as equality of opportunity. In contrast, ‘Discourses’ reflect the institutional and social context, including the performative norms and shared language of actors situated within settings like parliament (Gee, 2011). I have included another sample of the definitions of the Tools of Inquiry I used to study Building Tasks in Appendix B *Table II: Tools of Inquiry*.

The analysis of this thesis does not treat these Tasks or Tools as fixed or unidimensional. In many cases, many of these elements appear simultaneously within the same passages, recombining in various configurations to form complex artifacts. Only passages with low internal coherence exhibit minimal recombination such as offhand interjections or statements intentionally made to derail ongoing discussions. In fact, the convergence of multiple Building Tasks and Tools of Inquiry within a single analytical sample strengthens the ‘Validity’ as termed by Gee of the overall analysis by reinforcing the interpretative depth and structural consistency of meaning attribution (2011). Additionally, when the interpretation resonates

with the representations produced by discourse participants themselves, the discursive validity of these interpretations increases (Gee, 2011). Whilst coding transcripts and then transforming my data into the primary findings I present in Chapters 2 and 3 I kept the above in mind when asserting which of my findings was more concrete and which are not significant. In Appendix B *Table III: Validity* I have included a sample of the definitions I kept in mind whilst reviewing my coding.

1.3 | On Securitization and Insecurity

1.3.1 | On Securitization

Wæver originally introduced the term ‘securitization’ in his 1995 chapter on “Securitization and Desecuritization”, later expanding the concept in collaboration with Barry Buzan and Jaap de Wilde. Their framework positions securitization as the discursive construction of existential threats to a referent object, typically identity, through speech acts (C.A.S.E. Collective, 2006).

In this context, actors redefine issues that might otherwise be considered societal or economic, such as irregular migration, as security threats that require exceptional responses, including practices like offshoring. These threats are made with reference to the referent object of security which securitizing actors also define to relate to the values held by their audience. Conversely, speech acts may also function as mechanisms of desecuritization by dismantling the normative order established by earlier securitizing discourse and re-situating issues within the domain of routine political negotiation (Wæver, 2011). Desecuritizing speech acts then allow for the exceptional actions justified by securitizers to be questioned.

Actors produce speech acts as discursive interventions that create or shift normative frameworks with successful speech acts persuading audiences about the existential severity of a threat. These threats target a ‘referent object’, a construct which requires the “beliefs and expectations of the subject/audience”, as Emerson notes (2017, p. 527). The process of securitization centres on two primary actors: the securitizing actors, those performing the speech acts and the audience, whose endorsement generates normative legitimacy for security responses (Wæver, 2011). In addition to granting legitimacy, audiences also reproduce securitizing discourse and, in doing so, participate alongside initial actors in constructing an

intersubjective reality that redefines what constitutes a legitimate part of political order and what exists outside of it (Huysmans, 1998).

This thesis will approach the development of the Rwanda Plan and Pacific Solution as cases in which securitizing speech acts have redefined irregular migration as a security threat. Alternatively, these cases may reflect transformations in the underlying conditions of securitization that have permitted the practice of offshoring. Political discourse in the UK and Australia, and the discussion of the various ways in which migrants constitute threats will as such be front and centre, in this analysis. Through this discourse the way threats are understood also inherently contains information on how it should be appropriately addressed through offshoring and the use of language which deprivileges migrant identities. Whilst in both cases the construction of threats has an ostensibly strong economic foundation the massive cost of implementing offshoring regimes highlights the way in which the UK and Australia have grown their power to act with little regard to international and domestic legal standards.

1.3.2 | Joining Securitization Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis

Beyond the broader compatibility between CDA and constructivist approaches, the explicitly discursive orientation of securitization theory renders it particularly suitable for application within this methodology. This does not imply full alignment between the more intricate and linguistically oriented features of CDA and the conditions outlined for securitization by Wæver et al. Instead, CDA's methodological and theoretical emphasis on contextual specificity introduces a measure of flexibility that allows for the two frameworks to be adapted to one another. This context dependent flexibility also relates to a limitation of securitization theory that Huysmans identifies: its dependency on contextual construction renders its universalizability contingent upon detailed and conditional analyses (1998). Both CDA and securitization theory demand a strong understanding of the discursive environment in which meaning is produced. While CDA incorporates a more detailed linguistic lens, including aspects such as non-verbal communication, both approaches share an empirical orientation rooted in the relationship between discourse producers and the norms they invoke or challenge (Gee, 2011).

The concept of identities is an important aspect for security approaches and the construction of the referent object of security in the various contexts which securitization theory has been applied to. Gee's analytic understanding of 'Identities' also shares this deference to contextual construction. Both conceptions focus on discourse producers and their interaction with normative structures, revealing processes of ideational formation. In this thesis I will focus on the discursive construction of asylum seekers in relation to the native population. The discourse around asylum seekers builds upon existing norms and values to justify the implementation of exceptional measures aimed at managing perceived threats to domestic structures such as the welfare state or physical security.

1.3.3 | On Insecurity and Methodology

Although this thesis primarily centres on securitization theory, it also incorporates insights from the broader field of critical security studies that developed following Wæver's seminal contribution in 1995. In particular, the practice-based developments associated with the Paris School of Security Studies, led by Didier Bigo and Jef Huysmans, offer valuable perspectives. Their approach builds upon and extends the critical research of the Copenhagen School by partially utilizing the typologies and logics of securitization theory with their own emphasis on the place of security actors. Practice-based approaches emphasize the importance of security practices, not only speech acts, require analytical attention (Bigo, 2002; C.A.S.E. Collective, 2006). These scholars' emphasis on the development of security apparatuses derives from their distinctly Foucauldian focus on security as a form of governmentality that enables the establishment of security problems through practices and reproduces them through the *dispositifs* of governmentality (C.A.S.E. Collective, 2006).

The practice-based security approaches from the Paris School also employ the concept of insecurity, which represents the specific issue that security professionals securitize and manage (Huysmans, 2005). The projection of insecurity by politicians and security professionals parallels the projection of constative security threats, as discussed in securitization theory. Conversely the key distinction between these two theoretical approaches lies in their prescriptive outcomes. Whilst securitization constructs a

discursive framework to propose exceptional solutions and an eventually a clear solution, the deployment of insecurity by political actors creates an indefinite issue. This indefinite issue is addressed through the implementation of permanent security technologies such as surveillance systems. As a result, the establishment of insecurity by politicians and security professionals contributes to an unlimited expansion of security measures, often lacking a clear end-state or alleviatory goal (C.A.S.E. Collective, 2006).

Although the Paris School's concept of insecurity remains more abstract and aims toward a universal explanatory model of security formation, its focus on governmentality offers a significant theoretical advancement. This conceptual turn shifts emphasis from ideational transformation toward a structural analysis of security as a 'field effect.' For the purposes of this thesis, I contend that these field effects remain compatible with the ideational constructs articulated in securitization theory (C.A.S.E. Collective, 2006). Critical security approaches developed in Europe have been developed by their respective schools in dialogue with each other and can be understood as iteratively contributing to one another's development.

This convergence between these theoretical approaches becomes particularly apparent in "Critical Approaches to Security in Europe: A Networked Manifesto" (2006), where security scholars including Bigo, Huysmans and Wæver collaboratively outline a forward-looking research agenda for critical security studies in Europe. Although the C.A.S.E. Collective has not produced a unified theoretical synthesis across the Aberystwyth, Copenhagen and Paris Schools, this Networked Manifesto serves as a point of connection, allowing researchers to draw the links across their distinct but related approaches (2006).³ Building upon these theoretical foundations, this thesis aims to examine the field of security critically through both discursive and practical dimensions. In doing so, this analysis will work to identify the intersections between normative identity formation and the establishment of security practices.

³ Thesis does not engage with the Aberystwyth School as its emancipatory vision for security runs counter to its key assertions that the framing of immigration as a security issue has negative consequences for the rights of irregular migrants.

In relation to CDA, it remains essential to assert the more nuanced theoretical distinction between discourse analysis and the practice-based security approach even if they are not necessarily detrimental to this thesis. Considering the conceptual borrowing between these frameworks, particularly the adaptation of securitization logics by Paris School scholars, practice-based theorists place greater emphasis on the construction of insecurity and its iterative reproduction. This distinction necessitates additional methodological considerations. In this thesis, the production of insecurity is also understood as constructed through British parliamentary debates.

The obfuscation of information concerning the treatment of asylum seekers constitutes a prominent feature of incumbent governmental discourse. Though this incumbent discourse still provides a significant amount of information when interpreting the similarities and difference in multiple discussions of the same policy or event by various politicians. While ministers frequently invoke problematic security concerns to avoid addressing sensitive policy areas, retrospective discussions often reveal their acknowledgment of systemic shortcomings, typically as a rhetorical strategy to introduce new security initiatives. Integrating these official statements with queries from oppositional discourse and secondary reports allows for a more comprehensive view of the practices that constitute the British asylum denial regime.

By synthesizing the insights drawn from this multi-sourced discourse with findings on identity construction generated through the securitization framework, this thesis aims to produce a layered account of the discursive and practical logics underpinning British asylum policy.

1.4 | On Authoritarian Neoliberalism

This project also engages conceptually with the broader neoliberal context in the UK within which current security responses have emerged and develops the connections between this context and the security approaches previously discussed. The increasing involvement of private actors in managing security represents a novel phenomenon that warrants academic investigation (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2009; de Goede, 2017). This development appears particularly troubling and analytically perplexing, given that these

actors address issues framed as existential in nature which would conceivably be better addressed through strong responses from specialized government departments rather than generalist contractors.

By diminishing the role of the state and elevating private actors as the most specialized and efficient entities to manage the so-called ‘immigration crisis’, policymakers have not only enabled the marketization of asylum procedures but also exposed migrants to existential risks. Policymakers have reduced protective measures for migrants by outsourcing responsibilities to insulated private entities whose production of austere and reductive conditions is an explicit feature of externalization regimes that aim to ‘responsibilize’ migrants for their irregular mobility (Pickering & Weber, 2014). This issue emerges as a consequence of the conflict of interest which companies engaged in the private management of immigration face, whilst they are engaged to act in the place of government their interests in maximizing profitability and making immigration detention as efficient as possible conflicts with the rights of migrants.

This line of inquiry aligns with the theoretical contributions of Ian Bruff and Cemal Burak Tansel on ‘authoritarian neoliberalism’ (2018). Their arguments concerning the exceptional authority granted to private actors complement analyses of how exceptional security measures gain acceptance through securitization processes and the projection of insecurity. The encroachment of private interests into domains once administered by public authorities produces legitimating narratives that further shield exceptional policies from attempts at desecuritization. The championing of these actors as cost-effective specialists allows for their dominance in the managing of migration and insulates their actions from external scrutiny due to their rights to proprietary information, even though their actions are preformed either on behalf of, or directly coordinated by, the government. When proprietary confidentiality overrides mechanisms such as freedom of information legislation, the resulting lack of transparency also weakens democratic and institutional oversight into the execution of policies (Bruff & Tansel, 2018). The implementation of offshoring policies extends this issue beyond the hands of private actors and into even less accountable extraterritorial jurisdictions.

This thesis engages with the concept of authoritarian neoliberalism to produce a descriptive analysis which not only joins the theoretical aspects highlighted by the security approaches of securitization and

practice-based security but also looks at an essential aspect of British immigration policy. As private actors continue to grow in importance for the implementation of security-oriented policies their role in the profitability of immigration policy must also be seen alongside the consequences of their employment. These consequences in sum amount to the real underlying goal of offshoring policies and their attempts at reducing migrants' ability to exist territorially through discourse and practice.

1.5 | Conclusion

This chapter has clarified the relationship between the methodological and theoretical foundations that guide this research. It began by outlining how CDA enables contextual, norm-sensitive investigation, particularly through Gee's Building Tasks and Tools of Inquiry, which structure the analysis of parliamentary discourse. It then established how these discursive structures align with the critical security frameworks of securitization and insecurity, showing how threats and identities are produced and managed through speech acts and broader security practices. The discussion in this chapter also highlighted the shared emphasis on intersubjectivity across CDA and critical security theory, especially in relation to the construction of meaning and the validation of discourse. Finally, the chapter examined how the concept of authoritarian neoliberalism strengthens this framework by explaining the role of private actors in externalized asylum regimes and connecting these practices to broader trends in marketized governance and state transformation.

2. | Post-Brexit Developments Towards the Figurative Offshore

2.1 | Introduction

The concept of ‘offshore’ introduced by Davies et al. frames the British immigration management system as one that externalizes migrants to address the alleged existential threat they pose to the state. This chapter will provide a baseline for comparing the prospective shift toward the literal offshoring of migrants, exemplified by the former Tory government’s now defunct Rwanda Plan. The state of affairs described by Davies et al. may reflect a previous condition from which the Rwanda Plan either evolves from or disrupts. This conceptualization of an offshore through British governmental practices also aligns with expanding scholarship in the security field, particularly regarding the interaction between migratory flows and security logics (Huysmans, 2005).

The sub-question guiding this chapter is: ‘How does parliamentary discourse reflect the framing and practices that constitute the *figurative offshore*?’ This question will be followed by examining parliamentary discourse related to migrants’ access to public funds and welfare as discursive securitization, as well as how the Home Office and its private contractors regulate this access as security practices. Special focus will be paid to the treatment of asylum seekers, whose status holds particular significance within the securitized offshore framework.

This thesis engages with the discursive and practice-based aspects of offshoring by looking at discourse under the premierships of Theresa May and Boris Johnson to understand more concretely what policies have led Davies et al. to argue for research on the ‘figurative offshore’. To highlight the differences in the discourses of these administrations highlights differences and continuities between them that I have more clearly outlined with *Core Concepts Table I* in Appendix A. As a researcher attempting to explore the development of norms which allowed for the Rwanda Plan, I believe that it is eminently important to understand where arguments for offshoring may have developed from or what norms they may be entirely departing from.

This thesis’ emphasis on the developments of irregular migrant identities as economic threats highlights the way in which parliamentary discourse informs the introduction of restrictive security

practices and the employment of private actors. Through parliamentarians' justification of irregular migrants as economic threats the restriction of their access to public goods and the use of private actors as cost-effective solutions becomes rational. The use of both measures alongside the development of the 'First Safe Country Rule' has facilitated the pre-emptive denial of migrants and instrumentally deterritorialized them to the effect of having placed them in a figurative offshore throughout the post-Brexit period. The denial of irregular migrants also compounds due to the authoritarian harm they experience at the hands of private actors who play a key role in the restriction of the wellbeing of migrants. The use of private actors by the British government demonstrates that the offshoring regime benefits from the use of various private actors whose consistent abuses and lack of accountability shields the government from its goal to deny as many migrants as possible.

2.2 | May and Migrants' Access to Public Goods

If the figurative offshoring of migrants results from the framing and practices aimed at securitizing migration, it is important to note that offshoring at this juncture primarily occurs within the UK. The state does not physically displace migrants but rather externalizes them within its own borders or denies them access through other mechanisms. During the Brexit process, this figurative offshoring became increasingly common, marked by a narrowing of resources and legal avenues available to migrants. Parliamentary discourse reflects these changes, particularly in relation to the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) policy. This aspect of the British immigration regime represents processes of pre-emptive denial, which follows the arguments that I trace throughout this thesis. This part of Chapter Two traces the connection between the framing of migrants as economic threats which shaped the practices of the figurative offshoring regime, specifically its denial of migrants' rights.

2.2.1 | *No Recourse to Public Funds and Other Public Provisions*

NRPF is a condition introduced by the *Immigration and Asylum Act 1999* which restricts migrants from accessing welfare and benefits. It was a significant focus of parliamentary discourse on immigration

during the post-Brexit period (*Amnesty for Undocumented*, 2021; *Children Act 1989*, 2021; *Immigration and Social*, 2019c, 2020f). This legal condition applies broadly, with only extremely narrow exceptions, typically when individuals fall under the control of the UK's immigration regime (*Children Act 1989*, 2021). NRPF exemplifies how British immigration policy modulates the state's relationship with migrants domestically.

