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UK-France Cooperation on Border Control: Efficacy, Deterrence and Human Rights

Laura Blythe
laura.m.blythe@gmail.com

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Refugee Studies Centre
Oxford Department of International Development
University of Oxford



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Acronyms

Abbreviation	Definition
CICC	Joint Information and Co-ordination Centre
EU	European Union
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
Le Touquet Agreement	Agreement Concerning the Carrying of Service Weapons by French Officers on the Territory of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (2003)
MP	Member of Parliament
NCA	National Crime Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
STHF	Short-Term Holding Facility
The Sandhurst Treaty	Treaty Between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the French Republic Concerning the Reinforcement of Cooperation for the Coordinated Management of their Shared Border (2018)
The Sangatte Protocol	Protocol between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of the French Republic Concerning Frontier Controls and Policing, Co-operation in Criminal justice, Public Safety and Mutual Assistance Relating to the Channel Fixed Link (1991)
The Refugee Convention	The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol
The Treaty of Canterbury	Treaty Concerning the Construction and Operation by Private Concessionaires of a Channel Fixed Link (1986)
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Abstract

The UK and France have worked together to jointly control their borders since the authorisation for construction of the Channel Tunnel in 1986. In the past 20 years, this cooperation has been significantly reinforced and expanded upon. The UK and France have engaged in an array of measures to achieve their aim of preventing 'irregular' migration from France to the UK. This includes the establishment of joint mechanisms to police and securitise the northern French coast, joint surveillance operations and the expansion of British-run detention facilities. This paper demonstrates that cooperation between the UK and France has not been successful in achieving its aims of preventing and deterring 'irregular' migrants from entering the UK. The measures taken under this cooperation create and reinforce harmful conditions for asylum seekers. I argue that the only way in which bilateral cooperation externalisation policies like those between the UK and France can achieve their aims is through the violation of the human rights of asylum seekers. Furthermore, I contend that the cooperation between the UK and France should partially be seen as a political façade, which demonstrates to the British public that the government is taking strong action against 'irregular' migration.

Key words: UK-France cooperation, border control, asylum seekers, deterrence, human rights.

Introduction

'France and the United Kingdom are partners in the fight against human trafficking, people smuggling and illegal migration, from the Channel to the Mediterranean and beyond. They committed to reinforce their bilateral co-operation, not to manage the problem but to break it.' (Prime Minister's Office, 2023).

Since the 1990s, asylum seekers have resided in northern France in the hope of making their way across the Channel and to the UK (Hagan, 2023: 1537). The UK and France have worked together to jointly control their borders since authorisation for the construction of the Channel Tunnel in 1986 (Treaty of Canterbury, 1986). Over the past 20 years, this cooperation has been significantly reinforced and expanded upon. The UK and France have engaged in an array of different measures to achieve their aim of preventing irregular migration from France to the UK. This includes the establishment of joint mechanisms to police and securitise the northern French coast (Gower, 2023: 2), joint surveillance operations (Home Office, Border Force and Patel, 2020), and the expansion of British-run detention facilities (Prime Minister's Office, 2023). Since 2014, the UK has committed over £232 million to France through successive bilateral agreements (Gower, 2023: 2), and a further £476 million has been committed over the period 2023 to 2026 (Prime Minister's Office, 2023).

There has been criticism of this cooperation from all sides. British MPs have criticised the French government for 'not taking this seriously enough' and not doing enough to stop migrants from crossing the Channel irregularly, with one Conservative MP labelling the French efforts as 'pathetic' (LBC, 2023). On the other side, a French report has criticised British efforts to prevent people crossing the Channel by small boats and for not passing on sufficient information to the French police (Symonds, 2024). Furthermore, NGOs in northern France have condemned the cooperation as directly linked to increased deaths of migrants at the border (Alarmphone, 2024). Despite these negative assessments, the cooperation between the UK and France has continued, and the UK continues to invest enormous amounts of money into preventing and deterring irregular migrants. It is thus vital to analyse the impacts of this cooperation and to determine the efficacy of the agreements.

In this paper, I seek to fill this gap by providing a systematic account of the nature of these agreements, analysing how they have changed over time, and establishing how efficacious they have been in achieving the objective of preventing and deterring irregular migrants from entering the UK. Scholars have focused on specific aspects of the cooperation: Mary Bosworth has provided in-depth analysis of the British-run detention centres in northern France (2022), and Marta Welander has demonstrated the implications of actions taken in northern France for asylum seekers' human rights (2021). Lucy Mayblin has recently considered the apparent lack of success of British policies to control Channel crossings (2024), but as yet, there has been little systematic analysis of the border cooperation between the UK and France.

I argue that the cooperation between the UK and France has not been successful in achieving its aims of preventing and deterring irregular migrants from entering the UK. Furthermore, I will show that the mechanisms for the prevention and deterrence of irregular migrants rest on creating and reinforcing harms for asylum seekers. For example, the inhumane and dangerous living conditions for asylum seekers in northern France directly relate to the actions taken by the British and French authorities. While a reduction in the numbers of people seeking asylum may be possible through these forms of bilateral cooperation, this would require an open violation of the human rights of asylum seekers. The objective of preventing and deterring asylum seekers through mechanisms of bilateral externalisation is not possible within a framework of governance that respects the human rights of all people.

I contend that the cooperation between the UK and France is not purely concerned with stopping arrivals. This cooperation should be partially seen as a political façade, which demonstrates to the British public that the government is taking strong action against irregular migration.

Definitions of ‘irregular’ and ‘illegal’ migration

The agreements between the UK and France specifically refer to preventing ‘irregular’ migration (Prime Minister’s Office, 2023). In this paper, I use the term ‘irregular’ migration to refer to the movement of people who do not have access to legal routes across the UK-France border. The term ‘irregular’ migrant includes asylum seekers, as most asylum seekers do not have access to travel to the UK via legal routes (Lenegan, 2024). The UK government also regularly uses the term ‘illegal immigrant’ to refer to people crossing the Channel by irregular means (Prime Minister’s Office, 2023). ‘Illegal immigrant’ is an inaccurate label seemingly used by the government to delegitimise the motivations of people crossing the Channel; many of the people who the government encompasses within this term are seeking asylum in the UK. The seeking of asylum is not illegal, despite the lack of legal routes available (Refugee Council, 2024).

Methodology and methods

This paper conducts a policy analysis. I have gathered government documents, statements and agreements since 1986 on the topic of border cooperation with France. I seek to provide an in-depth account of the history of the cooperation, hence I begin the analysis from 1986 when cooperation began under the Treaty of Canterbury (Treaty of Canterbury, 1986). I have done this through a purposive sampling framework. I have used primary and secondary literature; using secondary literature on the topic to build up a picture of the cooperation, and using the Home Office webpage to find all policy agreements and statements publicised on this subject. In 2023, the UK Home Office published a report detailing the development in cooperation with France since 2014 (Gower, 2023). This report, in combination with further research and analysis of information publicised by the Home Office, has allowed me to accurately map out the cooperation, track the amount of financial commitments made, and analyse the government’s portrayal of the cooperation.

In my analysis of the outcomes of the agreements, I have largely focused on the period between 2014 and 2023 for multiple reasons. Firstly, between these years there have been successive agreements, statements and declarations by the UK and France on border cooperation. In this timeframe, the UK has invested significant amounts of money into these arrangements. Therefore, it is important to investigate the outcomes of this cooperation. Secondly, information is accurately available between the period of 2014 and 2023; before this period

there is a limited amount of information publicised on this topic. I used the House of Commons Library to source asylum statistics published by the government within this timeframe. Figures from 2024 have not been included as, at the time of writing this paper in June 2024, the numbers are incomplete and thus cannot be accurately compared.

To analyse the government's portrayal of the outcomes of cooperation, I also used Hansard to source parliamentary debates surrounding border cooperation with France, using the terms 'French cooperation' and 'migration' to find all information on the subject between 2014 and 2024. I also found government speeches and interviews on the Home Office webpage and on news sites such as the BBC. Various websites, including information provided by NGOs, have been used throughout this paper to build up a broader understanding of policy outcomes and actions taken by both governments in northern France. My aim is to bring together all the information on this topic to fill a gap in the literature on British asylum policy by developing a systematic account of the border cooperation between the UK and France and to provide an analysis of its efficacy through a critical lens.

This paper is organised into six sections. First, I set out an externalisation framework, in which I document how border externalisation has developed globally. Second, I provide an overview of the history and motivations of border cooperation between the UK and France. In the third section, I map out the measures taken in northern France that aim to deter and prevent asylum seekers from entering the UK. In the fourth section, I evaluate the success of this cooperation, in which I argue that these agreements have not been efficacious in achieving their aims. This is followed by a fifth section which analyses the theory behind externalisation agreements and the harms created and reinforced for asylum seekers by such measures. Lastly, I seek to provide an alternative answer as to why this cooperation has continued; I contend that these agreements are partially a political façade and the British government is not purely concerned with their efficacy; this cooperation is also a signal to the British public that the government is being tough on immigration.

Section 1: Externalisation framework

There has been an increase in the number of asylum seekers globally since the late 20th century; in the world today, there are estimated to be over 5.4 million asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2024). With the rise in global mobility, Western states have adopted increasingly restrictive border control mechanisms to prevent and deter migrants (Gibney, 2003: 20). One of these measures, used across Europe, North America and Australasia, is the externalisation of state borders (Crisp, 2020). Border externalisation is defined as 'extraterritorial state actions to prevent migrants, including asylum seekers, from entering the legal jurisdictions or territories of destination countries' (Frelick et al., 2016: 193). Border externalisation takes a multiplicity of forms and often involves cooperation with other states and private actors. Simple measures such as visas, passports and carrier sanctions are forms of border externalisation, designed to prevent people from crossing borders freely (Crisp, 2020). Border externalisation can also take the form of bilateral arrangements between countries. This can involve providing physical and financial assistance to border management in transit countries, externalisation of asylum processing to a 'safe-third country', and cooperation with the emigration authorities in a country of origin (Amnesty International, 2017: 4; Gammeltoft-Hansen and Hathaway, 2015: 250).

