

Manufacturing the Albanian Threat

Crime, Consent, and the politics of border control in post-Brexit Britain

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Executive Summary

This paper examines the political mobilisation of anti-Albanian sentiment in the United Kingdom since 2020 and its role in legitimising restrictive asylum and border governance in post-Brexit Britain. It argues that anti-Albanian sentiment should not be understood as a spontaneous expression of public prejudice, nor as a direct response to criminality or migration pressure alone. Rather, it functions as a form of political discourse through which Albanians are racialised as criminal, fraudulent, culturally suspect and undeserving of protection. Drawing on securitisation theory, moral panic, crimmigration and Gramscian hegemony, the paper analyses how Albanian migrants have been constructed as a distinct category of illegitimacy within government rhetoric, parliamentary debate and media amplification.

Through qualitative discourse analysis, it demonstrates how tropes of criminality, economic migration, modern slavery “abuse” and safe-country logic produce a simplified narrative of threat. The paper then shows how this construction legitimises accelerated removals, safe-country presumptions, detention, restrictions on modern slavery protections and wider exceptional border policies. Finally, it argues that the political payoff of anti-Albanian discourse lies in the displacement of responsibility: structural failures of asylum administration, accommodation, public spending and post-Brexit sovereignty are reframed as failures of control caused by external abuse. Anti-Albanian sentiment therefore operates as a social-

Key Takeaways

- 1 The Albanian "threat" is manufactured through four repeatable tropes.** *Criminality, fraudulent economic migration, modern slavery "abuse" and safe-country logic recur across executive rhetoric, Parliament and media coverage, shifting the burden of legitimacy onto the claimant before any individual case is assessed.*
- 2 Selective statistics turn a temporary spike into a permanent crisis narrative.** *A five-month window of arrivals in 2022 was repeatedly presented as evidence of a structural emergency, even as later data — 616 arrivals in 2024 against roughly 12,700 in 2022 — showed the spike had passed.*
- 3 This construction legitimises coercive policy.** *Once Albanians are positioned as presumptively undeserving, accelerated removals, safe-country presumption, detention and restrictions on modern slavery protections look like proportionate responses rather than exceptional measures.*
- 4 The underlying function is displacement — and the mechanism doesn't require Albanians specifically.** *Structural failures of state capacity are reattached to migrant "abuse" rather than resolved, meaning the same logic can migrate to another nationality once Albanian arrival numbers fall.*

hegemonic mechanism through which coercive border governance is made to appear necessary, defensive and commonsensical.