The discourse of parliamentarians in the post-Brexit period reveals the underlying logic supporting this process is aimed at alienating irregular migrants. Conservative ministers consistently justify NRPF and argue for its continuation to reduce economic 'pull factors' which purportedly incentivize migration (*Channel Crossings*, 2021; *English Channel*, 2019; *Immigration and Social*, 2020c). This justification remains stable across cabinet and government changes and the specific economic concern it highlights can be connected to the referent object of security, that which should be protected from securitized threats (Huysmans, 2005). Thus, framing migrants as threats to the welfare system and the provision of public goods.

In much of the discourse on immigration during this period, migrants are depicted as economic burdens and strains on the state not unlike tabloid discourse around 'benefits cheats' (*Immigration and Social*, 2019c; *Nationality and Borders*, 2021b). This framing demonstrates that the key concern of these policies is to secure the welfare state, for British nationals and 'legitimate' migrants. Migrant identities in this context are constructed not along lines of race or religion, but through their access, or denial, to healthcare, social housing and other benefits.⁴ The cost-orientation of this threat construction also justifies the exceptional growing inclusion of private actors in the management of immigration policy which is consequential to the next section of this thesis.

⁴ Identity in this context is part of my use of Critical Discourse Analysis and a specific aspect of discourse that I was able to locate in my coding of Hansard transcripts. *Identity* as a 'Building Task' is a specific aspect of language which attempts to assign certain values to shape how groups of persons, in this case irregular migrants, are viewed. Identity is linked to my approach to securitization, as I discuss in Chapter One, the identification of migrants as drains on the welfare state informs what measures are permissible in order to address the security threat they pose.

Opposition Members of Parliament (MPs) often counter this framing by constructing migrant and asylum seeker identities as deserving have-nots, whose exclusion from the welfare system is unjust. This exclusion is framed as a source of physical and mental harm to migrants, a discourse that highlights the human cost NRPF (*Immigration and Social*, 2020a; *Nationality and Borders*, 2021b). In contrast, the Conservative government's discourse on migrant identities is often reactive, shaped in response to these characterizations. This reactive discourse contains elements that justify NRPF and further measures, such as fee increases, as necessary to balance international migration and maintain fairness for those who have gone through the immigration system (*Immigration and Social*, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d).

The provision of welfare and its restriction, particularly following the Brexit referendum, assumes multiple forms beyond mere access to public goods associated with a 'British identity'. Certain welfare provisions, such as family reunification, reserved exclusively to asylum seekers were also restricted as a response to increased irregular immigration justified by the securitizing discourse of Conservative MPs. These discourses also play a crucial role in debates surrounding identities and the attempts to promote a broad and stable 'economic migrant' definition by the government of Theresa May to address irregular migration. May's government argued that the legal category of asylum seeker was too broad to properly protect 'legitimate refugees' and allowed migrants with purely economic motives to skirt regular migratory routes.

Whilst the connections between 'irregular' and 'economic' migration was tempered by the more benevolent view on prospective asylum seekers under the May administration all nuanced discussion which focused on the wellbeing of migrants was undone with the shift to the Johnson government. The debates prior to this shift demonstrate some cross-party nuance existed which identified migrants as prospective beneficiaries of the state thus de-securitizing them to some extent. Johnson's implementation of further restriction conditions also decisively ended a significant aspect of parliamentary discourse which desecuritized migrants. The significance of this shift, when viewed alongside the expansion of NRPF, demonstrates how migrants' access to their rights has decreased significantly and made their domestic existence untenable.

2.3 | The Home Office and its Private Actors

The figurative offshoring of migrants is facilitated through the denial of welfare-based rights, which fall under the authority of the Home Office and its private actors. Academic literature on practice-based security highlights that direct access to information on the activities of these private entities is exceedingly difficult if not impossible to obtain (Walters, 2023). Access to information is a crucial issue with the governments use of private firms, which are not subject to freedom of information requests and typically claim proprietary rights over any logs they maintain regarding their practices (*Asylum Accommodation*, 2017).

The concealment of information and institutional practices surrounding immigration can be understood as a larger practice employed by the government to more effectively manage immigration as a security issue, effectively contributing to the offshoring of migrants by isolating them. The use of private actors isolates migrants from society, which, according to oppositional discourse, has increasingly assumes a role in providing financial support and welfare to migrants over time (*Asylum Accommodation*, 2017). While direct access to this information remains limited, I have been able to close the informational gap on the practices of private actors by looking at the discourse of oppositional MPs. The discourse produced by these MPs reveals critical information about offshoring, their lived experiences with migrants, discussion of current events and, in some cases, use of parliamentary privilege when understood together demonstrates that the use of private actors is instrumental. In some cases, Conservative ministers even retroactively conceded that the critiques of the opposition are accurate, this confirmation has allowed for me to more concretely identify the use of systemic security practices by the Home Office and its private actors. This part of Chapter Two introduces how the Home Office's practices and its use of private actors work to effectively offshore irregular migrants. It also engages with how the use of private actors reveals the governments marketization of immigration management and tacitly allows for institutional harms to be exacted against migrants in line with Bruff and Tansel's research on 'authoritarian neoliberalism'.

2.3.1 | *The Home Office: Processes of Obscuring and Denying Migrants*

The formulation of migrant identities previously discussed is integral to understanding how oppositional MPs interact with the Home Office and its private contractors. At a basic level, the interaction between these different actors becomes most evident when opposition MPs question Home Office ministers about specific asylum cases they have encountered in their surgeries (*Asylum Accommodation*, 2017; *Christmas Adjournment*, 2018; *Immigration Volume*, 2019; *Support for Asylum*, 2021). The discourse of these MPs seeks to humanize the complexities that arise from practices such as NRPF. These conditions contribute to challenges faced by all migrants throughout the immigration process, which MPs often highlight as being emblematic of broader systemic issues. In the post-Brexit period MPs are often characterized in discourse as a last resort for migrants facing undue difficulties in integrating and accessing public goods (*Asylum Accommodation*, 2017; *Children's Act*, 2019; *Christmas Adjournment*, 2018; *Immigration Volume*, 2019; *Support for Asylum*, 2021). These parliamentary discussions frequently reveal previously unknown information about the practices and inefficiencies within the Home Office as well as endemic violation of migrant's rights by private contractors.

One of the first issues raised in these discourses concerns the processing of immigration applications, Brexit-related policies significantly reduced the resources available to migrants and immigration courts in the adjudication of immigration claims. MPs play a vital role as intermediaries for migrants and intervene to raise issues with Home Office ministers when migrants in their constituencies are unduly affected by the limited resources available to immigration courts. MPs' ability to intervene in the immigration process reflects the Home Office's underfunding, inefficiency as well as the limited legal resources available to migrants (*Immigration and Social*, 2019b). Although migrants are not denied public legal representation an increase in caseloads without a corresponding increase in funding for public defence has led to the institutional misprocessing of claims. As a result, representation by a barrister, which would typically facilitate navigation through the British immigration system, often becomes counterproductive to the goals of claimants (*Nationality and Borders*, 2021b).

A significant issue in this process is the collective understanding among MPs that many claimants are not fully equipped to provide the necessary documentation for their applications to be properly assessed (*Nationality and Borders*, 2021c). This is particularly consequential for asylum seekers; many of whom flee their countries of origin without much documentation or may not have official recognition from their countries of origin. In these cases, applications are typically automatically denied, without claimants being informed that additional information could lead to their claims being reconsidered (*Support for Asylum*, 2021).

Without the intervention of MPs, who often reveal that cases are denied due to missing details in applications, these practices would remain obscured. Conditions including NRPF exacerbates the situation, as all migrants, including asylum seekers, are provided with the same level of representation. Their cases are classified as 'straightforward' rather than 'complex' by default, which limits access to more comprehensive legal support (*Refugee Children*, 2018). Appeals seeking recognition of the unique circumstances of individual cases are often delayed by this automatic classification and, as parliamentary discourse indicates, success is difficult to achieve without the assistance of MPs or specialized barristers (*Immigration and Asylum*, 2020g; *Refugee Children*, 2018).

Underlying these discourses by oppositional MPs is a consistent effort to humanize migrants and advocate for the expansion of welfare provisions, thus desecuritizing their existence and turning them into territorial subjects. These efforts, however, are met with counter-discourses from Conservative MPs and ministers, who often depoliticize or neutralize such appeals in their speeches. Oppositional MPs are characterized as 'playing politics' or sensationalizing isolated cases to push for reforms that, according to government officials, could jeopardize national security or disrupt the balance of the immigration system (*Nationality and Borders*, 2021b; *Ukraine Volume*, 2022). Instead of addressing the specifics of individual cases raised by critical MPs, responses from the Home Office often rely on technocratic language and that emphasize the efficiency of the system in handling most cases. This language is also importantly combined with justifications for the privatization of immigration management through discussions on the purported

quantifiable benefits that employing private companies has for effectively managing immigration (*Immigration and Social*, 2019a; *Immigration Volume*, 2019; *Safe Streets*, 2021).

The discourse of oppositional MPs reveals that in truth the management of immigration by the Home Office is often ineffective or directly denies migrants through indirect means. Home Office ministers in their attempts at flattening critiques of these practices project a picture of the immigration system as largely successful through technocratic language to counter the use of humanizing discourse by oppositional MPs. This technocratic language not only serves the goal of justifying the governments increased use of private actors but also makes the issues raised by oppositional MPS more abstract thus diminishing some of the impact of harms committed against migrants.

Whilst discourse from the opposition is analytically helpful to this thesis it also reveals another aspect of the government's attempts at offshoring migrants on a wider scale through parliamentary debates. Conservative parliamentarians use of discourse to deterritorialize migrants supports the practices put in place by the Home Office to deny migrants who have been able to escalate their claims to their local MPs. Migrants as such are figuratively offshored by public measures not only through the restrictive practices the Home Office but also through the discourse of government representatives which shape debates.

2.3.2 | *Private Actors: Immigration Management Transparency and Accountability*

The focus of oppositional parliamentarians goes beyond the actions of the Home Office; the role of private actors is a focal point of their critiques of the UKs immigration system. The Home Office uses private actors to support its efforts at managing immigration as cost-effective specialists, the employment of these actors is significant and as such their actions are not separatable from the figurative offshoring regime. While asylum seekers are referred to as the 'most vulnerable' class of people in the UK, this identitarian frame is most prevalent in opposition discourse addressing the actions of private actors. The practices of these private entities are portrayed by MPs as significant infractions against the rights of migrants in contravention of their responsibility as the governments contractors. Oppositional MPs frame the practices of private actors as not only exploitative towards asylum seekers but also as extractive in

relation to the public as taxpayers who fund these companies that ostensibly fail to provide adequate standards of living for asylum seekers (*Asylum Accommodation*, 2017; *Nationality and Borders*, 2021b).

The use of these companies in asylum management, many of whom are responsible for private prisons, follows similar logics to those of privatized prison development (*Nationality and Borders*, 2021a). The building of permanent state infrastructure to house and process asylum seekers is deemed deeply unpopular not only due to its immediate cost. The influx of irregular migrants crossing the English Channel is framed as an exceptional and temporary issue, one that successive cabinets assert should not be normalized justifying the employment of temporary contractors and facilities (*Migrant Crossings*, 2019).

These private companies operate within a framework of national contracts, which effectively distance them from local actors. During debates in 2017 concerning the renewal and expansion of such contracts, opposition MPs called for reforms, highlighting issues of transparency and accountability regarding the actions of contracted private actors. In contrast, cabinet ministers continued to rely on the technocratic language, further obscuring the reality of these private actors' operations (*Asylum Accommodation*, 2017). Critics of the national structure of contracts frequently underscore the lack of oversight and the rampant abuses and negligence affecting asylum seekers. While discussions surrounding the denial of rights by the Home Office tend to remain cordial, discourse on the actions of companies like G4S, Serco, Mite, Mears and Clearspring is presented with a derisive tone. Despite these concerns, cabinet ministers maintain confidence in the quality of services provided by these companies, with some even claiming that the housing provided to asylum seekers surpasses that of council housing (*Asylum Accommodation*, 2017).

The use of refrains about the success of the immigration system and the ongoing expansion of private actors in British immigration policy indicate that the abuses and denials committed by these contractors have, if not explicitly condoned by the Home Office, become entrenched in how immigration insecurity is managed, meaning that they are aspects of its figurative offshoring regime. This reflects the logic of the 'Hostile Environment' policy in place since the premiership of David Cameron, which targets

economic migrants and benefits from the ambiguity perpetuated by the May government regarding distinctions between ‘economic’ and ‘legitimate’ migrants.

Sanctions against offending corporations are minimal, if not entirely ineffective, in curbing their continued involvement in asylum management. For instance, G4S and Mite, despite widely publicized abuses at facilities such as Brook and Dungavel House, have continued to secure substantial national contracts (Schlembach & Hart, 2024; *Support for Asylum*, 2021). Discourse from Scottish opposition parliamentarians underscores the lack of accountability, particularly following the 2019 *Ali v Serco Ltd* ruling by the Scottish High Court. This ruling determined that private actors are not liable under the 1998 *Human Rights Act*; instead, the Home Office, as the contracting party, bears responsibility further limiting the recourse migrants must address the injustices they face (*Nationality and Borders*, 2021b).

This dynamic reflects the broader trend that Bruff and Tansel describe as ‘authoritarian neoliberalism’. Government ministries which interact with some aspect of the public are increasingly being replaced by private actors who are presented as cost-effective and specialized extensions of the state. These private actors are driven by capital interests and operate with minimal regulation, often working against the rights of the individuals they engage with, rather than supporting them (Bruff & Tansel, 2018). The privatization of immigration management, therefore, does not fit neatly into classical neoliberal frames but instead reveals a system where the extraction of profit and the disempowerment of vulnerable migrants have become central features of how the state governs migration and its associated insecurities.

2.4 | Johnson and the ‘First Safe Country Rule’

After Brexit, not only were provisions for the welfare of migrants curtailed, but government MPs dramatically shifted their rhetorical approach. Whereas the May administration had employed language which technocratically conveyed the success of its policies to address critiques, whilst still engaging in discussions with opposition ministers to create a functional asylum system (*June European*, 2018), the Johnson administration introduced a more rigid and exclusionary discourse. His administration not only

continued to use technocratic speech but also entirely rejected the premises of discourse which was critical of immigration policy.

The use of the ‘First Safe Country Rule’ by ministers in Johnson’s government fundamentally altered the framework for addressing the growth of asylum claims following the influx of migrants through the Dover Strait. According to this rule, any asylum seeker in the UK who did not enter through legal routes is, by default, considered illegitimate (*Migrant Crossings*, 2019). In doing so, the Johnson administration effectively resolved the issue raised by Theresa May regarding the creation of clearer exclusionary categories for ‘economic migrants’, to more quickly reject asylum applications, by further shifting the goalposts to securitize the entire immigration system. Whilst the tone of discourse under the Johnson administration changed the insistence by Conservatives on the goal of improving immigration conditions allowed for this slim continuity. The flexible adaptability of this new category of asylum seeker highlights an important fact about the nature of this component of the offshoring process. The imagination by parliamentarians of an ‘illegitimate’ migrants is amorphous and serves to fit the broader goal of the Conservative government, the incontestable denial of migrant’s rights.

This return to securitization marks a critical moment in British immigration policy and undoes the desecuritizing progress made by oppositional MPs who attempted to work alongside the May government. The ‘First Safe Country Rule’ provides a legal rationale for rejecting a wide range of asylum claims and underscores the administration’s broader efforts to frame immigration primarily as an economic insecurity issue. By securitizing migration, the Johnson government was able to redefine asylum policy in a way that rejects the idea of the UK as a sanctuary for those seeking protection, while simultaneously reinforcing the hostile environment aimed at so-called ‘economic migrants’. This securitization, combined with the expansion of private actors in immigration management and the depoliticization of welfare provision, reflects a larger trend in British politics where the rights of migrants are increasingly less important than state security.