States are increasingly engaging in bilateral agreements in which assistance is provided to a transit country to prevent and deter asylum seekers (Welander, 2021: 29). Typically, these arrangements take place between Global North and Global South countries (ibid). Examples include arrangements between Italy and multiple North African countries; between Spain and Morocco; and between Australia and Indonesia (ibid: 30). In these bilateral arrangements, the wealthier state 'deflects its asylum responsibility and outsources functions of asylum governance and legal obligations outside its territory' (Xanthopoulou, 2024: 114). For example, Italy has signed agreements with Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Sudan and Tunisia to govern migration flows extraterritorially (Terlizzi, 2021: 768); these arrangements include the financing of detention centres in Tunisia and joint maritime patrols on the Libyan coast (ibid). Such measures allow states to attempt to prevent and deter asylum seekers from entering their jurisdiction where they could legally claim protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention (Gibney, 2003:20).

These externalisation practices have resulted in exacerbated disparities between states hosting refugees. Currently, the vast majority of refugees reside in the Global South (UNHCR, 2024); restrictive border mechanisms allow wealthier states to refrain from taking part in any sort of equal burden sharing, placing a disproportionate responsibility on countries with an already lesser capacity (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Tan, 2016: 641; Gibney, 2003: 20).

Why has border externalisation developed?

These harsh and restrictive border policies are the result of multiple factors. There is a growing trend in populist politics across the Global North to frame migration as 'out of control' and a 'threat to security, social cohesion and public services of destination countries' (Crisp, 2024). For example, in December 2023, former British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said that he would do 'whatever it takes' to 'stop the boats' after he claimed that migration would 'overwhelm' Europe unless firm action was taken (Giuffrida and Savage, 2023). Border externalisation furthers this goal of populist politics to restrict unwanted immigration. In the British context, external border controls with France are vital to furthering the government's political goal of deterring and preventing asylum seekers from entering the UK.

Non-entry regimes and border externalisation are the result of a structural problem in the global refugee regime, in which state sovereignty is prioritised over refugee protection. The structure of the 1951 Refugee Convention is built around territorial access; this creates an incentive for states to prevent refugees from entering their jurisdiction, which would create a legal obligation for them to offer protection (Crisp, 2020). Externalisation allows for states to prevent asylum seekers from entering without violating the principle of non-refoulement, a norm of customary international law as codified in the 1951 Refugee Convention which prohibits states from returning a refugee to a country where they would be at risk of being persecuted for a Convention reason (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Tan, 2016: 637). This has resulted in the growth of externalisation policies that we see today (Effeney and Mansouri, 2014: 217). For the UK, externalising its border to France allows it to evade its responsibilities and obligations to asylum seekers under international refugee law.

Border externalisation also allows states to distance themselves from the human rights violations that occur in the third-party state who are employed to deter and prevent asylum seekers. This deflection of responsibility helps to create and reinforce harms for asylum seekers. Examples of this can be seen in the Italy-Libya cooperation. In Libya, significant violations of asylum seekers' human rights have been recorded, such as pullbacks of migrant

boats by the Libyan coastguard (Pijnenburg, 2018: 396) and torture of asylum seekers in Libyan prisons (Lopez Curzi, 2016). However, there is a developing legal argument that states should and can be held responsible for the harms that they have created indirectly through third-party agreements (Spijkenboer, 2007: 138). States have positive human rights responsibilities; knowledge of a situation but a failure to act may amount to effective control and trigger the jurisdictional responsibility of a state (ibid). For example, Italy may be held responsible for the human rights violations of asylum seekers in the context of pullbacks by the Libyan authorities (UNHCR, 2019). Despite these growing legal challenges, border externalisation practices continue to develop across the world.

The bilateral cooperation between the UK and France is an example of border externalisation; the two countries cooperate to operate juxtaposed controls in the respective territories and the UK continuously commits large amounts of finances to France to operate border control mechanisms for it (Gower, 2023: 2). However, unlike the unequal power relations that I have highlighted above, the case study of the UK and France presents a different form of cooperation, instead between two Global North states. Between a Global North and a Global South country, financial incentives are likely to draw more interest from the Global South state to cooperate, and human rights violations that occur in the Global South state are more easily obscured and overlooked than in a Global North state (Crisp, 2020; Amnesty International, 2017: 6). The UK and France, however, are of relatively equal economic standing, and both are subject to the same human rights obligations under the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR, 1953). It is highly significant, therefore, to analyse the outcomes of this externalisation policy, including whether the UK is able to achieve its aims of deterring and preventing asylum seekers from migrating from northern France and what potential challenges arise from this.

Section 2: An overview of the history and motivations of border cooperation between the UK and France

Since the 1986 Treaty of Canterbury, the 1991 Sangatte Protocol, and subsequent legislation and funding, the British border has been partially externalised to France (Welander, 2021: 31). This has been implemented through the 'deployment of hundreds of UK Border Force guards to French territory' (ibid), the creation of British-run short-term holding detention facilities in France (Timberlake, 2020), physical barriers (Home Office and Cleverly, 2024), joint surveillance mechanisms (Gower, 2023: 9), and financial support for the French police (Edmond-Pettitt, 2019: 22). These agreements are an extension of the increasingly restrictive deterrence policy of the UK government in response to rising numbers of asylum seekers (Tecca, 2021), aimed at 'detecting, detaining and removing' asylum seekers before they reach British territory (Timberlake, 2019: 32). This section first illustrates the different French and UK motivations to engage in such arrangements and then set outs the history and development of the cooperation.

Motivations

Since the 1980s there have been significant numbers of people claiming asylum in the UK each year (Walsh, 2022); the number peaked in 2002 with over 84,000 asylum applications and in recent years has begun to rise again, with over 67,000 applications in 2023 (Sturge, 2024: 11). The number of people crossing the Channel irregularly in small boats has increased

dramatically since 2018 (ibid: 32). The UK has responded to these asylum applications through an array of measures designed to prevent and deter asylum seekers. Under the Conservative government in 2014 this was termed the 'hostile environment' policy; administrative and legislative measures intended to make the UK an extremely difficult place for undocumented people to live in order to make sure that British asylum policy was not a 'pull factor' for asylum seekers to come to, or remain in, the UK (Tecca, 2021; Edmond-Pettitt, 2019: 22). Following the end of Theresa May's tenure as Home Secretary in 2016, this 'hostile environment' has continued to develop, especially in the wake of the inflammatory anti-immigrant rhetoric surrounding Brexit (Joos and Leleu, 2022: 207). With the rise in people crossing the Channel in small boats in recent years, Rishi Sunak's government adopted the slogan 'Stop the Boats' and outlined various measures intended to stop this 'illegal' migration (Home Office and Cleverly, 2024). These included the 2023 Illegal Migration Act, which has allowed for the criminalisation of asylum seekers, in breach of Article 31 of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Public Law Project et. al, 2023: 22), and the safe third country agreement with Rwanda (BBC, 2024).

The election of a Labour government in July 2024 has led to some changes in UK immigration policy, however, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer has made clear that the objective of reducing numbers of asylum seekers coming to the UK remains a priority (Prime Minister's Office et. al., 2024). On 30 January 2025, the new 'Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill' was introduced into Parliament (UK Parliament, 2025). The Bill repeals the Safety of Rwanda Act and parts of the Illegal Migration Act, but retains key parts of the Illegal Migration Act, including expanded detention powers, the exclusion of certain victims of modern slavery and trafficking from protection, and a cap on the number of people entering the UK under safe and legal routes (Asylum Welcome, 2025). The Bill also proposes a new criminal offence of 'endangering another person during a sea crossing to the UK' (Casciani, 2025), which although targeted at smugglers, risks leading to the criminalisation of many refugees crossing the Channel on a small boat who have been coerced by smugglers (Freedom from Torture, 2025).

The bilateral agreements between the UK and France are part of this broader political goal of creating measures to deter and prevent asylum seekers from entering the UK. Northern France is of high significance for irregular migration to the UK. Geographically, it is the closest point between mainland Europe and the UK, with just 25 km between Dover and Calais (Timberlake, 2019: 7). Since the 1990s, northern France has been a central area for asylum seekers attempting to make their way across the Channel and to the UK (Hagan, 2023: 1537). The opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1994 provided further opportunity for people to cross between the two countries (Daguerre, 2023). Therefore, it has been a priority of British governments over the past decades to cooperate with France to control this migration flow (Prime Minister's Office, 2010; Prime Minister's Office, 2023). Most recently, on 28 February 2025, the UK and France reinforced their cooperation to prevent small boat crossings across the Channel and announced new joint measures to tackle people smuggling gangs (Home Office and Cooper, 2025).

In 2003, French and British interests were 'considered to be complementary', in a common 'fight against illegal immigration' (Le Touquet Agreement, 2003), with France emphasising the 'importance of maintaining the western border of the Schengen Zone' as part of a 'narrative of building and securing a particular vision of Europe' (Bosworth, 2022: 509). However, French and British interests have not always aligned. French politicians have questioned whether assisting the British in the prevention and deterrence of asylum seekers from entering the UK

is of benefit to France too, and whether the British are providing sufficient support for their demands (Daguerre, 2023; Kovarik, 2021; Cowburn, 2016). For example, when campaigning for the presidential election in 2016, Nicolas Sarkozy called for the abandonment of the Le Touquet Treaty, claiming that the arrangement was solely in the interests of the UK, which he suggested should process asylum seekers in its own territory (Joos and Leleu, 2022: 208). During the presidencies of François Hollande and Emmanuel Macron, both leaders criticised the Le Touquet Treaty for placing a heavy burden on France, however both maintained the Treaty and engaged in further agreements with the UK (ibid). Although Brexit strained the relationship between the UK and France (Schichan, 2022), the French government reaffirmed its commitment to cooperating with the UK, stressing the importance of border cooperation (French Embassy, 2020).

This border cooperation can be viewed as part of a broader diplomatic game between the UK and France; it is deeply tied to cooperation in other political and economic realms. The joint border cooperation is often framed within broader policy cooperation, such as in the 2023 Joint Leaders' Declaration (Prime Minister's Office, 2023). In this Declaration, the UK and France reaffirmed their 'longstanding friendship and partnership' based on a 'shared memory, common values, respect, and mutual interest, and a shared vision for our bilateral future' (ibid). Cooperation on 'illegal' migration, as it was framed, was one of the eight key areas of cooperation set out, which also included cooperation on social and economic matters, energy, defence, and security (ibid). It is plausible that France's willingness to assist the UK in the field of irregular migration is tied to a benefit for France in another realm of cooperation.