2.5 | Conclusion

What emerges from parliamentary discourse on the framing and practices surrounding migrants is a systematic narrowing of legal provisions and access to welfare, driven by the perception of migrants as an existential threat to the UK and the allocation of public goods. This narrowing stems from an expanding legal framework that increasingly limits migrants' access to state resources, particularly evident in the case of asylum seekers, which serves the goal of figuratively offshoring them. The Home Office, along with its private contractors, plays a key role in this narrowing process, discursively denying issues with the immigration process and exposing migrants in their care to systemic abuses. In parliamentary debates, opposition MPs frequently characterize these injustices as systemic, while government MPs tend to frame them as isolated incidents.

This exclusion exposes irregular migrants to harm at the hands of opaque and unaccountable private actors involved in immigration management whose market driven interests run counter to their roles as proxies of the state responsible for the wellbeing of migrants. The governments blanket framing of private actors as cost-effective specialist alongside its abstract framing of the immigration process justifies private actors to face meagre penalties and ultimately for national contracts to be simply re-shuffled. The approaches of the respective governments to offshoring differs as I have highlighted through *Core Concepts Table I* in Appendix A, which will be expanded upon with the analysis of the rest of this thesis.

This thesis' next chapter will use these findings to explore how the figurative offshore, shaped by this securitization discourse, compares to the literal offshoring policies proposed by the Tory government, such as the *Rwanda Plan*. Although beyond the scope of this chapter, the reviewed discourse reveals that the rejection of irregular migrants, most of whom are asylum seekers, through policies like the 'First Safe Country Rule' has been notably unsuccessful. In fact, later discourse, closer to the proposal of the Rwanda Plan, appears to suggest that this shift coincides with the UK's retreat from its humanitarian responsibilities, both domestically and internationally.

3. | Shifting Towards the Rwanda Plan

3.1 | Introduction

The notion of a ‘Rwanda Plan’ remains unstable and has always existed as a series of policies and concepts shaped by successive Conservative Party ministers, many of whom lacked the tenure to develop these ideas coherently. The plan initially emerged under Boris Johnson’s administration, through the *Nationality and Borders Act*, spearheaded by Home Secretary Priti Patel. Rishi Sunak’s government further advanced the plan through the *Illegal Immigration and Safety of Rwanda Act(s)*. This legislative progression significantly influenced both the structure and overarching intent of the Plan. The central aim was to remove the asylum and immigration rights of irregular or illegal migrants, primarily individuals arriving in the UK by small boats and subsequently transfer them to Rwanda, where their claims would be assessed under Rwanda’s immigration and asylum system (Drakeley, 2023).

As I have explained elsewhere, I believe that the Rwanda Plan must still be investigated, despite its ostensible end at the hands of the current Labour government, in order to understand its domestic and international consequences. This chapter aims to apply discourse analysis to interpret the presentation of the Rwanda Plan and examine the emergent ‘literal offshore’ in comparison to findings from the previous and following chapters. The policies introduced in order to introduce the literal offshore in order to move away from domestic, figurative, offshoring is central to this chapter’s research. As such, I have posed the following sub-question to explore the development of the Rwanda Plan: ‘How does parliamentary discourse influence and reflect the policy changes which were developed to support the transition to a *literal offshore*?’

My research in this chapter is the second half of the historic comparison I am making for this thesis and looks for a potential continuity between the figurative offshore I explored in Chapter Two and literal offshoring I will explore here. I have traced offshoring domestically overall to conduct the international comparison in my next chapter in order to explore the significance of my findings across the interlinked British and Australian cases.

This chapter will elaborate the developments which followed the introduction of the Rwanda Plan and their connection to the discourse in post-Brexit immigration policy. Its findings suggest a form of continuity within the various governments of the Conservative party with a change in the ways discourse is instituted discursively. Conservative parliamentarians' escalating characterization of irregular migrants as physical threats to the wellbeing of the British public builds on the economic security concerns discussed in the previous chapter to justify their removal to Rwanda. The construction of migrants as physical threats alongside discourse which framed judicial actors as threats to the execution of immigration policy reveals that literal offshoring was extremely reliant on the removal of all rights including potential appeals.

This chapter also looks at the different structures for offshoring that the governments of Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak built to explore the practices developed for literal offshoring. The comparison of their approaches reveals that the Johnson government's approach marked a significant departure from domestic figurative offshoring as it previously existed, including an agenda to significantly reduce the governments reliance on private actors. Conversely Sunak's approach to the Plan involved an increase in the power of the Home Office and a discrete re-investment into private immigration management. This discrete return to the use of private actors not only increases the for authoritarian harms against migrants but occurs concurrent to an increasingly unclear picture around the cost and actions involved in both figurative and literal offshoring. As with the previous chapter of this thesis I have produced a *Core Concepts Table II* in Appendix A in order to clarify the differences between the approaches to literal offshoring of the Johnson and Sunak administration which will be relevant to the overall goal of this thesis.

This chapter argues that whilst the *literal offshore* did not come to fruition the discourse and policies used in order to execute the Rwanda Plan have silently buttressed the *figurative offshore* and the British government's goal of denying the rights of irregular migrants and expanded their exposure to authoritarian harm at the hands of its private actors.

3.2 | Shifting and Emerging Identities in Parliamentary Discourse

This thesis' previous chapter examined how the characterization of irregular migrant Identities in discourse aimed to *figurative offshore* them and justify removing their rights to public goods. The Rwanda Plan marks a shift in managing claims of irregular migrants by moving from a limited denial of access to public goods to an absolute denial of any rights. In this chapter I return to my earlier arguments on the connection between how parliamentarians identify migrants as threats and what becomes permissible actions against them. I will argue that Conservative parliamentary discourse re-characterizes migrants as significant physical threats which supports efforts at criminalizing irregular immigration allowing the government to strengthen its denial of migrants and justify its attempt at removing them to Rwanda.

3.2.1 | *The Reformulation of Migrant Identities*

The introduction of the *Nationality and Borders Act* initiated this shift, signalling the beginning of the rapid transition toward constructing a literal offshore system in Rwanda. The *Act* preceded the *Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)* with Rwanda and it laid groundwork not only through its statutes but also by reconfiguring discourse surrounding migrant identities throughout the legislative process. Section 16 of the *Act* introduced conditions for displacing individuals to a 'safe third State' by amending the *Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act* of 2002 (Home Office, 2023; *Nationality and Borders*, 2021).

At first glance, this amendment appears to be the most significant step toward the Rwanda Plan. However, equally, if not more importantly, the *Act* enacted pivotal changes to the classification of asylum seekers under Section 40, which criminalized so-called 'illegal entry' into the UK (*Nationality and Borders*, 2022). This change holds particular significance because, despite previous references to irregular movement into the UK as 'illegal', primarily by backbench Conservative parliamentarians, such mobility had not been clearly defined as unlawful. Critics argue that seeking asylum, by its very nature, constitutes an irregular form of mobility, often requiring the transgression of sovereign boundaries (Drakeley, 2023).

Criminalizing these actions results in displacement, as such forms of mobility are now deemed illegal, rendering individuals' rights to apply for asylum inadmissible in the UK while still potentially

tenable in a ‘safe third State’, in line with subsequent changes introduced by the *Illegal Immigration Act* (*Illegal Immigration*, 2022; *Illegal Migration*, 2023a; *Illegal Migration*, 2023b; *Illegal Migration*, 2023c). This shift effectively creates two tiers of asylum status, echoing earlier attempts under the May government to establish a disqualifying ‘economic migrant’ classification.

This criminalization aligned with a concurrent criminal perspective on migrants advanced by prominent Conservative frontbenchers, most notably Priti Patel. Whilst Patel and the Conservative Party at large continued to utilize ideational framings of migrants, as deserving of protection identifying them as ‘the most vulnerable in society’, they engaged in deliberate efforts to discursively classify irregular migrants as illegal (*Asylum-seeking Children*, 2023; *Global Migration*, 2022; *Nationality and Borders*, 2021a; *Safety of Rwanda*, 2023). Conservative frontbenchers engaged more directly with perceived failures of the immigration system, employing discourse that prioritized the threat of violent crimes committed by migrants against the British public. This framing departed from opposition ministers' earlier humanizing narratives during May's premiership and instead emphasized cases where migrants evaded screening, circumvented the legal system, or escaped detention (*Global Migration*, 2022; *Nationality and Borders*, 2021a; *Nationality and Borders*, 2021d; *Illegal Migration*, 2023a; *Safety of Rwanda*, 2023).

As I have outlined in Chapter Two, the welfare state functioned as the primary referent object of securitization threatened by the entrance of irregular migrants as illegitimate claimants. By presenting examples of migrant violence and constructing asylum policy in response to such perceived threats, the groundwork for the Rwanda Plan strategically expanded the referent object of security to encompass a possibility for their physical threat. This new focus of Conservative parliamentarians' discourse, joining irregular migration and criminality, interestingly does not erase the economic threat imagined in the Brexit period but works to promote the understanding another durable threat to their audience.

3.2.2 | *The Judiciary in Parliamentary Discourse*

Alongside rhetoric which centres migrant criminality, critiques targeted ‘lefty lawyers’ and organizations providing legal resources to migrants whose access to specialized legal assistance remains

limited by NRPF. Within narratives linking migrants to threats against both public goods and the physical security of the British populace, these actors are discussed in debates by Conservative politicians as obstacles frustrating essential deportation processes. This obstruction primarily occurred through court injunctions or complex appeals following the issuance of priority removal notices, often involving the introduction of new information, such as claims under human trafficking legislation, that altered case proceedings (*Illegal Immigration*, 2022; *Illegal Migration*, 2023a).

Conservative ministers framed courts as exploiting this ambiguity to delay or extend cases, despite claims of these actions being *ultra vires*. Consequently, legislative changes brought by the *Nationality and Borders, Illegal Immigration and Safety of Rwanda Act(s)* explicitly sought to close these so-called ‘loopholes’ and expanded the ability of the Home Office to act unilaterally (*Illegal Migration*, 2023a; *Illegal Migration*, 2023e; *Nationality and Borders*, 2021a; *Nationality and Borders*, 2021b).

Immigration lawyers and supporting NGOs thus became entwined with the expanding security concerns highlighted by Tory frontbenchers during this period. Unlike irregular migrants, these groups exist outside the asylum system yet possess significant means of reaching into the figurative offshore. Through specialized appeals processes, they purportedly frustrate deportation efforts, often indefinitely (*Asylum and Migration*, 2024; *Illegal Migration*, 2023c; *Nationality and Borders*, 2021a; *Safety of Rwanda*, 2024a). Parliamentary discourse targeting these groups remained restrained when related to the developing discourse against irregular migrants following the introduction of the Rwanda Plan. Conservative ministers illustrate the threat of legal intervention as one which new legislation can circumnavigate in order to address threats to the efficiency of offshoring.

References to legal actors align explicitly with legislative measures, including the criminalization of irregular migration under the Rwanda Plan and displacement-focused policies. These changes drove the British immigration system toward increased efficiency by reducing asylum seekers’ avenues for legal recourse, particularly through the *Illegal Immigration Act*. The government’s tenuous relationship to actors in the judicial system reveal that the logics underpinning the Rwanda Plan not only aimed to removing migrants physically but to entirely strip them of any rights including the possibility for appeals. The

government's ability to restrict access to public goods through the figurative offshore were relatively unrestricted, with migrants often having to rely on their MPs to advocate for their cases, though the jump to a literal offshore constitutes a significant expansion of that denial.

3.3 | The Legal Structure of the Literal Offshore Throughout the Legislative Process

While it is important to understand the role of Identities in discourse to understand the shifting overarching logics of the Rwanda Plan, I argue that the construction of the literal offshore through the practices that accompany it should also be examined. In my analysis throughout Chapter Two the discursive conflicts between ministers and oppositional parliamentarians allowed for the obscuring practices of the government alongside its private actors. This type of revelatory parliamentary contestation is almost entirely absent in debates on the Rwanda Plan due to its intentionally secretive implementation. My analysis in the last chapter relied on a large sample of discourse which I cross-referenced in order to identify how parliamentarians collectively discussed the practices of the Home Office and its private actors. I also looked at how Conservative ministers engaged with the issues raised by the opposition and found various instances where ministers retrospectively conceded that there exist problematic institutional practices within the immigration and asylum system.

This dynamic is notably absent in discourse surrounding the Rwanda Plan. When questioned, frontbench Conservative MPs display a marked reluctance, or outright refusal, to discuss specific aspects of the Plan. This trend becomes particularly evident in parliamentary debates leading up to the announcement of the *MoU* between the UK and Rwanda. During this period, backbench Conservatives appeared uninformed, repeatedly probing for details yet receiving only consistent snubs from their frontbench peers (*Nationality and Borders*, 2022a).

The absence of this kind of debate makes the approach developed in Chapter Two impossible. I approach parliamentary discourse in this chapter differently by looking at incumbent and former cabinet members critiques of the Rwanda Plan to understand how it differs between administrations. The Party faced significant institutional and individual controversies, culminating in the resignation of two Prime

Ministers and an unprecedented turnover in cabinet positions (Baker et al., 2023; Gregory, 2022; Stewart et al., 2022). These disruptions resulted in a diffusion of information from the front- to the back- benches as former cabinet members involved in initial iterations of the Rwanda Plan critiqued how it had developed. Consequently, inconsistencies in access to information and shifting conceptions of the immigration system contributed to clear fractures in parliamentary discourse.

These fractures are most evident in the contrast between the Johnson and Sunak administrations, particularly in the parliamentary contestation between ministers from each leadership. While both administrations adhered to overarching logics supporting the Rwanda Plan, differences in emphasis, access to information and rhetorical framing reveal significant shifts in understanding and implementing asylum practices.⁵

3.3.1 | *Diverging Views on the Asylum Detention Estate*

While the Johnson and Sunak governments both follow the same logic, criminalizing migrants to justify restrictions on legal interventions, their discourse reveals notable differences in the practices they imagined underlying this denial. Under Johnson, ministerial rhetoric framed migrants explicitly as tied to criminality in various dimensions, whereas Sunak's Home Secretaries, Suella Braverman and James Cleverly, adopted comparably more moderate language. Statements linking migrants to criminal behaviour under Braverman and Cleverly remained abstract, focusing on the purported prevalence of offences committed by specific national groups (*Illegal Migration*, 2023b; *Nationality and Borders*, 2021b; *Safety of Rwanda*, 2023).

Concurrently, and at times preceding these moderated perspectives, former government ministers began voicing disagreements over perceived policy shift. While most of these disagreements remained

⁵ Liz Truss and her government remain notably absent from both this chapter and the thesis as a whole. Despite Truss's expressed commitments to the Rwanda Plan, her government did not hold any legislative sessions concerning the *Nationality and Borders Bill*. Consequently, no significant discursive construction or contribution to the Plan emerged during her brief tenure.

conceptual, they exposed discrepancies in practices related to managing the asylum estate, particularly the quality of housing provided to asylum seekers. Front- and back- bench ministers in discourse attribute the significance of these discrepancies in their vision as entirely undermining the Rwanda Plan and leading to the creation of an existential threat to British borders.

As previously discussed, asylum services remained contentious in discourse due to their immense costs, tied to the involvement of private actors in detention management, including staffing and housing. Throughout the development of the Plan comparisons between the quality of housing provided to asylum seekers and the quality of council housing became prominent. Ministers who had once made these comparisons as endorsements of the humanitarian standards of care for asylum seekers reinterpreted these differences as fundamentally unjust. The growing reliance on hotels when other forms of suitable accommodation reached capacity was imagined by Conservative MPs as a form of perverse reward for ‘economic migrants’ with tenuous claims to asylum (*Global Migration Challenge*, 2022; *Immigration and Borders*, 2021a; *Safety of Rwanda*, 2023).

This critique revealed a contrasting vision of the asylum housing regime. Between 2021-2022 Home Secretary Priti Patel outlined plans for opening new detention centres on government-owned land, including decommissioned military airstrips and barracks (*Global Migration*, 2022; *Nationality and Borders*, 2021d; *Nationality and Borders*, 2022a). These arrangements aimed to minimize perceived luxurious amenities and freedoms for detained migrants (*Asylum and Migration*, 2024; *Safety of Rwanda*, 2023). This approach sought to address the issue of housing migrants destined for displacement to Rwanda more directly and punitively by turning their indefinite suspension in the figurative offshore into a more uncertain situation in Rwanda. For private actors this turn in events signalled a potentially tenuous future at the helm of immigration policy, the shift towards literal offshoring by the British government at this point was a radical shift which comprehensively did away with privatization efficiency narratives.