The history of the agreements between UK and France

In response to the motivations as set out above, the UK and France have signed a series of bilateral agreements focusing on border cooperation which have 'gradually exported and outsourced' the British border into French territory (Timberlake, 2019: 5). The UK did not sign into the 1985 Schengen Agreement, which removes border checks between member states, when it was a member of the European Union (EU), thus allowing it to retain control of its own borders and enact strict immigration policies (ibid: 7). This independent border control has continued post-Brexit.

Timeline of agreements:

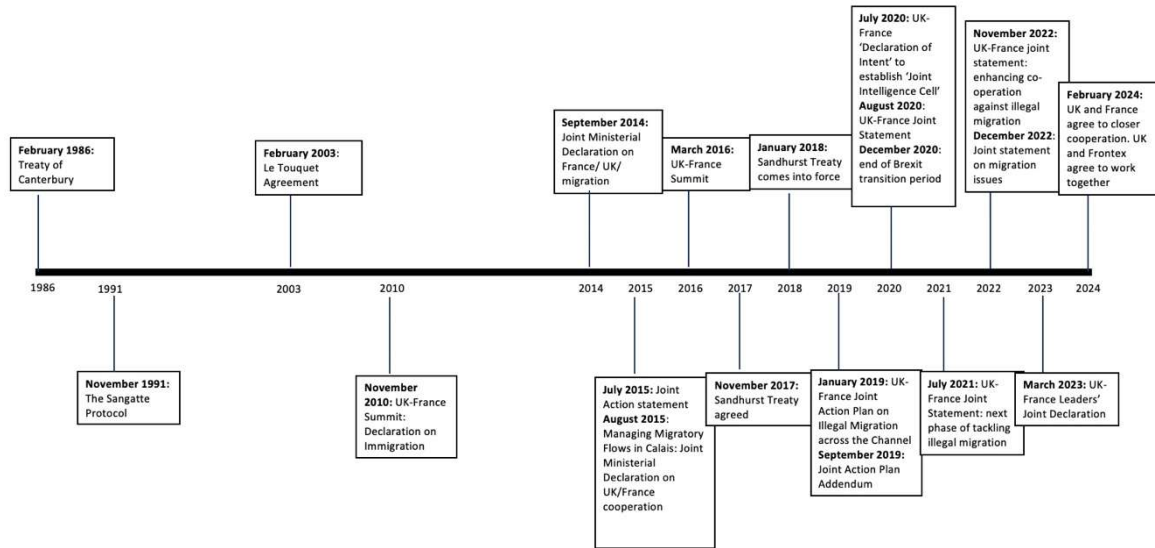


Figure 1, Timeline of cooperation. *Credits:* Created by author using UK Home Office and Prime Minister's Office statements, declarations and agreements.

Juxtaposed controls between France and the UK were initially created 'to speed up entry and exit procedures on the Channel Tunnel route' (Vine, 2013: 3). Juxtaposed controls are defined as 'a reciprocal arrangement between countries whereby each country carries out frontier controls in the other country prior to the commencement of the inward journey' (Clayton, 2010: 411). The beginnings of juxtaposed controls between the UK and France were established by the Treaty of Canterbury in 1986, which authorised the construction of the Channel Tunnel and set out a basis for both the UK and France to operate in each other's territory within a defined area (Treaty of Canterbury, 1986; Clayton, 2010: 412). This was furthered by the 1991 Sangatte Protocol, which established juxtaposed border controls at both the British and French side of the Channel Tunnel, in Folkestone and in Coquelles respectively (Sangatte Protocol, 1991). The Protocol also established British and French 'control zones' reaching to London and Paris, which allowed for each state to operate their own border control operations in the other's territory (ibid). This was expanded upon by the 2003 Le Touquet Agreement, which extended these controls to include ferry ports and led to the development of further detention sites in Calais and Dunkerque (Le Touquet Agreement, 2003; Bosworth, 2016). The Le Touquet Agreement also allowed for the UK to fund and provide resources to the French to increase security measures aimed at preventing irregular migration to the UK (Daguerre, 2023).

All together, these agreements 'established a framework for the management of the shared border between the two countries' (Daguerre, 2023), allowing for foreign border authorities in the areas governed by juxtaposed controls to 'wield the same prerogatives as those they have in their home country' (Bosworth, 2016). This granted the UK the power to 'stop, search, and detain individuals and freight vehicles while they are still on French soil' (ibid). French border police are also present on British soil near Dover, however there is no French holding facility in the UK (ibid). In this way, the agreements have partially displaced the British border to France (Joos and Leleu, 2022: 204).

Since the Le Touquet Agreement came into force there has been further development in cross-border management through subsequent legislation and agreements signed (Gower, 2023: 1). In 2004, the holding zone was set up in Calais (Bosworth, 2022: 508), and in 2007 detention sites were constructed at Coquelles (ibid). Joint border policing and surveillance mechanisms were first established by the 2010 Joint Declaration on Immigration (Prime Minister's Office, 2010). As numbers of asylum applications in the UK have remained high and anti-immigration sentiment has persisted, agreements between the UK and France on border cooperation have continued (Daguerre, 2023; Bosworth, 2022: 511). In 2018, the Sandhurst Treaty came into force (Sandhurst Treaty, 2018), which updated the Le Touquet Agreement, aiming to 'enhance co-operation on managing their shared border and reduce the number of people attempting to cross it illegally and at risk to safety and life' (Prime Minister's Office, 2018: 3).

The UK's departure from the EU prompted a significant change in cooperation between the two states (Gower, 2020). This led to the end of the UK's participation in the Dublin III Regulation on 31st December 2020 (ibid). The Dublin III Regulation allows for asylum seekers to be transferred between EU member states based on multiple factors, including family reunification, previous residence in a different EU state and the EU state first entered by the asylum seeker (ibid). Despite this transition, the UK and France continued to cooperate bilaterally on their border arrangements. The UK and France have committed to a series of Joint Action Plans and Joint Statements aimed at preventing irregular migration to the UK since the 2018 Sandhurst Treaty (Gower, 2023: 2). The bilateral arrangements demonstrate that British border control in northern France remains a significant political priority (Home Office and Cleverly, 2024). Not only have juxtaposed controls been reinforced, but British funding to the French border force, technology, and security mechanisms in northern France has increased (Gower, 2023: 2). Between 2014 and 2022, the UK government provided France with over £232 million to prevent 'irregular migration' (ibid). In March 2023, the UK committed a further £476 million of funding to France over the next three years to 'fight against human trafficking, people smuggling and illegal migration' (Prime Minister's Office, 2023).

Consequently, these agreements have led to the emergence of a British border zone on the French north coast. (Welander, 2021: 33). The border cooperation with France is part of the UK's policy to prevent and deter asylum seekers before they set foot on British territory. In this paper, I examine the efficacy and consequences of these agreements. I will now demonstrate the key actions taken as part of this border cooperation that aim to prevent and deter asylum seekers from reaching the UK.

Section 3: Measures taken in northern France to deter and prevent asylum seekers

Through analysing the different agreements, statements and declarations related to cooperative border control made between the UK and France since the Treaty of Canterbury, I have identified five main commitments taken on in northern France that aim to prevent and deter asylum seekers from entering the UK. These actions involve: physical barriers and security measures; surveillance mechanisms; British-run detention centres; border policing; and enforced poor living conditions. I demonstrate how these five actions have been enacted by France and the UK and for what purposes.

Physical barriers and the securitisation of northern France

The UK and France have worked together to create a securitised and fortified zone in northern France to deter and prevent asylum seekers from crossing into the UK. The UK provides funding to France to install border security infrastructure; this funding has increased in recent years (Gower, 2023: 2). With the increased ability to cross the Channel since the 1990s via the Channel Tunnel and with the recent increased crossings of small boats, it has been a priority of the UK to secure these routes (Home Office and Cleverly, 2024). Physical barriers and securitisation are a key part of this. Physical security infrastructures are used to contain migrants across the world; similarities can be seen with the US-Mexico border wall, which aims to prevent migrants from Latin America from entering the US (Felbab-Brown, 2017).

In the Joint Ministerial Declaration in September 2014, the UK contributed £2.7 million to the Joint Intervention Fund for strengthening security, infrastructure and fencing around and in the port areas of Calais in order to stop migrants from entering the port (Gower, 2023: 2). In 2015, the UK provided a further £8.4 million towards securing the waiting area for lorries at Calais and towards 'increasing security at the Channel Tunnel railhead at Coquelles' (Home Office and May, 2015). The two governments agreed to invest further in 'making the perimeter of the railhead secure, through a combination of high-quality fencing, CCTV and infrared detection technology and flood lighting', 'strengthening security within the tunnel itself', and 'supporting Eurotunnel Ltd. to increase substantially the number of security guards protecting the site' (Cazeneuve and May, 2015: 2). The establishment of 'la Lande' migrant camp in January 2015 in Calais, colloquially known as the 'Jungle', in which an estimated 7,000 people resided, furthered this desire to secure northern France (Home Office and Rudd, 2016; Edmond-Pettitt, 2019: 23). At the UK-France Summit in March 2016, the UK committed to provide £17 million for security infrastructure in Calais (Gower, 2023: 5), 'including extra fencing and infrastructure, security guards, search dogs and detection technology' (Prime Minister's Office, 2016). This was used in December 2016 to extend the existing wall along the ferry port's entrance; to build a further concrete wall topped with barbed wire surrounding the vehicle boarding area and the freight customs control in Calais (Travis and Chrisafis, 2016). This four-kilometre wall has been named the 'Great Wall of Calais', designed to prevent migrants from entering the loading zones and thus accessing the UK (Joos and Leleu, 2022: 205).

This investment has continued and expanded in recent years: in January 2019, the UK committed a further £6 million for preventive security measures, including 'CCTV, night goggles and number plate recognition capability' (Home Office, Border Force and Javid, 2019: 3). Similarly, in July 2021 and November 2022, the UK pledged to further invest in physical measures to strengthen border security along the Channel coast (Darmanin and Patel, 2021; Darmanin and Braverman, 2022). This investment in security infrastructure such as moats, anti-intrusion walls and watchtowers across the city has, in the words of some scholars, transformed Calais into a 'fortress' and aimed to make the British coastline 'impenetrable by migrants' (Joos and Leleu, 2022: 204).