Private actors’ uncertain future in immigration policy would be short lived. The Sunak administration from its formation began to gradually continue the expansive use of hotels and private companies, indicating a clear preference for maintaining the government’s reliance on private actors. This

approach reflected a superficially more moderate stance toward the interim housing of asylum seekers whilst still remaining committed to the ultimate goal of literal offshoring. The Sunak government return to the use of private actors and the public/private management of immigration as a security issue is the most interesting deviation from the Rwanda Plan of Johnson and Patel. The Johnson government's continuation of May's goal to create an inferior classification of 'economic migrants' which culminated in the Rwanda Plan constitutes and was accompanied by a continual escalation of securitization. Private actors' return to the helm signals a step backwards in the established securitization of immigration, which did not rely on overt efficiency narratives.

Sunak and his ministers would not highlight private actors as preceding administrations had in parliament but instead would commit to a discrete and gradual expansion of their employment.⁶ The lack of clarity around private actors and their use reflects the expansion of practices which obscure the immigration process which impose a form of authoritarian neoliberalism on irregular migrants. Johnson's turn away from this system would have reduced the ability for the British government to justify their domestic denial of migrants, whilst disruptive to the narrative of the Rwanda Plan as it was implemented, Sunak's return to the use of private actors marks a sort of comfortable return to the government's form of domestic offshoring. Whilst the governments portrayed the Rwanda Plan as a radical departure from the existing security norms and marketized management of immigration the Plan instead allowed for the expansion of the existing figurative offshore.

3.3.2 | *Bridging vs. Oversight, Differing Interpretations of the Literal Offshore*

The differences between the Johnson and Sunak administrations also extend to their implementation of the Rwanda Plan. Under Johnson ministers argued that the *Nationality and Borders Act*

⁶ Many members of Sunak's cabinet(s) were also important actors in preceding governments who had previously employed efficiency narratives and promoted the use of private actors as the future of immigration policy, making their silence on the expansive use of actors in this period particularly poignant.

made its plan to displace migrants to Rwanda an inherently legal policy (*Global Migration*, 2022; *Nationality and Borders*, 2021a). When challenged on the grounds of legality incumbent ministers insist that its standards and operation were either: so novel they are beyond the standards of international law or alternatively well within the boundaries of legal challenges such as claims it violated the non-refoulement principle (*Safety of Rwanda*, 2024a).

The governments focus on implementing the Rwanda Plan justified the removal of the rights of irregular migrants to the point they would be detained as criminals in the UK to be removed to Rwanda. The fact that irregular migrants would have no rights in the UK was supported by arguments which insisted that their rights to asylum were only litigable in Rwanda due to the *MoU* and the fact that the two countries were signatories to most of the same international conventions on Asylum. I have termed this interpretation of the law by the British government a ‘bridging’ view on the rights of irregular migrants.

Within Johnson’s ministers’ discourse, the fact that the UK and Rwanda were signatories to the same agreement established a relationship between the UK and Rwanda's asylum processing systems, rendering asylum claims legally commensurable (*Global Migration*, 2022). Conservative frontbenchers during this period dismissed questions regarding the wellbeing of asylum seekers in Rwanda, asserting that such challenges undermined the integrity of this now developing special relationship between the UK and Rwanda. This stance included an outright denial of any form of oversight mechanisms operated by the UK within the developing Rwandan asylum processing infrastructure (*Asylum Seekers*, 2022; *Global Migration*, 2022; *Nationality and Borders*, 2022b).

Under the administration of Rishi Sunak, a shift away from this self-coherent bridging view clearly occurs. Shortly before Johnson’s resignation, the European Court of Human Rights directly challenged the premise of the Rwanda Plan’s legality, citing uncertainties over Rwanda's ability to process asylum claims appropriately (*Nationality and Borders*, 2022b). This challenge proved particularly significant, as it originated from a body outside the bridging framework; Rwanda is not a signatory to the *European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)* (*The European*, 2022). Additionally, the arguments of the Court were particularly cogent and adopted in the challenges to the Plan voiced by of oppositional MPs in

parliamentary. Sunak and his ministers inherited this issue, later encountering further challenges from domestic courts, which raised concerns that Rwanda might be unsafe for specific groups of migrants (McNeil, 2024).

While Sunak's discourse outwardly maintained consistency with prior rejections of challenges to the Plan's legitimacy, effectiveness and safety, these legal obstacles appear to have impacted the construction of the literal offshore. Previously, discourse centred on so-called 'lefty lawyers' as the principal barriers to effective immigration proceedings. However, direct challenges from judicial bodies, both domestic and international, became unavoidable hurdles. Rather than openly antagonizing judicial actors, ministerial discourse under Sunak began to reflect a dual strategy, expressing deference to the courts whilst simultaneously disputing their rulings on technical grounds through the introduction of instrumental legislation which relied on his government's own interpretations of the Courts challenge (*Safety of Rwanda*, 2023).

This adjusted discourse retained the assertion that the Rwanda Plan was still inherently legal. The *Safety of Rwanda Act* exemplified this shift, framing legislative changes as 'clarificatory' measures designed to resolve ambiguities and reinforce the Plan's legality, whilst in no uncertain terms simply being a policy asserting a purportedly unchallengeable legal fact (*Illegal Migration*, 2024a; *Illegal Migration*, 2024c; *Safety of Rwanda*, 2023). Simultaneously, previous assertions regarding the UK's non-involvement in Rwanda's operational processes gave way to assurances of a certain level of oversight. This oversight included the introduction of a monitoring committee tasked with ensuring compliance with international norms though details around this remain unclear (*Safety of Rwanda*, 2023).

This evolution in discourse marked a significant recalibration of the Rwanda Plan's legal and operational framing which happened alongside the governments return to the use of private actors, both actions demonstrating the government under Sunak's more direct involvement in the potential exposure of migrants to harm. While the Johnson administration denied any basis for challenge and rejected oversight mechanisms, Sunak's government adopted a more cautious and reactive approach, introducing oversight to address mounting judicial scrutiny on the protection of migrant's rights. Whilst the introduction of oversight

is superficially promising historically the governments oversight over the parts of its immigration policy it delegates has allowed for the removal of responsibility as I have discussed with regards to private actors. As I will argue in the following chapter through my discussion of the Australian Pacific/Malaysian Solution(s) the introduction of this responsibility is not necessarily effective or even aimed at ensuring the rights of irregular migrants are protected in a *literal offshore*.

The previous sub-section of this chapter highlights how the silent revitalization of private actors entails a return to a more certain type of offshoring; the re-introduction of oversight in the migration of private actors also mirrors this development. Conservative parliamentary discourse under Johnson escalated the securitization of irregular immigration to the extent it abandoned the beneficial use of private actors as part of an inefficient system of previous immigration practices. Sunak's by re-introducing the use of these private actors thus constitutes a syncretization of security logics which formed the practice of denial by private actors in the post-Brexit and Rwanda Plan periods. The government's formulation of securitization under Sunak, whilst producing rationale which justifies practice of denial against irregular migrants, does not address the issues with the protection of migrant's rights in the governments then prospective figurative and literal offshoring regimes.

3.4 | The Muddying of the Fiscal Picture, Development and Private Actions in Discourse

In this sub-section Chapter Three I will explain how the obfuscation of offshoring costs play a role in the construction of a literal offshore and have also expanded the existing figurative offshore in the UK. I do so in order to contribute to the question I have posed for this chapter, particularly focusing on how parliamentary discourse reflects the gradual restriction of information on the cost of government policies which also allows for harms perpetuated against migrants to rapidly lose political salience.

Oppositional parliamentarians in their discourse throughout the development of the Rwanda Plan emphasize their contention on the use of private actors in less advanced ways relative to the post-Brexit period. Limited information available to oppositional MPs accounts for these constraints, where previously

these MPs directly interacted with the authoritarian consequences of these policies in their constituencies the distant implementation of the Rwanda Plan obscured their ability to grapple with its human consequences. The intensive securitization of migrants as physical threats which started under the Johnson government has not faced effective de-securitizing discourse as a consequence of the Plans abstract consequences. Instead, the focus of these parliamentarians became entirely focused on the extreme cost and logistic issues of the Plan, distracting them from the expansion of the figurative offshore.

In many instances, incumbent ministers presented inconsistent cost information across legislative sessions creating further confusion around the ability to trust the limited amount of official costs presented by the Home Office. The only consistently cited figure throughout parliamentary debates remains the widely discussed £120 million paid to Rwanda with the ratification of the *MoU* (McNiel, 2024; *Rwanda Plan*, 2024; *Asylum and Migration*, 2024). This inconsistency marks a clear discontinuity with prior processes of information diffusion in arrangements under the figurative offshore, raising critical questions about the causes and implications of this shift.

3.4.1 | On Development

The Rwanda Plan appears designed to reduce the UK's reliance on private actors in managing asylum claims arriving on its shores. Logically, this suggests a shift from a public/private relationship toward an alternative arrangement wherein the inclusion of extraterritorial public actors such as the Rwanda government is preferential in some way to a purely market driven offshore. This part of my chapter builds on my analysis of the previous section in order to argue that the funding of the Rwanda Plan through development funds demonstrates the British government's ability to effectively use its resources to implement literal offshoring as obscurely as possible. The governments covert implementation of offshoring demonstrates its significant control over immigration policy debate.

The framing used to present the Rwanda Plan and the general relationship that Rwanda and the UK have during this period tacitly confirms this shift. Incumbent Tory ministers notably tie the relationship to economic development narratives, referring to it as the *UK and Rwanda Migration and Economic*

Development Partnership, creating an inherent contradiction in their discourse: Rwanda is simultaneously presented as a safe and capable destination for processing nearly one hundred thousand irregular migrants from the UK, in a short order, whilst also requiring direct support to improve infrastructure, develop asylum-handling expertise and establish an effective court system for asylum claims (*Global Migration*, 2022; *Illegal Immigration*, 2023; *Rwanda Plan*, 2024; *UK-Rwanda*, 2023).

This development support also involves an unusual arrangement between the Home Office and the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), wherein funds from both the Home Office and ODA from the FCDO intermittently flowed to the Rwandan government (*Asylum and Migration*, 2024). Beyond these challenges in calculating costs even from an external perspective, inconsistencies in recording the disbursement of funds by relevant government departments ultimately led to requests for external assistance to conduct audits (*Asylum and Migration*, 2024). Whilst other international immigration agreements, such as the UK-France partnership, remained reliably published and consistently accounted for (*Rwanda Plan*, 2024).

The Conservative parliamentary discourse which occurred alongside these developments' conflicts with these developments. The focus of parliamentarians under the Johnson administration emphasized a shift towards a more effective, and thus better value, immigration system with the reduction of private actors. This new discursive narrative was in direct conflict with the assertions made by many of the same ministers only years prior on the efficiency of private immigration management and was also made without a direct answer to the real costs of the Rwanda Plan

The fiscal picture was also further obscured as attempts by oppositional MPs to access information through formal channels such as FOI requests encounter constraints, with officials citing 'commercial confidentiality' as the rationale for withholding information even prior to the Sunak's premiership (*Rwanda Plan*, 2024, p.3; *Safety of Rwanda*, 2024a). A protection which extends to cover the proprietary information of private actors whose standards for disclosure are significantly more stringent than any public agency. These contradictions run directly counter to the purported objective of fostering a new and undefined public/private relationship.

3.4.2 | *Obscuring the Figurative Offshore, a New Normal*

The concept of ‘commercially confidential’ facts remain nebulous throughout discourse surrounding the construction of the Rwanda Plan, amplifying critiques regarding accountability and transparency. This manoeuvring and shift in the focus of immigration securitization appear to obscure ongoing practices and certain facts about migrant processing known to the government. Discussions on the Plan’s costs or practical assessments persisted throughout the four-year legislative period, while limited attention was given to ongoing developments and controversies within domestic immigration policy. The renewed focus of oppositional MPs on the unclear fiscal status of the Plan signifies a successful shift away from more direct humanitarian concerns and towards issues whose facts were under the control of the Home Office.

When specific information surfaced regarding private actors such as Mitie, involved in training for migrant transportation to Rwanda, or the use of charter flights replacing the prior reliance on commercial flights, these details remained secondary to parliamentary outrage. Initial parliamentary discourse contested the two-tiering of asylum claims and the redefinition of migrant identities, linking them to criminal narratives. Over time, these perspectives gradually became less prominent, ultimately losing their impact in plenary parliamentary sessions and thus obscuring the ongoing growth of aspects of the figurative offshore formerly discussed. In the background of debates, especially following the failure to reduce migration perceived in the transition between the governments of Johnson and Sunak the return to reliance on private actors not only meant a return to the status quo but rather an expansion of that reliance. This return to an overt reliance on public/private partnerships, whilst shifting the deterritorialization of migrants into a literal offshore also factually sustains and expands the figurative offshore in Britain.

Although the Plan did not come into full effect under the Tory government, significant discursive shifts occurred which shaped debates surrounding migrants within the UK's immigration security regime, compared to the discourse examined in the previous chapter. Speech acts redirected focus from the established ‘normal’ state of politics, produced by irregular migration and small boat arrivals and, perhaps

unintentionally, obscured migrants' existence within the figurative offshore. While the primary objective of displacing migrants to Rwanda ultimately failed, the legislation comprising the Rwanda Plan simultaneously expanded the Home Office's powers to unilaterally make decisions and circumvent judicial challenges regarding their treatment of asylum seeker. This power has been supported by the escalating securitization of migrants as physical threats to Britons pioneered by the Johnson government and the Sunak governments re-investment into the domestic use of private actors in managing immigration processes and facilities.

3.5 | Conclusion

This chapter has examined the developments in the production of the literal offshore through parliamentary discourse, reviewing various aspects of this process.

The analysis begins with shifts in the focus of discourse and the reformulation of migrant Identities. From the inception of the Rwanda Plan, the constructed threat of migrants expanded, facilitating their securitization and the absolute denial of rights within the UK's immigration and asylum regime. Parliamentary discourse supports this denial by constructing migrant criminality and the perceived threat of judicial intervention disrupting the immigration system adding another layer to the securitization of immigration as a domestic issue.

My analysis of discourse in parliamentary sessions on the Rwanda Plan also reveals differences between the Johnson and Sunak administrations' ideas for the Rwanda Plan (see Appendix A: *Core Concepts Table II*). These respective governments adopt distinct views on the place of private actors and the legality of the scheme. Whilst the Plan was implemented as a drastic turn away from the domestic management of immigration under Johnson the return to the use of private actors by Sunak shows that it was an effective distraction in parliamentary debates which allowed for the existing figurative offshore to grow without scrutiny. The governments' diverging views on the legality of the scheme and its consequential impact on their purported responsibility towards migrants is also demonstrably a display of the government's ability

to cleverly re-formulate the Plan whilst maintaining as little accountability for the exposure of migrants to prospective authoritarian harm at the hands of private actors and in Rwanda.

The government's attempts at shedding accountability in the management of immigration extends to its funding of the Plan and has had a significant impact on the focus of parliamentary debates. This impact has consequentially almost entirely muted any concerns on the harms perpetuated against migrants through figurative and literal offshoring to entirely focus on the lack of information and improbability of the Rwanda Plan. Whilst the Rwanda Plan has ultimately been unsuccessful in literally offshoring irregular migrants the discourse and policies developed to support it under Sunak have significantly expanded the securitization of irregular migrants and made the harms they face in the figurative offshore almost entirely abstract. Literal offshoring and the discourse and policies executed in order to bring it about have necessarily expand the identification of migrants as threats and their exposure to harm at the hands of private actors.

4. | Australian Offshoring in the Early 21st Century

4.1 | Introduction

Australia and its attempts at literal offshoring precedes and has outlived the development of the Rwanda Plan in the UK which allows for a close and compelling comparison of their contexts through secondary academic literature. Policy transfers literature on the Anglosphere argues there is a strong connection between these two countries implementation of legislation which suggests that analogous developments are rarely the consequence of unlinked coincidence. As such this thesis will benefit from this additional angle of international comparison, not to argue for generalizations on the possibilities for offshoring, but to develop its emphasis on the use of offshoring framing and practices to obscure migrants.

The UK's departure from the EU introduced a renewed focus on the implementation of 'Australian style' immigration policy began to grow in prominence. Whilst this discourse primarily centres on reformulating the British immigration system to include a meritocratic points-based system, the simultaneous turn toward the Rwanda Plan also reflects the potential influence of the Australian government's Pacific Solution.

The government of John Howard controversially deployed military actors in late August 2001 to restrict the MV Tampa, a Norwegian commercial vessel which had rescued 433 asylum seekers, from entering Australian territorial waters (Kampmark, 2002). This action constituted the impetus for the novel Pacific Solution. The Solution emerged in 2001 through a series of amendments to the *Migration Act* (1958); the Howard government put forward these amendments and initiated the offshore processing of irregular migrants. The Solution has endured since and evolved despite repeated challenges to its legal and ethical grounds. The government of Kevin Rudd notably suspended it in 2008 (Amnesty International, 2018). Whilst the government of Julia Gillard reinstated it in 2012, the interim period also included an attempt at re-creating it through a 'Malaysian Solution,' whose failure mirrors the Rwanda Plan. Following its reinstatement, Rudd took it up again after successfully challenging Gillard's leadership in a 2013 party leadership spill (Davidson, 2016; Rhodes, 2015). The Pacific Solution, whilst diminished in scale relative

to its size during the Howard administration, has since remained a fact of the Australian immigration regime.

I have produced two concept tables in Appendix A for this chapter to demonstrate my findings: *Core Concepts Table III* illustrates my comparison of the Howard government's Pacific Solution and the Gillard government's Malaysian Solution. With *Core Concepts Table IV* I clarify the conclusions I draw between the Rwanda Plan and the Pacific/Malaysian Solution(s) which I will further develop in this thesis' conclusion.

The Pacific Solution provides an undeniably rich source for policy information relevant to this thesis. Despite claims from members of the British Conservative Party regarding the distinct nature of the Pacific Solution and the Rwanda Plan, I contend that a comparison remains important (Mehta & Whiteside, 2022). The insistence that the Rwanda Plan functions as an independent legal scheme with no connection to the Pacific Solution directly contradicts the modern body of literature studying policy transfer in the Anglosphere. Scholars examining policy transfer, most prominently Legrand (2012, 2016, 2021), have demonstrated the permeability of ideas and policy information between the US, Australia, Canada and the UK, and argue that communication between states in the Anglosphere plays a central role in theorizing, costing and metering policy. Beyond these broader connections, Smith et al. specifically offer a compelling account that shows that throughout the 20th century policy developments in Australia significantly influenced the reshaping of the British immigration regime (2021). These connections mean that in a sense the implementation of the Rwanda Plan in the UK are an extension of the ongoing development of offshoring in Australia with linking logics. As such the international comparison of these offshoring policies can add to the research already produced in Chapters Two and Three of this thesis.

Based on this context, this chapter investigates the following research question: 'What can the similarities and differences between the Pacific Solution and Rwanda Plan reveal about the establishment of offshoring policies?' In this chapter, I aim to conduct a comparative analysis of the developments explored in the previous chapters alongside the evolution of the Pacific Solution, to reveal both convergences and divergences between the two approaches. Through this analysis I intend to advance a

more comprehensive understanding of the ways to approach the developing trajectory of future literal offshoring policies connected to the Australian and British models.

This chapter will explore these aspects of offshoring in Australia and discuss the similarities and differences with the Rwanda Plan. In this chapter I will look at how the construction of the Pacific and Malaysian Solution(s) and the policies which supported their development and allowed for the blanket denial of irregular migrants as well as created the legal category of ‘illegal immigrant’ in Australia. These developments resonate with the discourse and policies necessary to implement the Rwanda Plan demonstrating the ability for both respective governments to ensure migrants domestic claims are untenable. Through my discussion of the failure of the Malaysian Solution I will argue that these challenges demonstrate the judicial limit which these offshoring policies with minimal assurances of migrant’s rights face. I believe that the shift under Sunak to ensure oversight over literal offshoring resembles the oversight which the Australian government had over its offshoring regime which rather than allowing for accountability in offshoring instead allow for a more effective denial of migrant’s rights.

I also explore the importance of identities and how migrants are characterized as security threats, as I have argued in the last chapter the escalation from economic to criminal threat was used in order to justify the shift to the Rwanda Plan. I will argue in this chapter that various Australian government has identified irregular migrants in similar terms but also projects them as prospective terror threats have made its immediate escalation to the Pacific/Malaysian Solution(s) a tenable policy solution. I believe that this discrepancy may reveal why the implementation of the Rwanda Plan became protracted.

Finally, I will discuss how the implementation of the Pacific Solution and the Australian government’s exclusive use of private actors not only mirrors the unaccountability I have connected to the Rwanda Plan but also demonstrates how this unaccountability exacerbates the authoritarian harm migrants are subject to. The exposure of irregular migrants to authoritarian neoliberalism is much like in the UK a tacitly accepted part of their marketized approaches to the management of immigration which is both benefits and is an aspect of their respective offshoring regimes.

Through this chapter my aim is to use my comparisons to look at how offshoring in Australia developed in order to refine the historic comparison I completed throughout Chapters Two and Three. I follow the arguments made in policy transfer literature on the connection between immigration policy in the UK and Australia, as such I believe that aspects of the Pacific and Malaysian Solution(s) influenced Johnson and Sunak's visions for the Rwanda Plan. Whilst the Plan ultimately never came to be, and as such very little information is available on its structure, that by making this comparison I will be able to solidify my arguments on the importance of the relevant developments in discourse, security and neoliberalism.

4.2 | On the Legal Construction of the Australian 'Offshore'

The critical literature examining the role of the judicial system in the Australian offshoring process offers a valuable framework for analysing the attempted construction of the Rwanda Plan. The Australian legal system maintains a structural resemblance to the UK's parliamentary and judicial model (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000; Legrand, 2012, 2016). This resemblance constitutes a significant factor in the study of policy transfer across the Anglosphere, where shared political, economic and cultural histories among English-speaking nations facilitate a transnational environment in which developments in one state tend to resonate powerfully within others (Legrand, 2021; McGuire, 2001).

The justification for constructing offshoring processes in both Australia and the UK rests on an interpretation of the meeting point of domestic and international legal principles. In both national contexts, this justification has produced a bifurcated asylum framework that separates 'legitimate' from 'illegitimate' asylum seekers. A distinction which undermines international legal standards concerning the treatment and assessment of refugee claims but reinforces an absolute conception of national sovereignty (Francis & Caton, 2011; Lowes, 2012; Martin, 2019). Across the literature on the subject, the physical and judicial relocation of asylum processing outside of Australian territory appears grounded in the articulation of a 'no advantage' principle (Kampmark, 2002; Nethery & Holman, 2016; Welch, 2013). This legal and policy rationale closely parallels the logics underpinning the Rwanda Plan and the First Safe Country Rule, particularly in the shared framing of irregular mobility as inherently unlawful and as a security threat

existential enough to warrant containment and deterritorialization (Francis & Caton, 2011; Martin, 2019). In this framework, the perceived attempt by migrants to exploit asylum processes through purportedly illegitimate claims directly harms those deemed to possess ‘legitimate’ claims. In response, Australia and the UK introduced a set of exceptional security measures, which subsequently encountered legal challenges.

4.2.1 | *The Migration Legislation Amendment Act: Emerging Forms of Legal Denial*

Following the interception of the MV Tampa, the Howard government implemented a series of measures that laid the foundation for the offshoring of migrants in the antipodes. The *Border Protection Bill* (2001) served as the initial legislative response to the crisis occurring just outside Australian territorial waters. The *Bill* introduced standards that facilitated the bifurcation of asylum status, retroactively denied entry and judicial review to asylum seekers and permitted their removal from Australia (Every & Augoustinos, 2007). However, the *Bill*’s vague provisions concerning removal procedures, its lack of judicial oversight and the extensive powers it conferred encountered significant opposition from Howards coalition partners, ultimately preventing its passage (Crabb, 2011, 2012).

In response to this legislative failure, the Howard government introduced the *Migration Legislation Amendment (Excision from the Migration Zone) (Consequential Provisions) Act* (2001) a month later. This revised legal framework secured coalition support and established the legal architecture for detaining migrants on the nearby island nations of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Nauru, thereby instituting the Pacific Solution (Laforgia, 2006; Briskman, 2019; Francis & Caton, 2011). By replacing outright denial with offshore detention, this legislative manoeuvre addressed the critical legal and ethical tensions that arose under the earlier *Border Protection Bill*, which had left asylum seekers in a limbo following their rejection and exclusion from the Australian jurisdiction (Lowes, 2012; Nethery & Holman, 2016).

The bifurcation enshrined in the *Migration Legislation Amendment Act* corresponds with developments in the UK under the *Nationality and Borders Act* (2022), as examined in the previous chapter. Both legislative instruments introduced provisions that delegitimize asylum seekers and criminalize

irregular forms of migration. In certain respects, the physical offshoring models introduced by both states display notable structural similarities.

Where the construction of a ‘safe third country’ framework for the Rwanda Plan required several years and multiple legislative instruments the Pacific Solution materialized more decisively. The establishment of detention centres in PNG and Nauru took place within months, supported by cross-party cooperation and private contractors. Martin (2019) and Stratton (2009) identify this rapid implementation as a decisive shift from enforcing domestic legal norms, specifically through the states combined use of the police and military.

The initial invocation of the *Amendment Act* enabled Australia to insulate asylum claimants from judicial scrutiny, illustrating the scope of unilateral executive authority acquired through the *Act*. Over time, this authority allowed successive governments to strategically circumvent legal challenges (Andrew & Eden, 2006; Laforgia, 2006; Lowes, 2012). Despite consistent judicial pushback and a 2016 ruling by PNG’s courts declaring the scheme unconstitutional, the government maintained its parallel and opaque asylum infrastructure in its periphery (Amnesty International, 2018; Martin, 2019). A 2024 report confirms that 42 asylum seekers remain detained in PNG under constrained conditions, with minimal support from the involved governments (Gillespie, 2024).

Beyond delegitimizing asylum claims, the state compounded its exceptional measures by formally excising parts of its territory. This excision, rather than removing sovereignty in a geographic sense, excluded specific islands in the Northern Territory from the domestic application of international refugee law (Andrew & Eden, 2006; Stratton, 2009). This excision would further expand through legislation introduced in 2013 that extended this status to the entirety of the Australian mainland through further amendments to the *Migration Act* (Maillet, 2019).

Due to geographic and logistical constraints, the Rwanda Plan lacks a clear analogue to Australia's excised territories. Though this blanket rejection of responsibility can be paralleled with the combined mechanism of the First Safe Country Rule and the Rwanda Plan under Johnson. Wherein migrants as subjects of the immigration system were discursively portrayed as not existing in the UK and directly being

legally under the Rwandan asylum system. Both systems extend their respective legal frameworks in ways that prevent asylum seekers from accessing judicial reprieve. In both contexts, the state engages in the determination of standards for permissible treatment which, when executed by private actors, results in less than legal treatment of asylum seekers. As addressed in the preceding chapter, the Rwanda Plan evolved from a model grounded in shared membership in international asylum treaties toward one that emphasized oversight and assurances. Similarly, the agreements forged with PNG and Nauru included provisions asserting a duty of care for migrants (Andrew & Eden, 2011).

Despite the inclusion of these assurances, the standards of care articulated in the Pacific Solution remain both vague and unenforced, assurances that standards in the offshore would need to meet or exceed constitutional protections in Australia (Nethery & Holman, 2016). Although no equivalent ‘constitutional’ standard appears in the available documentation surrounding the Rwanda Plan, statements from the Rishi Sunak administration repeatedly emphasized the intention to provide asylum seekers in Rwanda with access to a higher standard of care and opportunity for integration.

4.3.2 | *The Failure of the Malaysian Solution*

The 2011 attempt to expand the offshoring regime through the proposed Malaysian Solution under the Gillard government presents a particularly puzzling case. Despite the previous successes of the policies associated with the distinct Pacific Solution, efforts to extend offshore detention further from mainland Australia encountered a more direct and consequential judicial challenge (Lowes, 2012). At this point, the Rudd government had already suspended the Pacific Solution in 2008, following electoral commitments as opposed to responding to specific legal interdiction (UNHCR, 2008).

The Malaysian Solution, like the Rwanda Plan, faced its most significant obstacle in legal debates surrounding the safety and protection of migrants within the designated third country (Martin, 2019). In the case of the UK, the government defended the safety of asylum seekers in Rwanda by referencing Rwanda's participation in the shared international asylum regime, with the exception of the ECHR and ultimately invoked parliamentary supremacy to pass the *Safety of Rwanda Act*. In contrast, the Australian government

under Gillard relied solely on the discretion of the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship to declare Malaysia a safe country for asylum seekers, despite Malaysia's non-signatory status to key international asylum conventions (Martin, 2019; Welch, 2013).

Malaysian domestic practices, particularly the sanctioning of corporal punishment and documented cases of institutional sexual abuse affecting previous refugee groups, formed the second key point of contention. The courts cited these issues to curtail executive power and halt the implementation of the Malaysian Solution. The courts determined that granting ministers the authority to designate countries lacking asylum protections in this context violated Australia's international obligations (Hart, 2011).

As with the Rwanda Plan, critics attributed the failure of the Malaysian Solution to the intervention of the judiciary and legal advocates. These actors drew criticism for allegedly obstructing unilateral executive action intended to limit their involvement (Welch, 2013). As the following section will demonstrate, such criticisms stem from a broader discursive framing that casts legal interventions into the offshoring regime as acts that support migrant populations seen as threats to Australian sovereignty on multiple levels. This parallels the use of discourse in the development of the Rwanda Plan under the Johnson and Sunak governments whose escalating identification of irregular migrants as economic and physical threats was an integral component to the implementation of their offshoring policies.

4.3 | Locating and Modulating the Referent Object of Security

The identities assigned to migrants shape the perceived forms of harm associated with their presence, with these harms modulated according to specific dimensions of the state. As outlined in previous chapters, these dimensions correspond to varying conceptions of what the audience of securitizing speech acts understand as being threatened, functionally the 'referent object of security'. The ability to control the influx of irregular migrants exist dimensionally within this space as their transgression of borders means that the threats they are portrayed as posing enter and threaten the object of security. Migrants as threats encompass economic and criminal concerns, as observed in the UK, but also extend into the domain of terrorist threat in Australia. The invocation of such threats facilitated the use of exceptional measures, both

discursive and practical, designed to respond to perceived violations of Australian sovereignty by irregular migrants. I believe that there is a connection between the exceptional framing of migrants as terror threats and the implementation of the Australian offshoring regime which explains the British government's inability to more effectively command discourse in order to create a cross-party consensus which supported offshoring.

4.3.1 | *Economic Identities*

Academic literature on irregular immigration in Australia interestingly highlight the framing of irregular migrants as 'economic' migrants, a development matches the arguments initially put forward by May and implemented by Johnson in the UK. Migrants in Australia are then also framed as prospective economic threats to the welfare state and economy taking away resources from those who should really benefit from these parts of the state i.e. Australians and 'legitimate' migrants (Andrew & Eden, 2011; Stratton, 2009).

The issue of economic integration in Australian political discourse also appears to develop framing through which irregular migrants are understood as unviable participants and thus more likely to be burdens than the Australian populace. What complicates this framing is a contradictory interpretation also promoted by politicians which defines irregular migrants as necessarily economic migrants due to their ability to pay for arrival in Australia but also drains on welfare and the domestic economy (Pedersen, 2007; Welch, 2013). Ministers from the Howard administration particularly fixated on the fact that migrants on the Tampa carried mobile phones, a marker of their lack of merit (Kampmark, 2002).