Surveillance and intelligence sharing

Joint surveillance mechanisms are used by the British and French to track irregular migrant activity and crack down on smuggling gangs (Home Office, Border Force and Patel, 2020). These mechanisms were first established in the 2010 UK-France summit, when the Joint Intelligence Unit in Folkestone was created. This involved British and French units working together with the aim of breaking 'illegal immigration networks' (Prime Minister's Office, 2010:

1). In September 2014, Bernard Cazeneuve, French Minister of the Interior, and Theresa May, Home Secretary of the UK agreed to 'increase their operation cooperation to fight against the smuggling of migrants' (Gower, 2023: 4). This involved the sharing of operational information and increased contact between different actors, including the French border police, the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA), and the British Border Force, in which both the British and French would send officers to work in the opposite country (Cazeneuve and May, 2014: 2). In 2015, the UK committed to invest 'in creating a new, integrated control room covering the railhead in Coquelles, bringing together CCTV, detection equipment and intelligence feeds to give local police tactical commanders a comprehensive and integrated picture upon which to base operational deployments' (Cazeneuve and May, 2015: 2). Furthermore, the countries have established a 'joint command and control centre in Calais' which focuses on 'developing and deploying intelligence and operations against criminal activity on both sides of the Channel', supported by the Joint Intelligence Unit in Folkestone (ibid).

The most significant development in surveillance mechanisms in recent years has been the creation of the Joint Information and Co-ordination Centre (CICC) in 2018 by the Sandhurst Treaty to share intelligence between the UK and France (Prime Minister's Office, 2018: 6). The CICC is staffed by both French and British officers (Home Office and Cleverly, 2024) and is tasked with the 'management and prevention of threats to public' order in Nord and Pas-de-Calais, 'crisis management in the event of acute migratory pressure', and supporting 'action to counter the operations of smuggling rings, human traffickers and criminal networks in Nord and Pas-de-Calais' (Prime Minister's Office, 2018: 6- 7). This cooperation has continued to develop: in July 2020 UK and France signed a 'Declaration of Intent' which established a UK-French Joint Intelligence Cell to 'collate, centralise and analyse operational intelligence to prevent crossings from taking place and to dismantle the gangs behind them' (Gower, 2023: 9). Agreements in 2021 and 2022 have committed to further this cooperative surveillance of northern France (Darmanin and Patel, 2021, Darmanin and Braverman, 2022). In March 2023, it was established that the UK's NCA would provide training and deploy a liaison officer to France's counterpart agency 'to tackle the supply chain of equipment that enables dangerous and illegal small boat crossings' (Prime Minister's Office, 2023). These joint surveillance and intelligence mechanisms, working with the physical barriers and border policing, aim to reduce irregular migration by targeting smuggling gangs and breaking the structures by which people can cross irregularly into the UK.

Detention centres

The UK and France also cooperate to run asylum detention centres in France in an effort to prevent asylum seekers from reaching the UK. The British government runs several short-term holding facilities (STHFs) in northern France, managed by juxtaposed controls (Bosworth, 2022: 508). British-run detention centres were initially created by the 1991 Sangatte Protocol, which established checkpoints at the Eurostar terminals and at Coquelles where people could be held for a period of 48 hours in detention (ibid: 509). The 2003 Le Touquet Agreement expanded these controls, allowing for the creation of detention centres in Dunkerque and Calais (Le Touquet Agreement, 2003). In 2004, the holding zone at Calais was constructed and in 2007 detention sites were established at Coquelles, near the Eurostar entrance (Bosworth, 2022: 508). Under the juxtaposed controls in the areas specified, 'the British Border Force can stop and search individuals and freight vehicles on French soil', as can French border police in the UK (ibid: 509). Anyone who is an irregular immigrant, is claiming asylum, or is suspected of serious criminal or terrorist offences may be briefly detained in STHFs for up to 48 hours (ibid).

Three STHFs are now located in the Calais port, Coquelles, and Dunkerque (Bosworth, 2022: 512). In the March 2023 Joint Leader's Declaration, provisions were made for another detention centre to be established, reportedly in Dunkerque, which is expected to be operational in 2026 (Gower, 2023: 15). As well as the STHFs in northern France, the UK also invests in reception centres in the south of France to deter migrants entering France from travelling to northern France and 'removal centres to support voluntary returns to countries of origin' (Gower, 2023: 14).

The stated aim of the UK in running these detention facilities is to 'contribute significantly to improve the number of returns and prevent the recurrence of crossing attempts' (Prime Minister's Office, 2023). However, it is questionable how much impact detention centres like this have on preventing and deterring migrants from crossing the Channel, especially given the short time period that people can be held in these centres. There is a lack of information about the STHFs and their consequences for asylum seekers. It is equally important to examine the detrimental effect to migrants themselves. These STHFs pose a legal problem; although under British jurisdiction, they are not subject to the same scrutiny and evaluation as detention centres in the UK (Bosworth, 2022: 513). The centres are staffed by private sector companies and overseen by the UK Border Force (ibid: 514). They have not been inspected by the Independent Monitoring Board, which monitors fair and humane treatment in prisons and detention centres, despite requests for access (ibid). As Bosworth demonstrates 'holding centres in France are practically invisible, hidden within the layers of security around the ports in which they are located' where migrants are treated 'neither as subjects (of discipline) nor objects (of elimination) but as those without presence', raising serious questions around the rights of the occupants who are held there (ibid: 513-514).

British and French policing of the border

The fourth way in which the UK and France cooperate to deter and prevent asylum seekers in northern France from entering the UK is through joint policing mechanisms. The British and French work together to police the borders of northern France. This was first formally established in the 2010 UK-France summit by the creation of the Joint Operational Coordination Centre, which brings together the UK Border Agency, French Border Police and Customs (Prime Minister's Office, 2010). This cooperation was reinforced in 2014, when the UK and France committed to strengthen operational cooperation between British and French law enforcement agencies at the border (Cazenueve and May, 2014: 1). In 2016, the French authorities deployed over 1300 police officers to prevent intrusions of irregular migrants to the port of Calais and the Channel Tunnel (Prime Minister's Office, 2016).

As the numbers of migrants crossing on small boats have increased over recent years, so too have coastguard patrols (BBC, 2022). The Joint Action Plan Addendum in September 2019 committed to the 'prevention of departures of boats from France before they are launched through increasing the number of active patrols along the French coast', which included increasing the Gendarmerie Reservists (French border police) deployed to 45 officers per day providing 24/7 cover, with British officers there to support (Patel and Castaner, 2019: 3). In the financial year 2019/2020, the UK government made an additional payment of £2.25 million 'dedicated to the deployment of Gendarme Reservists and further strengthening preventative security measures' (Gower, 2023: 8). In November 2022, the UK and France agreed to increase the deployments of French patrol officers by 40% in the next five months (Darmanin and Braverman, 2022) and to incorporate British officers into French teams to observe and 'strengthen migrant debriefing and increase information sharing on the threat' (ibid).

Furthermore, the Joint-Leader's declaration in March 2023 established a 'zonal coordination initiative' which is 'responsible for coordination of all relevant French law enforcement, supported by the United Kingdom and including a permanent presence (24/7) of an embedded British officer' in order to respond to irregular migration in the Channel (Prime Minister's Office, 2023). This is reinforced by the UK Border Force's Small Boats Operational Command created in January 2023 to curb migration crossings (Home Office and Border Force, 2023).

This policing of the border works in parallel with the security infrastructure, surveillance mechanism and the detention regime to prevent and deter asylum seekers from crossing the Channel into the UK.

Enforced poor living conditions

The final method of prevention and deterrence that I have identified is the policing of migrant camps in northern France and the poor living conditions available to asylum seekers. Informal refugee camps first emerged in northern France in the 1990s (Hagan, 2023: 1537). In 1999, Sangatte camp was established, an official refugee camp run by the Red Cross (Rahman-Jones, 2016). However, this was closed in 2002 by the French and British governments and since then migrants have lived in makeshift encampments across northern France (ibid). These camps are regularly cleared by the French authorities as part of their policing mechanisms agreed upon with the British (Freedman, 2018: 401), but this has not deterred refugees from residing in northern France and has led to a continuous cycle of temporary movement of refugees within the region (ibid: 406). In 2015, the biggest informal camp, colloquially known as the 'Jungle', formed in Calais, hosting an estimated 7000 people (Rahman-Jones, 2016). In October 2016, the French authorities violently demolished the camp, moving the migrants and asylum seekers to temporary reception centres across France (Edmond-Pettitt, 2019: 23). The UK and France have continued to demonstrate their commitment to dismantling 'illegal' encampments in their bilateral agreements since 2010 (Prime Minister's Office, 2010; Prime Minister's Office, 2016; Prime Minister's Office, 2018).

The conditions for asylum seekers residing in northern France are extremely poor (Freedman, 2018: 401). In 2021, it was estimated that 2000 asylum seekers were living temporarily along the northern French coast (Durie, 2021), although this figure is imprecise and it is impossible to know exactly how many people are currently residing there. Human Rights Watch have demonstrated the degrading treatment of refugees in the region and have argued that there is a policy of 'enforced misery'; with people living in temporary shelters and tents and lacking access to clean water, sanitation and cooking facilities (HRW, 2021: 45). These conditions are created and reinforced by constant evictions of migrants from their temporary camps by the French police, who are funded and directed by the British (Welander, 2021: 30). The number and regularity of evictions has increased starkly since 2018 (Joos and Leleu, 2022: 204); migrants are often forced to move location of their makeshift encampments daily, which has a detrimental effect on their physical and mental health (ibid: 209). There are multiple reports of police brutality and violence when carrying out these evictions (Welander, 2021: 32). The extensive surveillance mechanisms in northern France enable the French authorities to locate the informal camps and carry out the evictions (Joos and Leleu, 2022: 208).

These evictions and enforced instability of migrants appear to be based on the reasoning that ‘providing humanitarian help to refugees will create a “magnet” effect and will attract migrants from the world over’ (Joos and Leleu, 2022: 204). Welander argues that this enforced misery and instability is part of a deliberate strategy to make northern France unliveable for migrants; it is a ‘border governance tool aimed at achieving deterrence, control and exclusion’ (2021: 31). In this way, the British ‘hostile environment’ policy has been exported to France to extend the policy of deterrence to asylum seekers before they arrive (Edmond-Pettitt, 2019: 22). That said, poor living conditions in France have the potential to be counter-productive by encouraging refugees to move from France across the Channel (ibid: 27).