4.3.2 | *Criminal Identities*

As in the UK, the framing of migrants as criminals emerges concurrently with the rationale used to justify the offshoring policy. This framing develops in two prominent forms: the perceived potential to commit crimes within Australia and the characterization of irregular mobility as inherently criminal.

Arguments linking migrants to petty crime and to widely reported sexual offences committed in Sydney and Ashfield by members of migrant communities play a central role in constructing justifications for their exclusion (Dagistanli, 2007). Moreover, the framing of potential criminal harm, especially when directed toward ‘native’ Australian women, functions as a retort used to undermine critiques of the Offshoring process. This rhetoric continues to circulate and further limits access to judicial review (Dagistanli, 2007; Kampmark, 2002).

The construction of migrants as rational economic actors converges with a particular notion of criminality. The Pacific Solution frames their capacity to pay people smugglers as evidence of agency and, consequently, culpability for irregular movement (Kampmark, 2002). This narrative develops alongside the imposition of harsher criminal penalties for smugglers and concurrently justifies the relegation of asylum seekers to the offshore. Despite the severe risks faced by migrants, including the threat of death and harm during their journey to Australia, a symbolic connection drawn between smuggler and migrant persists (Andrew & Eden, 2011).

These elements mirror the construction of threats to the imagined integrity of the British welfare state, as discussed in earlier chapters. Similarly, the representation of irregular migrants as incompatible with Australian societal norms reflects the securitized discourse reviewed in the context of the UK, which also legitimates the extension of immigration control to the offshore. The convergence of these two threat logics, economic and criminal, proves fundamental to the justification of offshoring, which rests on the presumption that such threats can be managed more efficiently and securely by private actors operating beyond national territory. These developments and the displacement of migrants also result in the Australian and British offshoring, both figurative and literal, systems to be essentialized as insular exceptional places further isolated by the proprietary rights of private actors.

This rationale necessitates both the erosion of judicial oversight and the consolidation of unilateral powers within welfare, defence and immigration ministries. This consolidation reinforces migrants’ exposure to uncertain and authoritarian practices by private actors, whose co-option of the government’s desire for indefinite secrecy results in the production of practices which punish migrants regardless of the

substance of their asylum claims. The security response to irregular migration in the Australian case draws not only from economic and criminal framings.

4.3.3 | *Terrorist Identities*

At this point, it is worthwhile noting that the Tampa controversy and the enactment of the *Migration Legislation Amendment Act* occurred chronologically before and then after September 11. The literature on migrant externalization in Australia consistently centres on this early development and identifies it as significant catalysts in cultivating heightened suspicion toward irregular migrants (Kampmark, 2002; Martin, 2019; McAllister, 2003; Stratton, 2009). Beyond the immediate associations and suspicions embedded within migrant discourse during the establishment and entrenchment of the Pacific Solution, what emerges is the invocation of a ‘war’ narrative against migrants and people smugglers. This narrative functions to justify the opaque actions of public, private and military actors in periods of heightened political and social tension (Martin, 2019; Welch, 2013).

This logic, which attributes inherently nefarious qualities to irregular migrants, expands the grounds for denial beyond criminal or economic concerns. Migrants who attempt to enter Australia through irregular channels are framed not only as violators of immigration norms but also as individuals who deliberately avoid formal background checks embedded in regulated pathways. This avoidance raises immediate suspicions of terrorist intent of racialized migrants fleeing from regions marked by destabilizing violence.

Judicial efforts to constrain executive power, most notably, the intervention that prevented the implementation of Gillard’s Malaysian Solution, appear framed by ministers as a particularly existential threat to national sovereignty as a consequence (Welch, 2013). Court rulings that address constitutional violations embedded within the offshoring regime produce wide-reaching consequences. Within electoral and institutional discourse, political actors link national security to the exclusive ability of the elected government to regulate entry through sovereign borders (Francis & Caton, 2011).

This view is particularly evident in the provisions of the *Migration Legislation Amendment Act* and the broader legislative framework it initiated. While the initial logic of offshoring rests heavily on the principle of denial, the Immigration Minister's discretionary power to grant onshore access to select irregular migrants also plays a central role in critiques of judicial intervention (Francis & Caton, 2011; Lowes, 2012). Suspicion of economic, criminal and terrorist harm drives forms of denial that render migrants passing through opaque private systems that remain largely obscure to this day. Consequently, officials frame potentially vulnerable persons as beneficiaries of the Immigration Minister's discretionary power to permit certain irregular migrants onshore, despite the infrequent use of this mechanism (Hart, 2011; Lowes, 2012).

In the British case, such a mechanism does not exist, though the conditions for offshoring differed significantly. The displacement of unaccompanied children, explicitly prohibited in the Rwanda Plan, emerged as a particularly problematic issue and formed part of the legal reasoning that led courts to strike down the Malaysian Solution (Hart, 2011). This prohibition resulted from sustained pressure by activist groups and appeared to serve as a pre-emptive measure in anticipation of more targeted judicial challenges (Brader, 2022). In response, Australian officials projected a sense of helplessness and invoked the language of war to frame these judicial interventions as representing an existential loss of Australian sovereignty (Martin, 2019; Nethery & Holman, 2016; Welch, 2013). In contrast, UK responses, while critical of judicial setbacks, remained relatively measured and directed efforts toward legislative solutions, such as the *Illegal Immigration Act* and the *Safety of Rwanda Act*, to reassert control over offshore policy.

This does not suggest that Australia failed to creatively engineer legislative solutions in response to judicial interdiction; rather, officials framed the orientation of threats as terrorist in a way that produced a perceived threat to sovereignty, which in turn justified a more invective response to judicial oversight (Laforgia, 2006).⁷

⁷ This rhetoric culminates in the imagined 'war' on migrants and people smugglers of the governments in charge of the Pacific Solution and mirrors the undercurrent of anti-immigration rhetoric growing in the UK through actors such as Nigel Farage and his Reform Party.

4.4 | Transparency and Understanding of the Pacific Solution

The state of transparency and level of understanding in the offshore context arguably diverge most significantly between the Rwanda Plan and the Pacific Solution. The Pacific Solution has existed since the start of the millennium and, as a result, has generated numerous critical and investigative accounts. In contrast, the failure to launch the Rwanda Plan has limited critical access to information, with relevant materials confined to private documents that remain unreleased. This does not suggest that the Pacific Solution operates with significantly greater transparency. Although accounts from individuals subjected to externalization and from those enforcing the system provide detailed insights into certain practices, these narratives often raise more questions than they resolve due to the inherently obscure nature of offshoring (Martin, 2019).

4.4.1 | *Divergences in Transparency and the Move to ‘Unaccounting and Unaccountability’*

If there is something that broadly connects the accounts available for both instances of the literal offshore, it is the fact that relatively little information exists regarding the true cost of their implementation. Whilst certain key figures have emerged, recognizing that the Rwanda Plan has cost at least £318 million and the Pacific Solution a figure exceeding \$1 billion AUD per year, the sources of these funds remain only partially uncovered (Buchanan, 2024; Walsh, 2024). George et al., in their 2024 paper “Authoritarian Neoliberalism and Asylum Seekers: The Silencing of Accounting and Accountability in Offshore Detention Centres”, identify this condition as the result of ‘unaccounting and unaccountability’.

Looking historically at the logics of offshore efficiency in Australia, policy actors have justified the introduction of private contractors by framing them as authorities on security capable of providing such services at lower cost than the state. Their involvement has also enabled the imposition of proprietary restrictions that limit access to information about their operations, as discussed in the previous chapter, further obscuring the fiscal cost of offshore practices (George et al., 2024). This was not always the case. From the outset, the Howard government committed to providing public information through press releases on the Pacific Solution, in line with the belief that such services should remain both efficient and publicly

accountable whilst also being marketized. Analogous to the development of immigration before and after Johnson's implementation of the Rwanda Plan these developments also demonstrate the neoliberal priorities of these states to reduce expenditure through competitive private contracts. Mechanisms such as annual reports produced by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship reflected that commitment (Andrew & Eden, 2011).

Over time, however, successive administrations tightened control over the transparency of costs and the actions of private actors, to the extent that later reports excluded mention of them altogether. This tightening became especially evident in cases that involved the exposure of systematic abuse, underreporting and the destruction of incident reports (Martin, 2019). This reduction and elimination of key information, still not fully revealed, marks a significant move toward unaccounting. Unlike the Rwanda Plan, where secrecy stems from the deliberate denial of access to information in its construction, the Pacific Solution reveals a gradual erosion of accountability over time which benefits from the proprietary right of private actors. This difference however does not detract from the overall production of neoliberal authoritarianism in both cases. Whilst expanded use of private actors through the Rwanda Plan occurred in deliberative obscurity its ultimately consequential purpose, the reduction of migrant's rights and their consequential deterritorialization has been supported and has enabled the abuse of the rights of irregular migrants.

4.4.2 | Unaccounting and Democratic Deficit in PNG and Nauru

It is also worthwhile noting that, beyond the opacity surrounding the provision of funds to private actors, the fiscal picture remains muddy in relation to the funds directed to PNG and Nauru. While initial funds moved through memorandums of understanding to facilitate the operation of Australian offshoring facilities, the provision of aid played a surreptitious role in establishing these arrangements (Martin, 2019; Morris, 2023). Aid also featured in the attempted production of the Rwanda Plan, serving primarily to diversify the unaccountable sources of funds available to the Rwandan government. Whilst Rwanda ranks among the largest recipients of aid globally and draws from a diversified range of sources, PNG and Nauru

remain particularly reliant on Australia as the wealthiest nation in the Pacific region (Dale, 2008; George et al., 2024; Sayler, 2020).

Much of the literature reviewed for this chapter argues that this imbalance has allowed Australia to benefit from and actively fund the democratic deficit in these nations, particularly in the case of Nauru's tumultuous period during the early 2010s, which included judicial dismissals and the suppression of public officials (Nethery & Holman, 2016). Although PNG's legal system would effectively challenge the Pacific Solution in 2016 due to challenges to the legitimacy of detainment, thereby complicating this narrative, Australia nonetheless managed to delay the closure of processing centres significantly through its influence within this imbalanced relationship. The Australian government's ability to prolong the end of one part of its offshoring regime demonstrates its veritable power in, not only prolonging the exposure of migrants to harm at the hands of private actors, but also through its intervention into the domestic political process of PNG.

These countries have also added a further layer of intransparency by progressively working with Australia and private contractors to deny entry to journalists and NGOs. In 2014, Nauru raised the cost of journalist visas by four thousand percent while offering no clear justification. Earlier that year, Nauru also blocked access for UN observers attempting to visit the Nauru Regional Processing Centre (Martin, 2019). Whilst not directly harmful to migrants detained in the offshore system Nauru's actions in this context serve to further reinforce the already elevated level of privacy integral to the subjugation of migrants by private actors.

The disproportional influence of Australia through its support of these states with development funds, funds publicly celebrated for their positive effects on the governance of these states, has then inversely regressed their authority and regard for freedom of the press.

4.5 | Conclusion

As initially stated, this chapter aims to review the similarities and differences between the Pacific Solution and the Rwanda Plan to better understand the orientation of offshoring policies.

With regards to the legal construction and judicial events surrounding the respective policies, they share similar logics, though their execution varies. Both fundamentally rely on the espousal of a no advantage principle, which requires the creation of a subordinate class of asylum seekers. The Pacific Solution came into force within the year it was implemented due to its swift enactment and the early combined use of private and military actors. Comparably, the timeline for the Rwanda Plan extends significantly longer. Additionally, the Australian use of excision constitutes a particularly exceptional case, with limited international points of comparison. Finally, the failure of the Malaysian Solution demonstrates that, across all three policies, clarity around the safety of asylum seekers plays a vital role in determining whether these offshoring policies can pass judicial scrutiny. The failure of the Johnson government in implementing the Rwanda Plan can be understood in comparable terms to the failure of the Malaysian Solution, in rejecting all responsibility to retain even marginal accountability for offshoring both governments were unsuccessful in their attempts at circumventing the courts. These comparisons have been illustrated in *Core Concept Table(s) III* and *IV* below.

With regards to the ways in which identities are framed in the Australian example, the insecurities they project, particularly economic and criminal, mirror the identities developed in the UK since 2016, which have allowed for the justification of the Rwanda Plan. Specifically, with respect to the economic framing of migrant identities, they appear simultaneously as welfare drains and as undeserving, competitive entrants into the Australian economy. This economic drain in the UK and Australia also allows for the use of private actors to be helpful and cost-effective solutions to manage irregular immigration. In the context of criminality, migrant identities represent direct threats to the public, mirroring the criminal threats reviewed in the previous chapter. Additionally, the Pacific Solution aligns migrants with people smugglers, whereas UK discourse keeps these groups distinct. Finally, it is important to recognize the unique framing of irregular migrants as prospective of terrorist threats following September 11, 2001. This framing remains distinct from any developments encountered thus far in the externalization of asylum seekers. It effectively generates suspicion toward migrants, positions them as existential threats to sovereignty and portrays their transgression of borders as a form of ‘war’. I believe that the ability to escalate the issue of immigration

beyond the economic and criminal concerns raised in both of my cases to the extent of understanding them as a terror threat highlights a key limiting factor for the offshoring attempts of the Johnson and Sunak governments. The association of irregular migrants with terror threats allowed for the Howard government to effectively build a cross-party consensus which allowed for the widespread domestic denial of all rights to irregular migrants. As the restriction of rights was unchallenged the implementation of the Pacific Solution met nearly no friction.

The combination of these issues and the threat posed by migrants is understood by political actors in Australia to justify the introduction of offshoring and the privatization of immigration management. Private actors function as a competitive solution for managing immigration issues and efficient, this efficiency and the justification of their use are hints which point to the reality of offshoring as a practice. The obstacle of judicial intervention and migrants' ability to appeal decisions in domestic settings has been entirely quashed, initially by the rights of private actors to not be subject to equivalent standards of transparency and then by the external jurisdictions of PNG and Nauru. This suppression is also supported and enables the violation of migrant's rights at the hands of private actors whose interest in producing capital outweighs their responsibility as proxies for the government. Across my research the connection between the employment of private actors and the implementation of increasingly restrictive conditions against irregular migrants is a clear constant. I believe that this means that despite the differing approaches on their responsibility the Johnson and Sunak governments implementation of the Rwanda Plan would be reliant on the employment of private actors, either indirectly by Rwanda or transnationally by the British government and inevitably subjecting migrants to authoritarian neoliberalism.

With regards to issues of transparency, both cases reveal similar patterns of opacity concerning financial sums, though in the Australian case, initial commitments to transparency and efficiency gradually diminished. In contrast, UK authorities blocked access to information entirely from external actors. Finally, although both governments increasingly shift toward practices of 'unaccounting', their use of aid to obscure funds differs, given the contextual reliance of PNG and Nauru on Australia and the concurrent use of democratic deficit in both countries to ensure lower oversight in the offshore.

5. | Conclusion

This thesis examines the conditions that have facilitated the emergence of the British government's Rwanda Plan. It does so to understand the development of offshoring policies and facilitate future research. As the so-called 'migration crisis' continues to develop as the subject of political discourse in the global North, its escalation as a salient issue is guiding many states including Denmark, Germany, Italy and the US towards the possibility of offshoring migrants. As these states consider the implementation of their own offshoring measures, I believe that it is important to figure out how to study these policies and their implementation in neoliberal contexts.

Through this thesis I explore the issue of offshoring by integrating various theoretical frameworks. This thesis outlines the rationale for applying Critical Discourse Analysis, emphasizing that examining the structuring of meaning through language is essential to understanding opaque policies such as offshoring. This thesis' analysis also addresses the framing of offshoring and restrictive migration policies as security issues, shaped by political discourse. I argue that the shared analytical focus of CDA and securitization theory on identity and discursive context demonstrates their theoretical compatibility. Additionally, I have introduced practice-based approaches to security in my analysis to provide a more comprehensive account of security governance in my comparisons alongside the concept of authoritarian neoliberalism, which has allowed my research to argue critically about the role of private actors at the intersection of immigration, security and neoliberalism. I have also approached the securitization of irregular migrant identities and described how the negative characterization of migrants as economic strains has intensified throughout implementation of the UK's domestic figurative offshoring scheme. I did so by using various sub-questions which I have argued allow me to make sense of the Rwanda Plan through its historic and international context.