Conclusion

It is clear that a policy of deterring and preventing asylum seekers in northern France from reaching the UK has been taken through the development of cooperation between the UK and France since the 1990s. This policy is enacted through an array of different measures: physical barriers and security measures, surveillance mechanisms, detention centres in France, border police, and the enforced poor living conditions in northern France. These actions all aim to reduce the numbers of people crossing the Channel to the UK to seek asylum. However, the efficacy of these policies has not been clear. In the following section I analyse the extent to which the UK government’s cooperation with France has met their aims and objectives to ‘tackle illegal migration’ (Home Office, Border Force and Javid, 2019), examining the numbers of people crossing the Channel and seeking asylum in the UK and comparing them to the government’s portrayal of the outcomes.

Section 4: Evaluation of the success of cooperation

There has been criticism from some stakeholders, including MPs and Border Force unions, of the agreements with France for not meeting their objectives. For example, Labour MP Emily Thornberry criticised the March 2023 Declaration as nothing more than ‘typical sticking plaster politics’, and was quoted saying that ‘before Rishi Sunak sends even more money to the French authorities to tackle this crisis, he needs to explain what was achieved by the hundreds of millions we’ve given them before, and why small boat crossings continued to go up regardless’ (Grammaticas and Whannel, 2023). I look to provide a systematic analysis of the cooperation. Firstly, I do this by comparing an analysis of the number of people seeking asylum in the UK to the aims of the UK government. Numbers of people crossing the Channel irregularly are difficult to measure accurately, due to the unofficial nature of such journeys. Therefore, I focus on the number of asylum applications, as most asylum seekers in the UK travel irregularly (Lenegan, 2024), as well as numbers of people who have crossed via small boats, as this has been measured by the UK government since 2018. Secondly, I compare this to how the UK government has portrayed the outcomes of their cooperation with the French. I focus my analysis on the period 2014 to 2023, in which there have been continuous agreements between the UK and France. I find that the success of this cooperation in achieving the aims of the government is not clear.

Objectives

To analyse the success of the bilateral cooperation between the UK and France, the aims of the cooperation must first be established. The aims of the agreements and statements have

remained similar over the years that the cooperation has developed. As affirmed in the March 2023 Joint Leaders' Declaration, the overarching goal is to 'fight against human trafficking, people smuggling and illegal migration, from the Channel to the Mediterranean and beyond' (Prime Minister's Office, 2023) and to 'increase the interception rate and drastically reduce the number of crossings year on year' (ibid). Similar objectives can be seen in 2010, where France and the UK committed to 'continue the fight against illegal migration and against the traffickers who exploit migrants and organise the trade in human beings' (Prime Minister's Office, 2010: 1). To first evaluate whether these objectives have been met, I compare the development of UK-French cooperation to the numbers of people seeking asylum in the UK.

Cooperation in comparison to numbers of people seeking asylum in the UK

As shown in Figure 1, French and British cooperation has been continuous, and since 2014 there have been agreements every year.

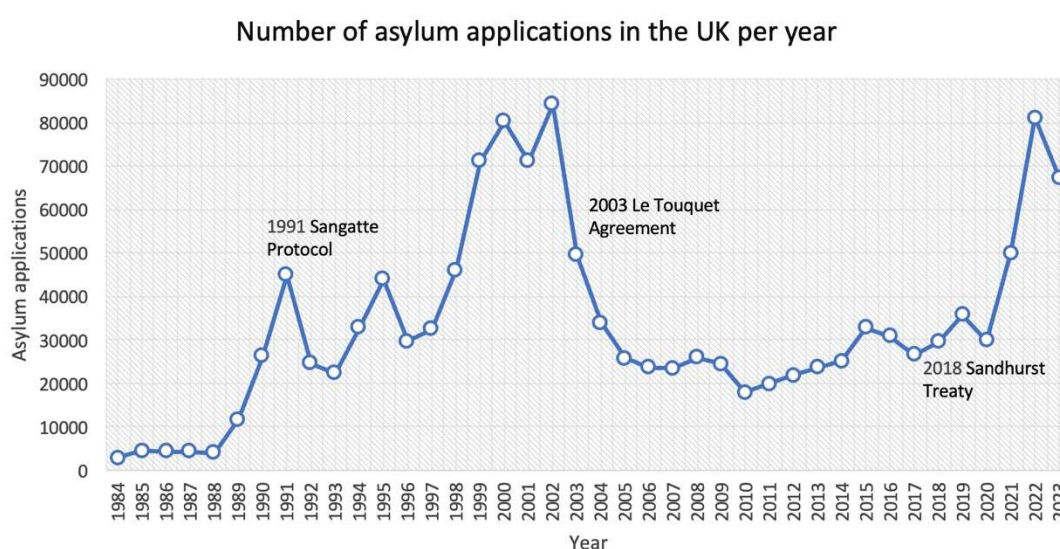


Figure 2, Number of asylum applications in the UK since 1984. *Credits:* created by author based on asylum figures from Sturge (2024: 34) and bilateral agreements as published by the UK Government.

An increase in asylum applications correlates to renewed and reinforced cooperation between the UK and France. For example, in 2002 there were the highest number of asylum applications ever recorded, at 84,132 (Sturge, 2024: 34). Subsequently, the Le Touquet Agreement was signed in 2003. We can see a similar trend in recent years, with asylum applications steadily rising since 2011, alongside continuous agreements made between the UK and France to reduce irregular migration.

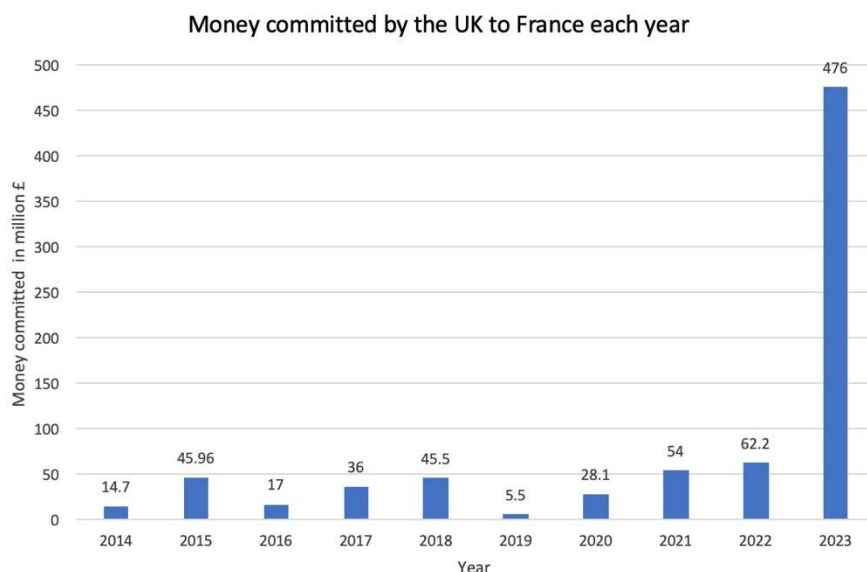


Figure 3, Money committed by the UK to France to prevent irregular migration each year. Credits: created by author based on figures from Gower (2023: 2).

Figure 3, as seen above, is a graph of the total amount of money committed in the agreements that year; some years this money will be spent over the period of a few years. In 2014, this money was committed over three years, in 2015 it was committed over two years, and in 2023, this money was committed over the next three years. This does not cover all financial commitments invested by the UK into border cooperation with France, rather I focus on the key agreements. It is not possible to track all the money invested by the UK as the information made public on how much the UK has pledged to France is not always made clear by the government (Gower, 2023: 2). The financial commitments are often reported inconsistently, for example both in calendar years and in financial years, and both in Euros and in GBP (ibid). I have made the graph above based on the spending information that was made publicly available by the UK government.

This compares to the number of asylum applications over the past 10 years:

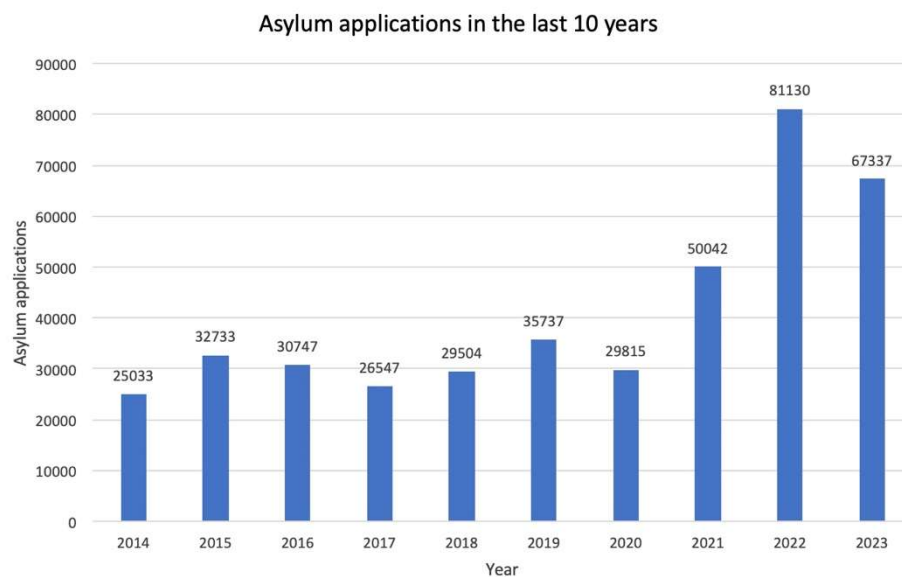


Figure 4, Asylum applications in the last 10 years. *Credits: created by author based on figures from Sturge (2024: 34).*

A clear pattern cannot be seen when analysing asylum applications alongside the amount of money committed by the UK. It can be inferred that the vast increase in money committed in 2023, £476 million, is a response to the increase in asylum applications to over 80,000 the year prior. Similarly, the continuous flow of agreements and money committed can be seen as a response to the continuous flow of asylum seekers to the UK over the last 10 years. However, a relationship between how many people have been prevented or deterred by these agreements cannot be drawn. This is not to say that the cooperation has not had any effect whatsoever on irregular migration from France to the UK. We do not know if some people may have been prevented from crossing; however, the government's desire of stopping irregular migration certainly has not been fulfilled.