My first sub-question, which asked 'How does parliamentary discourse reflect the framing and practices that constitute the *figurative offshore*?' allowed me to research how Conservative parliamentarians in the post-Brexit period discursively emphasized the threat of migration which allowed for the expansion

of policies such as the ‘No Recourse to Public Funds’ conditions. These speech acts framed migrants primarily as threats to domestic economic stability and public resource allocation and tacitly justified the use of private actors as a temporary and efficient solution to irregular immigration. Under the premiership of Theresa May, opposition MPs produced speech acts that humanized migrants and challenged securitizing measures; however, this dynamic shifted significantly under Boris Johnson’s administration.

Through my second sub-question, ‘How does parliamentary discourse influence and reflect the policy changes which were developed to support the transition to a *literal offshore*?’ I extended my exploration of the transition between the administrations of May and Johnson which was marked by a reconfiguration of migrants not merely as economic burdens but as violent and distinctly ‘illegal’ actors, adding to their prior categorization as ‘economic’ or ‘irregular’ migrants. I argue that the fact that the characterization of migrants as escalated existential threats to the British public occurred simultaneously to the introduction of the Rwanda Plan by design. My thesis’ approach to the historic development of the Plan has revealed that despite the purported focus of the figurative and literal offshoring policies on a discursively created economic and physical object of security, these policies aim to remove and obscure migrants from public existence as permanently as possible. Literal offshoring as a logic attempts to remove irregular migrants’ ability to access their rights to asylum and the protections domestic and international law prescribe. The British government clearly pays a high cost to enact offshoring, costs which disproportionally outstrip the costs of domestic detention. The focus of parliamentary discourse on the intervention of legal actors in the process of figurative offshoring alongside the focus on legislating around the potential illegality of offshoring demonstrate the governments exceptional focus on elevating the securitization of migrants.

Through my final sub-question, ‘What can the similarities and differences between the Pacific Solution and Rwanda Plan reveal about the establishment of offshoring policies?’ I use my historic comparison to look at how political actors in the Australian case produced similar constructed identities, which justify the exceptional measures necessary for offshoring, to argue that migrants should be understood as economic, physical and terror threats. The characterization of migrants as terror threats

specifically justified the near immediate implementation of offshoring and would also impact the political response to judicial intervention, allowing for legal actors to also be understood as threats to Australian sovereignty.

5.1 | Synthesizing the Offshore

The characterization of irregular migrants as security threats in both of the contexts I have explored has justified the escalation of domestic responses to exclude migrants from social and economic integration. I identified a strategic shift accompanying the Rwanda Plan under Johnson and Sunak, through which government officials and security professionals managed information to redirect public attention away from the domestic treatment of migrants. This realignment also coincided with the Home Office's increased control over immigration infrastructure, particularly under the government of Sunak and its expansive use of private actors, enabling broader denial practices. By contrast the overt and rapid exclusionary measures adopted in Australia, such as the excision of national territory from asylum legislation, has been justified through the associations of migrants to terrorist threats post-9/11.

Across both cases, private actors are framed as cost-effective solutions to immigration management in different ways. In the UK their implementation was almost entirely secretively enacted whilst in Australia their implementation in the Pacific Solution was imagined alongside yearly reporting intended to ensure their actions were accountable. Whilst their approaches differ, I have argued that ultimately the inclusion of private actors and the secretive measure around their actions demonstrates both states' willingness to ensure as little information is available on their offshoring regimes.

This thesis describes how discourse which frames migrants as threats also justifies their subordination to private actors who enact tacitly state sponsored violence on migrants who then live under authoritarian neoliberal conditions. These private proxies do so due to their conflicting goals of maximizing their efficiency whilst also acting in the place of the government. I have discussed how the lack of accountability and penalties not only leads to violence against migrants to be enacted in perpetuity. Private actors in the UK have been championed as temporary and efficient solutions to the issue of increased

irregular immigration through the post-Brexit period. The Rwanda Plan under Johnson initially was conceived in a way which potentially threatened the growing dominance of private actors in managing immigration as government was committed to finding new and more effective immigration solutions. Sunak's administration would consequentially reverse these commitments and expand the use of private contractors whilst still pursuing the Rwanda Plan. I argue that this expansive use of private actors indicates a renewed focus on the figurative offshoring of migrants in addition to the Plan as a response to legal challenges to offshoring. In my research on the Australian Pacific Solution I also believe that irrespective of the differing levels of involvement which differentiate the governments of Johnson and Sunak, the use of private actors and perpetuation of authoritarian harm on irregular migrants is an unavoidable feature of offshoring.

As I have discussed in my research on my Australian case, the legal solutions of successive Australian governments successfully addressed potential challenges to the legality of its Pacific Solution there exist limits to this form of denial. Julia Gillard's Malaysian Solution is a direct example of this limit: its conditions and disregard for the conditions of asylum seekers ensured that it could not overcome legal challenges whereas the Pacific Solution and its employment of cooperative private and extrajudicial actors allowed for it to remain unchallenged. The flexibility of Sunak's approach to the Rwanda Plan mirrors these developments and demonstrates a fundamental contradiction in offshoring policies. Despite the diffusion of responsibility to private actors and other states, offshoring as a process relies on the intervention of the states through indirect means including the use of development funds.

Returning to my central research question, 'Why has there been an exceptional shift from a 'figurative' offshore in the UK to an attempt at the creation of a costly, 'literal' offshore in Rwanda?', my research throughout this thesis has led me to the conclusion that the exceptional aspect of the UK's prospective shift towards literal offshoring is its re-enforcement of the domestic measures which ensured irregular migrants were figuratively offshored. I believe that whilst the governments of Johnson and Sunak were committed to the Rwanda Plan ultimately their attempts at literally offshoring migrants required the

expansion of their capacity to deterritorialize migrants domestically through their escalating use of securitizing discourse and the rights accessible by migrants through the use of private actors.

The international comparison I have conducted with the Australian offshoring regime for this thesis reinforce the findings of my historic comparison of offshoring in the UK. I also believe that this comparison may partially explain why ultimately the Rwanda Plan did not come to fruition due to the securitization of migrants not elevating to a level which would justify the denial of migrants and the British governments' response to courts not decisively shut the concerns of judicial actors.

5.2 | On Contributions

This thesis has approached the issue of offshoring and in doing so constructed a thematic analysis of the discursive processes used by political actors to implement securitizing offshoring policies. As I have argued the escalation of irregular migrants as security threats in the UK historically and Australia internationally can be understood as occurrences in an interconnected case. My aim with this thesis has been to clarify the connections between offshoring policies to contribute to the body of research on British immigration policy, critical security approaches and critical approaches to neoliberalism.

To date very little research has been produced which tackles the development of the Rwanda Plan and how it relates to the existing literature on British immigration policy. My research in part builds on the critical agenda set forth by Davies et al. and traces the development of what they term the 'figurative offshore' and the introduction of the Rwanda Plan as an escalation of offshoring which should be examined critically.

I have made contributions to research on critical security and critical neoliberalism by joining their analytical frameworks, as I have argued in this thesis the increased presence of private actors and the role they play in imposing authoritarian conditions on irregular migrants through offshoring should be researched further. Whilst these literatures produce research that tackles immigration as an issue in interesting ways, I believe that by combining their insights throughout this thesis I have produced research which more extensively engages with the issues of offshoring. I also believe that my combination of these

critical approaches with CDA will potentially be useful for researching the developing offshoring regimes in Europe and the United States if judicial challenges do not effectively undo the harm these regimes perpetuate against migrants.

5.3 | On Future Research

Whilst I believe that my approach is potentially useful to future research it is important to note that my findings are the products of my analysis of the UK and Australia as connected social contexts. I explore the commonalities between both of my cases with the understanding that they are interconnected. My approach informed by policy transfer literature on the Anglosphere means that such connections may prospectively be drawn between the cases I review in this thesis and the current attempts at criminalizing and offshoring migrants in the US. I believe that this is an extremely promising avenue for future research on offshoring; however, I also believe that the means through which the American government is enacting denial against migrants may be radically different to the approach of the British and Australian governments. As such future research should critically investigate the discourse and practice of offshoring in the US intensively.

As the arguments I have drawn throughout this thesis are connected by research which emphasizes the interconnectedness of policy in the Anglosphere research on cases such as the Italy-Albania offshoring scheme may not necessarily benefit from this interconnected view. Considering this difference, I would advocate for continued research on offshoring developed with an intensive contextual understanding on the influences which shape norms around immigration and justify the exceptional enactment of offshoring.

Whilst research on other potential offshoring cases, particularly in the Anglosphere, is a viable route for future research it is also worth considering the potential continuities in immigration policy which were briefly discussed in this thesis' introduction (Khiabany & Williamson, 2025). This research project has been conducted aiming at filling a gap in the academic literature left by the purposefully vague attributes of offshoring policy, as such it may also provide the basis for future historical comparisons in the UK. Despite Kier Starmer's claims in opposition the Rwanda Plan was "unworkable" and "unethical" and his

claims when entering government that it was “dead and buried” I contend that future research into British immigration policy must still be reckon with the developments in offshoring I have traced throughout this thesis (Da Lomba, 2025; Faulkner, 2022). Particularly the governments increased power to act unilaterally and utilize private actors with impunity which developed under Rishi Sunak’s premiership.

On November 17, 2025 Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood spoke to the House of Commons presenting the Labour Party’s “most significant reform to [the UK’s] migration system in modern times” and published a policy paper titled *Restoring Order and Control* (Home Office, 2025a; Home Office, 2025b). Whilst this sample of discourse is not diverse enough to conduct expansive primary analysis such as the Critical Discourse Analysis taken in Chapters Two and Three, I believe that they can potentially be understood as the starting point for a new juncture in critical migration policy research.

Reflecting on the research I have conducted throughout this thesis there appears to be various significant developments proposed by these changes including continually more restrictive measures levied against asylum seekers. In her statement to Parliament Mahmood announced that the idea of a ‘duty to support’ in British law would be revised in order to re-configure the relationship to migrants as one wherein the government would have ‘power to support’ (Home Office, 2025b). I would propose that this change reflects an open acceptance of the immigration policy which the preceding Conservative governments have adopted in their attempts at figuratively and literally offshoring migrants. This acceptance also more clearly reconciles the increased unilateral power of the government and its ministries to act around courts in processing asylum cases and managing the lives of those under its overarching management.

The consequence of this ‘power to support’ is already visible when looking at the further fragmentation of asylum claims proposed in *Restoring Order and Control* wherein the identification of migrants as economic threats continues (Home Office, 2025a). Where under figurative offshoring and the Rwanda Plan irregular migrants are framed as drains on public good the proposals in the policy paper appear to introduce ways for migrants to contribute to the cost of their detention through their assets and income. These changes also come with the introduction of a new work/study visa stream which certain asylum seekers can access after completing qualifying tests (Home Office, 2025a). I believe that these changes will

allow for migrants to be made into contributing actors to the neoliberal authoritarianism they have been subject to, what is concerning about these developments is the attachment of these contributions to access the limited support the British government contributes to asylum seekers. Mahmood and Starmer have clarified that in cases where migrants are not willing to contribute to these costs or become productive their access to (what were formerly) rights such as family reunification or access to housing would not be provided (Home Office, 2025b; Walker, 2025). This exposure of irregular migrants to extraction by the state for private actors is also buttressed by restricting the ability of courts to interpret domestic and international legislation. Mahmood in her statement cites the ‘ever-expanding’ interpretation of the ECHR as impeding the processing of deportations (Home Office, 2025b).

I believe that it is impossible to consider these changes without understanding the expanded power of the Home Office which occurred because of the Rwanda Plan, the circumvention of courts is done in favour of isolated bureaucratic and privatized processes. Migrants that are unwilling to be productive are made illegitimate by default as all irregular migrants were under the proposed Rwanda Plan and those that do work to contribute to their alienation. This is exemplified in another excerpt from Mahmoods speech which centres the additional framing of migrants as physical/criminal threats which allowed for the Rwanda Plan to develop: “While we will continue to support those who play by the rules, those who do not – be that through criminality or antisocial behaviour – can have their support removed” (Home Office, 2025b). What remains to be seen is what the removal of support will look like, it is not entirely clear at this point what additional steps the British government can take to further alienate irregular migrants short of exposing them to homelessness or returning them to their country of origin regardless of the legitimacy of their asylum claims.

Whilst it may be too soon to tell it appears that the latter may be more likely, the current Labour governments preference for circumventing courts is exemplified by its self-proclaimed restrictive measures on protections against ‘degrading treatment’ codified in the ECHR (Home Office, 2025b). Rather than relying on courts to make this determination Mahmood has clarified that the government will now make decisions in these cases alongside “key partner countries” (Home Office, 2025a, p.25). It is also clear from

her speech that the government is considering shifting from voluntary to enforced removals to Syria despite the FCDO issuing a travel advisory August 29, 2025 against travel “due to unpredictable security conditions” (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2025). These changes are reminiscent of the introduction of the *Safety of Rwanda Act* (2024) under Sunak which may have set a new precedent for circumventing legal intervention. I believe that future research should be incredibly sceptical of the claims made by Starmer and his government that the Plan is “dead and buried” and as such look intently at how new measures follow or utilize the logics developed for figurative and literal offshoring for the Rwanda Plan.

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Appendix A:

Core Concepts Table I (Chapter Three)

<i>Governments</i>	Theresa May July 2016 – July 2019	Boris Johnson (Brexit) July 2019 – April 2022
<i>Policies</i>	Expansion of ‘No Recourse to Public Funds’. Proposed ‘Economic Migrant’ legal classification. Use of private actors as proxies to tacitly inflict neglect on irregular migrants, thus offshoring them.	The ‘First Safe Country Rule’. Continued use of private actors to subject irregular migrants.
<i>Evidence</i>	Parliamentary discourse during the premiership of Theresa May examined through CDA. My approach in this part of my analysis looks at how cross-party discourse explains security practice. I look at the critiques of oppositional parliamentarians and compare them to what Conservative MPs later conceded as factual issues with asylum and immigration policy.	Post-Brexit parliamentary discourse from the Boris Johnson’s premiership examined through CDA. My approach here also follows the same cross-party discourse.
<i>Security</i>	Under May migrants were securitized as threats to the economic stability and the welfare state. This threat also justifies the use of private actors as cost-effective solutions. Migrants are also imagined as abstract threats using technocratic discourse by Conservative parliamentarians. Oppositional parliamentarians in this period were relatively effective in their attempts at de-securitize the threat of irregular migrants near the end of the premiership.	In this period the Johnson government effectively continued the securitization of discourse concerning irregular migrants. In addition to imagining migrants as economic threats the use of the ‘First Safe Country Rule’ justified the denial of any discourse which challenged the approach of the government by oppositional MPs.
<i>Neoliberalism</i>	Private actors are increasingly used to manage the detainment of irregular migrants. Discourse from oppositional parliamentarians demonstrates that there are systemic issues with the violation of migrant rights at the hands of private actors with little to no accountability for their infractions. These infractions constitute the governments practices in managing immigration. The substitution of the state by these private actors demonstrates the government’s willingness to inflict authoritarian conditions to migrants by proxy.	Discourse on the issues presented by private actors is still present but somewhat challenged by the assertion of the ‘First Safe Country Rule’. Private actors and their authoritarian treatment of migrants become a secondary, yet still prescient, political issue.
<i>Offshoring</i>	Offshoring under the May administration appears to develop as a combination of the removal of the access to public goods available to irregular migrants, their externalization through discourse and their isolation under private management. I would argue that these conditions set the groundwork of what Davies et al. (2021) argue is the <i>figurative offshore</i>.	In a way the Johnsons governments efforts continued to develop on the restrictive groundwork set forth by May. In doing so Johnson extends the isolation of irregular migrants in the domestic <i>figurative offshore</i> exposing migrants to potential authoritarian harm at the hands of private actors.

Core Concepts Table II (Chapter Two)

<i>Governments</i>	Boris Johnson (Rwanda Plan) April 2022 – September 2022	Rishi Sunak October 2022 – July 2024
<i>Policies</i>	Introduction of the Rwanda Plan with no oversight on the condition of migrants. <i>Memorandum of Understanding</i> (2022). <i>Nationality and Borders Act</i> (2022). Priti Patels spearheading of a potential reduction of the use of private actors.	Continued development of the Rwanda Plan with changes to the structure of the agreement to ensure oversight of the scheme by the British government. <i>Illegal Immigration Act</i> (2023). <i>Safety of Rwanda Act</i> (2024). Increased unilateral power of the Home Office and a re-centralization of private actors.
<i>Evidence</i>	Post-Rwanda Plan parliamentary discourse during the premiership of Boris Johnson examined through CDA. This discourse was also compared to the discourse produced during the premiership of Rishi Sunak to reveal aspects of the Rwanda Plan which Conservative ministers previously denied.	Parliamentary discourse during the premiership of Rishi Sunak examined through CDA. This discourse was also contextualized using information revealed about the structure of the Rwanda Plan under Boris Johnson.
<i>Security</i>	Migrants are re-imagined as threats to the physical safety of the UK in addition to the purported economic threat they pose. This re-imagination of migrants as physical threats comes with a critical reflection on the role of private actors in managing immigration and a tentative move away from the use of private actors.	The securitizing discourse initially produced under Johnson during the implementation of the Rwanda Plan continues under Sunak consistently. Though the critical reflections on the role of private actors in managing immigration drop out of discourse almost entirely.
<i>Neoliberalism</i>	As the Johnson government imagines an exclusively bilateral agreement with Rwanda the place of private actors is uncertain with little information available on what possible arrangements there could be for these actors.	In the background of the implementation of the Rwanda Plan under Rishi Sunak legislation including the <i>Illegal Immigration</i> and <i>Safety of Rwanda Act(s)</i> significantly increase the governments' ability to make unilateral decisions related to the immigration of management. Included in these decisions is the quiet expansion of the use of private actors which alongside their potential role in offshoring increase their power over the lives of irregular migrants.
<i>Offshoring</i>	The move away from private actors brought about by the Rwanda Plan as initially conceived by the British government potentially threatens all knowable aspects of the <i>figurative offshore</i> in the UK. This thesis' engagement with the retrospective accounts of former ministers during the premiership of Rishi Sunak reveals that there the structure of <i>literal offshore</i> was imagined as a logical bridge between the UK and Rwanda. With the rights of irregular migrants denied by the First Safe Country Rule it was understood that their rights were instead reviewable in Rwanda under the <i>MoU</i>.	Whilst ultimately the Rwanda Plan and thus the <i>literal offshore</i> never came to be the increased power that ministries gained, particularly the Home Office, significantly bolstered the existing <i>figurative offshore</i>. This increase in power that these agencies benefited from was also accompanied by a lack of focus on the continued neglect of irregular migrants by private actors. Ostentatious aspects of the Rwanda Plan, particularly its cost, drew significant parliamentary focus and almost entirely extinguished debates which used to be regularly instigated by oppositional MPs.

Core Concepts Table III (Chapter Four)

<i>Governments</i>	John Howard March 1996 – December 2007	Julia Gillard June 2010 – June 2013
<i>Policies</i>	Introduction of the Pacific Solution. <i>Migration Legislation Amendment Act (2001).</i> Diversified use of payments including development funds. Use of private actors as effective solutions supported by initially transparent reporting which gradually declined.	Malaysian Solution (2012) as a policy which entirely removed any clear oversight or standards for the care of irregular migrants with their removal to Malaysia.
<i>Evidence</i>	Secondary academic literature on security, immigration and neoliberalism in Australian offshoring.	Secondary academic literature on security, immigration and neoliberalism in Australian offshoring.
<i>Security</i>	Migrants throughout the process of developing the Pacific Solution were imagined as not only economic and potentially violent threats but also as acute potential terrorist's post-9/11. This rationale allowed the Howard to quickly implement the legislative changes necessary to help develop their use of private actors as well as allow for literal offshoring to be implemented.	Under Gillard the implementation of the Malaysian Solution benefited from the same securitizing discourse used to implement the Pacific Solution.
<i>Neoliberalism</i>	The use of private actors is a clear feature of the Australian Pacific Solution and lack of clarity around their actions is the consequence of gradual 'unaccountability'. Whilst part of the reasoning behind the implementation of a privatized offshoring system was rationalized as being more efficient when combined with public oversight abuses in the offshore lead to a gradual reduction of information on the authoritarian actions of private actors.	Whilst the Malaysian Solution failed the relationship which Gillard attempted to establish would be directly between the Australian and Malaysian government.
<i>Offshoring</i>	The excision of Australian territory from international asylum legislation and concurrent relegation of migrants to PNG and Nauru demonstrates that offshoring in this case was produced almost immediately. The construction of a <i>literal offshore</i> in the Australian case, as well as the governments use of its influence over its neighbouring islands in the Pacific, effectively removed irregular migrants entirely from any possible existence in Australia. This removal is clearly organized under the effective control of the Australian government despite its purported diffused responsibility using other states and private actors. Offshoring through the Pacific Solution arguably continues to this day as its implementation after the failure of the Malaysian Solution has yet to be directly challenged. Short	As the <i>literal offshoring</i> attempt under Gillard centred a direct relationship between governments migrants would be entirely under the care of the Malaysian government which is not party to the 1951 <i>Refugee Convention</i>. This removal of oversight and the assurance of oversight ultimately were detrimental to the scheme resulting in its failure and the re-adoption of the Pacific Solution under Rudd's second premiership.

	of its temporary suspension under the first premiership of Kevin Rudd between Howard and Gillard.	
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Core Concepts Table IV (Chapter Four)

Offshoring Policies	Rwanda Plan	Pacific Solution / Malaysian Solution
Policies	<i>Memorandum of Understanding</i> (2022). <i>Nationality and Borders Act</i> (2022). <i>Illegal Immigration Act</i> (2023). <i>Safety of Rwanda Act</i> (2024).	<i>Migration Legislation Amendment Act</i> (2001).
Evidence	Primary discourse from parliamentary sessions during the premierships of Johnson and Sunak.	Secondary academic literature with a focus on the place of private actors in the respective schemes and the identification of irregular migrants as security threats. Particularly focusing on the actions of the Howard and Gillard governments.
Security	To execute the Rwanda Plan migrants were re-identified as not only economic but also physical threats thus justifying their removal from the UK. These discursive changes were supported by legislative changes which officially created the legal category of ‘illegal migrant’ thus effectively bifurcating the asylum process. This re-categorization also justified the rejection of asylum claims first propped up by the ‘First Safe Country Rule’. The identification of lawyers and other judicial actors as threats to domestic security also reveal that a main concern of the Rwanda Plan is the removal of judicial oversight.	The identification of irregular migrants with economic, physical and terror threats effectively securitized them and allowed for their removal to PNG, Nauru and provisionally Malaysia to be justified.
Neoliberalism	Whilst the place of private actors in managing immigration was called into question under the Johnson government with Sunak’s re-configuration of the Rwanda Plan the use of private actors not only continued but significantly expanded domestically. The focus of discourse in this period moved away from the treatment of migrants towards the cost and tenability of the Rwanda Plan obscuring the continued authoritarian conditions which migrants were subjected to in the <i>figurative offshore</i>	Private actors and their inclusion are unclear in the Malaysian Solution, but academic literature presents a very clear picture of their role in the Pacific Solution. Whilst they were initially introduced as cost-effective and accountable actors through transparency initiatives as systemic abuses which are inherent to privatized offshoring developed less information became available on their actions. Their location in the extraterritorial setting of PNG and Nauru and purported specialization in managing immigration justifies their use by the Australian government.
Offshoring	The whilst the establishment of a <i>literal offshore</i> through the Rwanda Plan did not come to be it is clear that its re-configuration under Sunak emphasized an arrangement under which the UK would directly supervise the asylum process in Rwanda.	<i>Literal offshoring</i> in both Australian solutions had a different emphasis on the role of the government in managing immigration after the removal of migrants much like with the Rwanda Plan. The governments involved in the development of the Pacific Solution developed oversight and means to control private actors and the states to which migrants were removed. Comparable to the conditions for the Rwanda Plan developed by the Sunak government.

	Concurrently the expansion of the powers of ministries such as the Home Office allowed for the <i>figurative offshore</i> to significantly develop quietly.	Whereas the Gillard government attempted to remove itself as much as possible from the detention of migrants in Malaysia. Which are conditions comparable to how ministers of the Johnson government discuss their development of the Rwanda Plan. The use of private actors in the Pacific Solution also appears to be employed as extensions of the Australian government used much like how private actors are used in the UKs <i>figurative offshoring</i> regime. With harms perpetuated against migrants being institutionally rife and subject to cover-ups.
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Appendix B:

Table I: Building Tasks

Definitions and coding questions adapted from Gee (2011) pp. 121-122:

	<i>Definition + Question:</i>
<i>Significance</i>	Significance as a building task is used to identify the ways in which the importance of the subject of a discourse is conveyed and thus formed, or ‘built’ by discourse producers. I identified this key aspect of discourse through the coding of parliamentary transcripts; I did so through a closed reading of my transcripts and by asking questions such as: • How do the Tools of Inquiry reflect how discourse producers develop the Significance of: ➤ The Rwanda Plan; or ➤ Security threat of immigration; or ➤ Place of private actors in managing immigration; etc.
<i>Practices (Activities)</i>	Practices in discourse are reflections of actions made by discourse producers; they are signposts for what discourse producers understand as the physical activities which are connected to their discourse. I identified this key aspect of discourse in parliamentary transcripts by asking questions such as: • How do the Tools of Inquiry reflect how discourse producers develop the Practices of: ➤ Parliamentarians; or ➤ Irregular migrants; or ➤ Cross-border traffickers; or ➤ Private security specialists; etc.

<i>Identities</i>	Discourse producers formulate or project meaning onto Identities, as markers for belonging and existing, through their speech. I identified this Building Task in parliamentary transcripts by asking questions such as: • How do the Tools of Inquiry reflect how discourse producers develop the Identities of: ➤ Parliamentarians; or ➤ Irregular migrants; or ➤ Private security specialists; or ➤ Judicial actors; etc.
<i>Relationships</i>	Relationships as presented by producers of discourse includes establishing, maintaining or ending them. I identified this Building Task in parliamentary transcripts by asking questions such as: • How do the Tools of Inquiry reflect how discourse producers discuss Relationships between: ➤ The government and private actors; or ➤ The government and irregular migrants; or ➤ Irregular migrants and British society; or ➤ Private actors and irregular migrants; etc.
<i>Politics</i>	Politics as presented by producers of discourse is a projection of their understanding of the distribution of social goods or their ideal state of distribution. I identified this building task in parliamentary transcript by asking questions such as: • How do the Tools of Inquiry reflect how discourse producers understand the Politics of: ➤ Asylum benefits; or ➤ Access to welfare; or ➤ Mobility; or

	➤ Family reunification; etc.
<i>Connections</i>	Connections reflect discourse producers use of language to make or sever the relevance of facts/events from each other. I identified this building task in parliamentary transcript by asking questions such as: • How do the Tools of Inquiry reflect how discourse producers present Connections made between: ➤ Irregular migration and economic issues; or ➤ Irregular migration and social issues; or ➤ Immigration policy failure and new policies; or ➤ Private actors and effective immigration management; etc.
<i>Sign Systems and Knowledge</i>	Sign Systems and Knowledge reflects discourse producers' way of characterizing how knowledge claims can be made about the world. It does so by attributing value (or devaluing) to claims made by other producers of discourse. I identified this Building Task in parliamentary transcript by asking questions such as: • How do the Tools of Inquiry reflect how discourse producers present the value of Sign Systems and Knowledge such as: ➤ Government or NGO produced statistics; or ➤ External reports on the legality of the Rwanda Plan by legal organizations, the SCUK, ECtHR, etc.; or ➤ Investigative journalism into the conditions of private asylum detention; or ➤ The testimony of oppositional parliamentarians on issues faced by asylum seekers in their constituencies; etc.

Table II: Tools of Inquiry

Definitions adapted from Gee (2011) pp. 201-214:

	<i>Definition:</i>
<i>Situated Meaning</i>	Situated meaning reflects two different possibilities, it is first conveyed by speakers/writers who through their discourse seek to attach their discussion to a particular context. An example related to my research could be how a conservative parliamentarian conveys a state of immigration policy failure attached to the development of increased irregular migration. An audience receptive to this messaging aligns themselves and their own understanding of the issue of irregular migration. The second possibility for situated meaning comes from the audience of the discourse who can be ‘uncooperative’ to the construction of the conservative parliamentarian and understand the issue as fundamentally rooted in a failure in government rather than an exogenous issue.
<i>Social Languages</i>	This Tool of Inquiry is of limited relevance to my research as it reflects the use of a certain register or dialect used by producers of discourse. As I have used transcripts for this thesis’ primary analysis, I have not done a comprehensive study of how Social Languages are presented but have noted that there are rigid traditions for speaking, particularly the use of respectful deference in debates.
<i>Figured Worlds</i>	This is extremely well described by Gee, as such I have exceptionally included the following block quote from his book: “A figured world is a theory, story, model, or image of a simplified world that captures what is taken to be typical or normal about people, practices (activities), things, or interactions. What is taken to be typical or normal, of course, varies by context and by people’s social and cultural group. A figured world is a socially and culturally constructed way of recognizing characters and actors and actions and assigning them significance and value. Thus, we all have ways to construe what is a typical or “appropriate” bedroom, house, spouse, marriage, way of raising children, educated person, alcoholic, romance, student, and so on through an endless list.” (2010, p. 206) In my research the idea of a Figured World reflects both an understanding of the feasibility of implementing offshoring policies as well as the relationship between migrants and territoriality. Migrants isolated to private detention domestically can be understood through parliamentary discourse as not actually being in the UK and the implementation of the Rwanda Plan rejects their assertion that they can exist legally in the UK.

<i>Intertextuality</i>	Intertextuality refers to the allusions to other discourse/texts, in my research this appeared frequently through references to reports from news publications or information from NGOs/governmental agencies.
<i>Discourses (capital D)</i>	Discourses reflect the use of language to bring together situated identity with the Activities they are associated with to participate in a discussion. It is a connection on which the basis of a dialogue is based on and impacts the direction of a discussion such as the ones I have analysed in parliamentary discourse. As I stated earlier parliamentarians behave and present themselves in a certain way, this enables them to engage in the parliamentary setting and be heard not only by their fellow speakers but also a broader audience as an official participant in a Discourse.
<i>Conversations (capital C)</i>	Conversations reflect certain issues and debates around them as understood by a broad public. In an immigration debate there are different ‘sides’ within which a certain type of person because of their belonging to a social group, such as their affiliation to the Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat parties.

Table III: Validity

Definitions adapted from Gee (2011) pp. 123-124:

	<i>Definition:</i>
<i>Convergence</i>	The validity of discourse analysis is supported by the convergence of the recombination of the above Building Tasks and Tools of Inquiry. The compatibility of each factor in presenting a picture, such as the one I have drawn in my research, with convincing answers demonstrates a coherent understanding of the state of discourses.
<i>Agreement</i>	In addition to the convergence of answers with regards to the use of Tools of Inquiry in order to find Building Tasks, the agreement on the veracity of findings by members of a discourse or other discourse researchers supports the validity of ones findings.

<i>Coverage</i>	Coverage refers to the ability for discourse analysis to make sense of the subject being researched through discourse analysis by looking at past discourse to predict possibilities in the future for discourse. Successful predictions help reinforce the validity of discourse analysis.
<i>Linguistic Detail</i>	The ability to key into linguistic detail through discourse analysis also helps validity; by directly engaging with the form and function of language a researcher can further support their analysis. Linguistic detail is also further reinforced by Agreement from members of discourse and discourse researchers.