It must be noted that asylum applications per year are not synonymous to numbers of people crossing the Channel irregularly; this does not show whether people have entered the UK that year or by what means. Therefore, it is also important to examine the numbers of people crossing the Channel irregularly via small boats.

Cooperation in comparison to small boat crossings

Since 2018 there has been a sharp increase in the number of people crossing the Channel in small boats (Sturge, 2024: 32). As demonstrated earlier, stopping this is a key priority for the UK, and thus is one of the main actions with which France has been tasked.

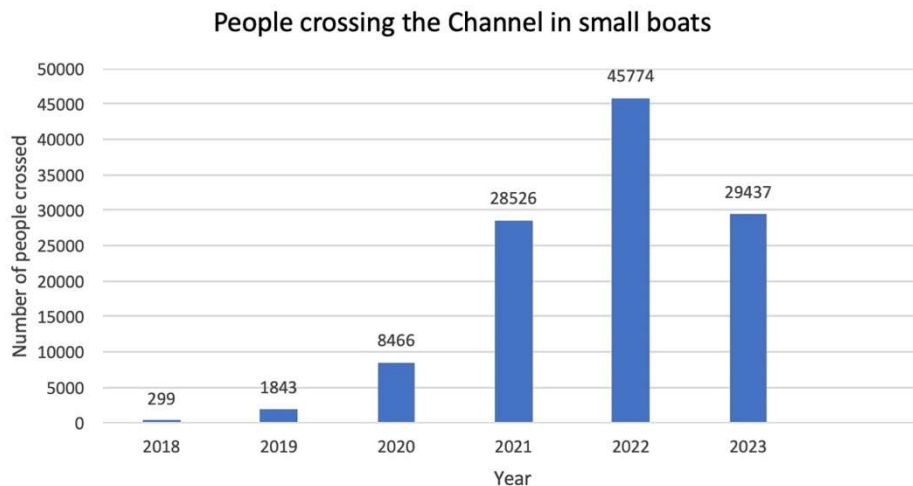


Figure 5, People crossing the Channel in small boats. *Credits:* created by author based on figures from Sturge (2024: 32).

This compares to the amount of money committed by the UK to France since 2018, as shown in Figure 3. As with comparisons with overall applications for asylum, there is a continuous trend of money committed as well as a continuous flow of people crossing the Channel by small boat. The vast amount committed in 2023, £476 million, correlates to the increase in the number of people crossing in small boats in 2022. This can be seen as a response to the objective of the March 2023 Joint Declaration to ‘increase the interception rate [of people crossing the Channel] and drastically reduce the numbers of crossings year in year’ (Prime Minister’s Office, 2023). However, from these numbers a pattern cannot be determined between the financial commitments of the UK and how many asylum seekers have been prevented and deterred.

When examining asylum figures, the impact of the Dublin III Regulation must also be considered. The UK was a net recipient of asylum seekers under the Regulation in the UK’s latter years of participation in the agreement (Wilkins, 2019). Between 2015 and 2019, 3,850 people were transferred to the UK under the Regulation, largely through the family reunification route, compared to 1,604 people transferred out of the UK to other EU states during that same period, due to the ability to return asylum seekers to EU states through which they travelled (ibid). The UK’s departure from the Dublin III Regulation may have led to an increase in the number of people seeking asylum irregularly due to the lack of the Dublin III family reunion pathway which applied ‘more generous eligibility criteria’ than the family reunion pathway under the UK Immigration Rules (Gower, 2020). However, a clear correlation between the UK’s departure from Dublin and the rise in asylum applications post 2020 cannot be inferred.

It can be interpreted that the increase in the number of people crossing by small boats correlates to the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, in which a reduction in international movement made it harder to cross by lorry and rail (Henley, Halliday and Boffey, 2020). Furthermore, I argue that the increase in people crossing the Channel by small boat is likely to correlate to an increased tightening of security surrounding the port and Eurotunnel in Calais. The increased physical security and policing mechanisms, such as the Calais border wall, have limited people’s access to travel irregularly via lorry and train (Joos and Leleu, 2022: 205). As has been demonstrated by interviews with asylum seekers in northern France, increased

restrictions at borders do not stop people from undertaking these journeys, but rather encourage them to take alternative and often more dangerous routes (Harding, 2024). One asylum seeker in Calais was quoted by the BBC saying ‘we’re not scared. If we’re to die in the Channel, that’s what God wanted. It is nothing compared to what we’ve already been through’ (ibid). This demonstrates that asylum seekers will continue to attempt to travel to the UK despite the increased securitisation of the border.

The government’s portrayal

From this analysis of the number of people seeking asylum and number of small boat crossings compared to the agreements and money spent, the success of the UK government’s aims cannot be inferred. It is therefore important to look to how the UK government has portrayed the outcome of this cooperation. The UK Home Office has shared that there is a regular joint UK-France Monitoring Committee and a ‘result framework’ to monitor the impact of the investment under the Sandhurst Treaty, however no government has yet publicised the outcomes of the monitoring body on the grounds that it relates to ‘sensitive operational activity’ (UK Parliament, 2021). The March 2023 Declaration is also ‘underpinned by a range of (unpublished) metrics’ (Gower, 2023: 18). Thus, I examine official government statements and parliamentary debates to demonstrate how the British government frames the outcomes of their cooperation with France to the British public. This information has been sourced by analysing joint statements and declarations on border cooperation with France published by the Home Office and by analysing parliamentary debates surrounding ‘French cooperation’ and ‘migration’. I have identified two main trends in this discourse regarding the claimed successes of cooperation with France: reducing numbers of crossings and breaking smuggler gangs. I examine these in turn.

Reducing the number of crossings

Throughout the government’s discourse surrounding these agreements, there has been a focus on interception rates of asylum seekers crossing the Channel and of asylum seekers being deterred from making these crossings. The Joint Leaders’ Declaration issued in March 2023 refers to an agreement to increase the interception rate in the Channel and ‘drastically reduce the number of crossings year on year’ (Prime Minister’s Office, 2023). In February 2024, ‘the Home Secretary welcomed the excellent work from French law enforcement to reduce the number of small boats reaching the UK by 36% in 2023 compared to the previous year’ (Home Office and Cleverly, 2024). However, this conflicts with a statement later that month given by the Minister for Countering Immigration, Michael Tomlinson, who announced in a debate in the House of Commons surrounding the progress made by French border cooperation that ‘small boat crossings were down by 46%’ in 2023 compared to the previous year (House of Commons, 2024). As the Home Office statistics show, people crossing the Channel on small boats did in fact reduce by 36% (Sturge, 2024: 32). This inconsistent information undermines the legitimacy of information shared by the government on the outcome of their border cooperation with France.

Outcomes of the border cooperation are also demonstrated in the 2023 Joint Leaders Declaration, which stated that 1,381 small boat crossings, carrying 33,788 people, had been prevented from entering the UK in 2022. This amounts to 42.5% of attempts to cross and 55% of small boats being intercepted by the French border police in 2022. (Gower, 2023: 3). These figures correspond to information given by Dan O’Mahoney, former director of the Home Office’s Clandestine Channel Threat Command, to the Home Affairs Committee in October

2022. Mr O'Mahoney described the French authorities as having intercepted 'a lower percentage, but a much, much bigger number' in 2022 than in 2021 (Gower, 2023: 17). Roughly 50% of people and boats crossing the Channel in 2021 were intercepted (ibid). In November 2020 'the intervention success rate increased from 41% in 2019 rising to 60% in recent weeks', however it was acknowledged that 'despite these extensive efforts, the number of attempts to cross the Channel by small boat remains too high' (Home Office, 2020).

In this government discourse, there is a significant emphasis on the number of boats France has intercepted, rather than the total number of people crossing. For example, in 2021 it was affirmed that in the last year 'France has doubled the number of successful interceptions of attempted launches of small boats, preventing more than 7,500 people from making the dangerous crossing, thus saving twice as many lives as in the same period in 2020' (Darmanin and Patel, 2021). Similarly, in the '2022 Risks of Illegal Immigration' document published by the Home Office, it was stated that 'in 2022, French and UK authorities prevented nearly 33,000 attempts to travel illegally to the UK, nearly 40% more than in 2021' (Home Office, 2022), rather than highlighting how many Channel crossings were made. In both 2021 and 2022, there was an overall increase in people crossing the Channel by small boat compared to the previous years (Sturge, 2024: 32). Although increased interception rates can be seen as symbol of success of the cooperation in achieving the objectives of the UK government, it seems plausible that people who have been prevented from crossing will try again. For example, one asylum seeker in Calais said that he had tried to cross the Channel six times (Blackall, 2024). A 40 to 50% interception rate has little meaning compared to how many crossings are being made; we do not know if anyone has been fully prevented or deterred from making the journey to the UK, or if the people who were intercepted then successfully made it across on a subsequent journey. Thus, this does not demonstrate that the efforts taken by the UK and France to prevent Channel crossings are effective in achieving their desired outcome.

Breaking smuggler gangs and organised crime groups

There has also been a significant focus on 'breaking smuggler gangs' and criminal convictions in government discourse surrounding these agreements. This has been emphasised in the joint statements, summits and declarations. For example, in the 2022 'Risks of Illegal Migration' document, it was stated that 'since the UK-France Joint Intelligence Cell was established in July 2020, the UK and France have dismantled 76 organised crime groups and secured over 500 arrests', 'there have been 779 convictions for immigration crimes resulting in a combined total of over 900 years in prison' and 'UK government investigations have led to 340 convictions relating to people smuggling cases; this includes 130 small boats related convictions and 210 convictions for facilitating migrants in vehicles' (Home Office, 2022). There is a significant emphasis on criminality and the implied success that this denotes. When analysing information supplied by the government on this, it must be acknowledged for what purpose they are supplying this information and what information is being purposefully left out. The above-mentioned Home Office document is not only giving public information about the work, but also seems to be targeted at asylum seekers to deter them; it is produced in multiple languages and is warning about the risks of irregular migration such as the dangers of people smugglers, relocation to Rwanda, and penalties and jail sentences (ibid). Thus, this document seems to aim to act as a deterrent to asylum seekers. Similar outcomes and statistics have been published in the 2016 Summit, November 2020 statement, and 2020 statement. The UK government has also recently reported that 'joint work with France has seen at least 59 Organised Crime Groups connected to these crossings dismantled, and over 500 arrests made, since the foundation of the Joint Intelligence Cell in July 2020' (Gower, 2023: 3).

This high emphasis on criminality and number of crossings intercepted can also be seen as a signal to the public that the government is being tough on irregular migration, as well as part of a broader deterrence strategy to asylum seekers. These facts are emphasised by the government in these documents and statements, rather than the total number of asylum applications. This emphasis on criminality fits into the 'crimmigration' discourse and action in the UK, in which irregular immigration is being increasingly criminalised (Bhatia, 2020: 36). For example, the Illegal Migration Act passed into law by the previous government in July 2023 allowed for anyone who arrives to the UK irregularly to have their claim deemed 'inadmissible', and to be subsequently detained indefinitely and then removed to their home country or a 'safe third country' (Refugee Council, 2023). It has been argued by scholars that criminalisation of people smuggling and irregular migration does not prevent such migration, but rather often increases the dangers faced by asylum seekers (Gerver, 2021: 143). Furthermore, Obermann contends that 'the reason smugglers exist is because there is a demand for their services, and that demand is created by border enforcement' (2021). Therefore, despite the hundreds of arrests made in relation to irregular immigration and smuggling, the number of people crossing the Channel has remained high (Sturge, 2024: 11). It is difficult to interpret these statistics as being a success for the UK government.

Conclusion

To assess whether the measures taken by the UK and France in northern France to deter and prevent asylum seekers from reaching the UK have been successful is problematic and challenging. It is impossible to know whether these measures have had a direct impact on migration patterns, and no clear pattern can be interpreted from assessing the numbers of asylum seekers in the context of cooperation between the UK and France. Actions such as policing, surveillance, detention centres, living conditions and physical security mechanisms are likely to influence migration patterns to an extent, but these are only a few factors that determine migration patterns and it cannot be determined how these factors will influence everybody. For example, the physical barriers and the policing of the border may have prevented some people from crossing, but may have also contributed to more people crossing the Channel by alternative means such as by small boats rather than on the back of lorries or in trains, as demonstrated by the increase in small boat crossings (Sturge, 2024: 32). As established above, joint surveillance mechanisms may have broken multiple smuggling gangs, yet the numbers of people crossing the Channel irregularly suggests that smuggling gangs are still very active in northern France. The enforced poor living conditions may have also deterred some, but people continue to reside in these makeshift encampments across northern France in the hope of reaching the UK. Furthermore, it is unclear what the impact of detention centres has been on irregular migration (Devlin, Dearden and Gregory, 2023). Therefore, I argue that the cooperation between the UK and France has not been successful in fulfilling the government's desire of preventing irregular migration to the UK.

Section 5: How can the prevention and deterrence of asylum seekers through externalisation be successful?

In the previous section I demonstrated the difficulties in assessing the success of the British and French cooperation on border control. This is a common trend when looking at measures taken by states to deter and prevent asylum seekers; similar outcomes have been demonstrated by the Italy-Libya cooperation, which has not stopped irregular migration but rather has led to people being put in more dangerous circumstances (Crisp, 2020). This raises the question of how externalisation through bilateral cooperation can achieve its aims of prevention and deterrence of asylum seekers and whether this can be achieved within a human rights protective framework. Firstly, I argue that such policies rarely have the impact desired by states. Secondly, I contend that the targeted success of externalisation policies is not a sustainable solution but rather rests on the creation and reinforcement of harmful treatment of asylum seekers, as demonstrated by the dangerous conditions for asylum seekers in northern France. Similar failed and harmful outcomes are seen in comparison with different externalisation policies globally. The only way in which bilateral cooperation externalisation policies like those between the UK and France can achieve their aims is through relying on the violation of the human rights of asylum seekers.

Prevention and deterrence theories

As I have demonstrated in the previous section, a correlation between decreased asylum applications in the UK and increased UK-France border cooperation cannot be deduced. The overall outcome of UK-France border cooperation is to create increasingly restrictive border controls through their cooperation. The outcome of the cooperation is similar to that of restrictive border controls globally. For example, Shields analyses the EU border controls and argues that the extent to which the restrictive border controls can be used to explain fluctuations in irregular migration to the EU is highly debatable; other factors such as economic conditions and job opportunities were also influential in numbers of people migrating to the EU (Shields, 2015: 85). This is supported by Spijkboer, who demonstrates that ‘available data does not suggest that the intensified border controls [in Europe] of the past few years have led to decreased numbers of irregular migrants’; tougher border controls do not stop people from attempting to travel to Europe irregularly, but instead force people to take more dangerous routes (2007: 131). Similarly, Shields argues that ‘tougher border controls [on the Mexico border] have had remarkably little influence on the propensity to migrate illicitly to the United States’ (2015: 87).

It has been demonstrated by Tecca that deterrence policies are grounded in the idea of push and pull factors, which assumes that people are able to make well-informed decisions and have full knowledge of the risks arising and the policies of destination states (2021). Research has shown this is not how most forced migrants decide on their destination country, which is often based on limited options and influenced by ‘family ties, smugglers’ influence, language and colonial histories’ (ibid). The securitisation of borders, such as through bilateral externalisation mechanisms, similarly overestimates the level of choice people have in their decisions and underestimates the risks people are willing to take.

It is difficult to determine whether UK-French cooperation has had any impact on the number of people claiming asylum in the UK. As the UK and France pursue increasingly tougher controls, it seems that asylum seekers and migrants turn to alternative routes. This can be seen by the rise in the number of people crossing the Channel in small boats since 2018 (Sturge, 2024: 32), which has continued despite the deadly consequences and patrols of the French coast. UK-French border cooperation underestimates the risks asylum seekers are willing to take to secure safety in the UK. One man attempting to make the irregular journey across the Channel was quoted by the BBC as saying, ‘they don’t know how far we have come and what it takes for us to come here’ (Panons and Irving, 2024); this demonstrates how government policy overestimates how much deterrence policies will influence the decisions of forced migrants. Therefore, when measuring the efficacy of the bilateral cooperation between the UK and France, it is hard to determine whether the actions taken are successfully fulfilling their aims.

Externalisation and human rights

I argue that it is not possible to achieve bilateral externalisation policies’ objectives of deterring and preventing asylum seekers within a human rights protective framework. In the case study of the UK and France, not only have the objectives not been met, but these policies depend on the creation and reinforcement of dangerous conditions for asylum seekers. The desired outcome of such cooperation is not a sustainable solution to irregular migration. Often externalisation policies are framed around a humanitarian narrative; governments claim that such policies are targeted at saving lives and breaking criminal networks of people smugglers and traffickers (Amnesty International, 2017: 6). States typically blame the harm that asylum seekers face on people smugglers, removing their own responsibility in the situation (Obermann, 2021). This can be seen in the UK-France cooperation, which is portrayed as having a humanitarian motive, to ‘avoid the loss of life at sea’ (Home Office and May, 2015; Home Office, Border Force and Javid, 2019). However, these narratives are in stark contrast with the outcomes of non-entry regimes and externalisation policies.

The harmful outcomes of cooperation between the UK and France are representative of non-entry regimes globally. Restrictive border controls often place asylum seekers in more vulnerable situations (Spijkoer, 2007: 127). Scholars have argued that this is part of a deliberate strategy to deter asylum seekers; de Leon has coined this a ‘prevention through deterrence’ strategy, in analysing the dangers of the US-Mexico border and the deliberate strategy by the US government to deter asylum seekers by making conditions more dangerous for people and funnelling them into the Sonoran Desert (De Leon, 2015: 29). Similarities can be drawn with EU border control and the Mediterranean. Although exact numbers are unclear, the IOM recorded that between 2014 and 2021 over 29,000 people died on migration journeys to Europe (2022); this figure is likely to be much higher as many deaths go unaccounted for (Pickering and Cochrane, 2013: 36). Externalisation agreements tend to increase this insecurity, as such policies ‘prevent people from exercising their right to seek asylum, put them at risk of other human rights violations and inflict serious physical and psychological harm on them’ (Crisp, 2020).

Australia seems to be one of the only case studies where the border externalisation has been successful in meeting their aims (Turnbull, 2023). In 2013, ‘Operation Sovereign Borders’ was introduced in an attempt to prevent irregular migrants and asylum seekers from entering the country; this policy involved offshore processing, mandatory detention and ‘pushbacks’ of migrant boats at sea (ibid). Although these policies seem to have been successful in meeting Australia’s aims of reducing numbers of asylum seekers (ibid), the human rights of asylum

seekers were starkly violated, with the pushbacks representing a clear violation of the principle of non-refoulement (HRW, 2023).

Similar harmful outcomes are seen in the cooperation between the UK and France. Welander contends that the externalisation of the British border to France mirrors the ‘inhumane production of harm in the context of the externalization within the subordinate relationships between states of the Global North and their Global South counterparts’ (2021: 39); it is not so different from the “letting die” approach in the Mediterranean and Libya, or the violence at the Spanish-Moroccan borders (ibid: 40). The UK-French cooperation reinforces and creates harm for asylum seekers by the cooperation in two prominent ways: deaths in the Channel and inhumane conditions in northern France.

Over the last 25 years, at least 391 people have died at the UK border (Galisson, 2024). This is likely to be an underestimation as not all deaths have been accounted for by journalists, activists and law enforcement (ibid). Roughly 25 percent of these deaths have been due to drowning, over 25 percent due to road accidents and over 25 percent due to asphyxiation (ibid). The increased securitisation of the border which has been created by the cooperation between the UK and France puts asylum seekers in dangerous conditions where these lethal harms are more likely to arise. The increased focus on stopping the boats is argued to have led to more deadly incidents in the Channel (Alarmphone, 2024). There are two main ways in which the cooperation has had an indirect impact on this: firstly, the more rigorous policing of the French coast has led to fewer dinghies being able to take off, thereby increasing the number of people on the small boats leading to overcrowding and more chaotic embarkations (ibid). It has been shown that there are more people on dinghies each year, with an average of 49 in 2023 compared to 27 in 2021 (ibid).

Secondly, there have been more attacks by the French police on small boats as they launch, which has led to panic and further destabilises unsafe situations (Alarmphone, 2024). The increased police presence in northern France has been widely criticised by human rights organisations as violent and creating a de facto military zone (Timberlake, 2019: 19). Although it is claimed by the British government that the coastguard engaged in humanitarian life-saving missions (Home Office, et al., 2019: 2), there are multiple reports documented by NGOs of the police exacerbating the dangers experienced by irregular migrants (Galisson, 2024). In March 2024, Lighthouse Reports documented evidence of the French coastguard using dangerous pushback tactics on a small migrant boat in the Channel (Statius et. al., 2024). In June 2024, it was reported that the French police used tear gas on migrants leaving the French coast and slashed dinghies in the sea to attempt to prevent them from crossing (Sears and Barret, 2024). These dangerous tactics used to deter people crossing the Channel irregularly by small boat seem not to have stopped people from making these journeys, but put their lives at greater risk in an already vulnerable situation.

Furthermore, as demonstrated in Section Three, the living conditions for migrants residing in northern France are extremely dangerous. Around 2000 refugees live in makeshift encampments across northern France (Durie, 2021). A report by Human Rights Watch in 2021 demonstrates the ‘enforced misery’ and degrading treatment of refugees in northern France; with constant evictions, police harassment, and restrictions on provision of and access to humanitarian assistance (HRW, 2021: 3). The repeated mass evictions by the French police, in an effort to push migrants out of Calais, put people living in extreme precarity in an even more vulnerable position, often to the detriment of their mental and physical health (Maggs, 2020:

81; Freedman, 2018: 400). Abusive and violent methods are often used in the routine evictions conducted by the French authorities (Welander, 2021: 30). As told by a Kurdish asylum seeker in Calais in December 2020, 'when the police arrive, we have five minutes to get out of the tent before they destroy everything. It is not possible for five people, including young children, to get dressed in five minutes in a tent' (HRW, 2021: 28). There have been reported cases of people going missing and deaths in the makeshift camps (Galisson, 2024). Freedman argues that this is a deliberate strategy of creating insecurity through inaction (2018: 400); the French and British authorities are engaging in the 'politics of exhaustion', attempting to deter asylum seekers by constructing situations of extreme vulnerability (Welander, 2021: 39).

Thus, the methods of border externalisation between the UK and France seem to rely on creating more dangerous conditions for asylum seekers. This is not a long-term or sustainable solution to the arrival of irregular migrants in a destination country. Such methods both fail to achieve their aims of stopping asylum seekers from entering a state and create and reinforce extremely dangerous conditions for asylum seekers. I argue that the UK is unlikely to achieve its objectives set out in the 2023 statement, despite the vast increase in funding, unless an even more dangerous approach to physically prevent people from crossing the UK-France border is taken. The main consequences of this increased funding will likely rather be the increased vulnerability of asylum seekers in northern France and the Channel.

Section 6: Why has this cooperation continued?

In this paper, I have demonstrated that the cooperation between the UK and France has not been successful in meeting the objective of deterring and preventing asylum seekers from entering the UK. This form of externalisation through bilateral cooperation is not a sustainable solution to migrants entering the UK irregularly. Therefore, considering this failure in efficacy, in conjunction with the continuous cooperation and large amounts of financial investment by the UK, other motivations behind this cooperation must be considered. I argue that this cooperation should be partially viewed as a political façade of the British government; it acts as a signal to the British population that the government is taking a strong position of cracking down on immigration. This cooperation is part of a wider political game and will continue despite its lack of efficacy.

Both British and French politicians have blamed the other country for the failures of this cooperation (LBC, 2023; Symonds, 2024). Tensions have remained high between the UK and France after the 2016 Brexit vote (Schichan, 2022); comments by British MPs denouncing French commitment to the cooperation can be seen to be part of an anti-European rhetoric (LBC, 2023). It is true that it must be questioned as to how strongly the French are invested in the priorities of the UK and whether they are taking the most effective measures to prevent and deter asylum seekers. Unlike other bilateral externalisation agreements that we see elsewhere in the world between two countries of unequal power and wealth, such as Italy and Libya, where financial incentives hold more weight (Crisp, 2020), the UK and France are of relatively equal power. For example, it could be argued that if the French were truly committed to these objectives, it would be more efficient to do more to prevent people from reaching northern France to begin with. However, it would not be accurate to say that the French are not committing to the agreements that they signed up to with the UK; as I have shown in Section Three, this cooperation has led to a series of direct actions taken in northern France that attempt to deter and prevent asylum seekers.

Regardless of the claims blaming the other country's lack of commitment, it seems clear that these measures are not an effective way of deterring or preventing asylum seekers from crossing to the UK. The development in cooperation between the UK and France since 2014 is largely repetitive. The bilateral agreements have established five key mechanisms that attempt to deter and prevent people from crossing the Channel irregularly: physical barriers, surveillance and intelligence sharing, detention centres, policing of the border, and enforced poor living conditions in northern France. It cannot be concluded that any of these measures directly correlate to a decrease in the number of people crossing the Channel irregularly. Measures such as the enforced poor living conditions have existed since the closing of the Sangatte camp in 2002 (Rahman-Jones, 2016), yet this does not seem to have stopped people from residing in northern France on their way to the UK. Detention centres were first established in 1991 by the Sangatte Protocol (Bosworth, 2022: 509), however the extent of the impact of these is unclear. Joint surveillance mechanisms were first established in 2010 (Prime Minister's Office, 2010: 1), yet it is likely smuggling gangs are still highly active given the high number of people crossing the Channel by small boats in recent years (Sturge, 2024: 4). Similarly, the reinforcement of physical barriers and policing of the border seems to have led to more people crossing the Channel by small boat (ibid: 32), forcing them into more dangerous situations.

I contend that the UK-France Monitoring Committee (Gower, 2023: 18) has likely pointed to this lack of effectiveness of the cooperation. Although the British government has attributed the secrecy of the joint oversight mechanism to the covert nature of the operations by the French and British (ibid), their secrecy seems more likely to be related to the failures in the efficacy of the cooperation. The UK government made clear to affirm their cooperation with the French to secure the border to the public, as demonstrated in a statement released by the Home Office in February 2024 (Home Office and Cleverly, 2024). However, the government has been much quieter in publicising the outcomes of this cooperation.

This leads me to argue that the cooperation between the UK and France is in part a political façade by the British government to signal to the public that the government is being tough on irregular migration, and this cooperation continues regardless of its efficacy. There is an anti-immigration rhetoric in the UK, which expands to include irregular migration and asylum seekers (Joos and Leleu, 2022: 207). In 2015, in the midst of what was named the 'refugee crisis' in Europe, then-Prime Minister, David Cameron, denounced asylum seekers coming over to the UK as a 'swarm' (Taylor, et al., 2015). This dehumanising and dismissive rhetoric has been used consistently by the previous Conservative government over the past 10 years, with former Home Secretaries Priti Patel referring to people crossing the Channel irregularly as 'not genuine asylum seekers' (Grierson, 2021) and Suella Braverman speaking of 'stopping the invasion on our southern coast' (Sparrow, 2022). Similarly, Rishi Sunak's campaign to 'Stop the Boats' (Sandford, 2023), undermines the legitimacy of these people's claims to asylum and the lack of legal routes to do so. This rhetoric has justified and led to the establishment of multiple different policy mechanisms which aim at deterring and preventing irregular migration to the UK.

As demonstrated in Section Two of this paper, the previous UK government established the Rwanda policy aimed at deterring asylum seekers, the Illegal Migration Act, and engaged in a 'hostile environment' policy inside the UK. Cooperation with France to tackle irregular migration seems part of this wider political plan. The Rwanda policy was arguably political

theatre; in addition to its clear human rights violations, it is an economically inefficient method to manage asylum seekers and was ruled unlawful by the Supreme Court (McDonnell, 2023). However, this policy demonstrated that the Conservative government was prepared to be tough on immigration and asylum. This anti-immigrant sentiment is shared by members of the British public, with polling by YouGov showing that Conservative voters viewed immigration and asylum as the biggest issue in the July 2024 general election (Smith, 2024).

Therefore, the British government has an interest in signalling to the British population that they are working on tackling these issues and the current Labour government has continued to engage in this 'hostile environment' policy. Keir Starmer has deviated from the approach of the previous leader of the Labour party, Jeremy Corbyn, who defended the 'value of immigration to society' (Mason, 2019), and has taken a strong stance against irregular migration within his first year of government. Starmer has not challenged the principles of the Conservative anti-immigration and asylum policies, but rather challenged the Conservatives' efficacy (Syal, 2024). On 31 March 2025, at the Organised Immigration Crime Summit, Starmer commented that 'we all pay the price for insecure borders – from the cost of accommodating migrants to the strain on our public services' (Taylor, 2025), and, as outlined in Section 2, has implemented the policies to match this rhetoric. Alongside the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill, the government has also formed a new 'Border Security Command' in cooperation with France to 'strengthen Britain's border security and smash the criminal smuggling gangs' (Home Office and Cooper, 2024), and in February 2025, has agreed new measures to prevent irregular migration from the French coast (Home Office and Cooper, 2025). These new measures include 'a new specialist intelligence and judicial police unit in Dunkirk to speed up arrest and prosecution of people smugglers' and 'training additional drone pilots to increase operations and intercept planned boats before they reach the sea' (Home Office and Cooper, 2025). Thus, these tough policies on immigration and cooperation with France seem firmly set in the future of British politics. It is a necessary tool of the government to be able to show that they are working with France to prevent irregular migration into the UK, despite their lack of efficacy.

It is plausible that France may opt out of these agreements, as France is increasingly left with the costs of these policies. However, this cooperation has persisted in the face of the seemingly disjointed relationship so far, including in the wake of Brexit, and thus it seems unlikely that the situation will change in the near future.

Section 7: Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated the lack of efficacy of UK-France border cooperation that aims to prevent and deter asylum seekers from entering the UK. Prevention and deterrence of asylum seekers is not possible within a human rights protective framework. The British border has been partially externalised to France since the late 20th century, with significant expansion of this cooperation in the last 10 years through a series of joint declarations and statements. This cooperation has resulted in an array of measures taken in northern France, including physical security mechanisms, policing of the coast, British-run detention centres, joint surveillance mechanisms, and deliberate inhumane living conditions. It is plausible that these measures have deterred and prevented people from crossing the Channel irregularly. However, it cannot be determined that this cooperation has directly led to a reduction in the number of people claiming asylum in the UK. Despite the actions taken by this cooperation to increasingly

securitise the border, migrants and asylum seekers have not stopped trying to reach the UK. These measures underestimate the risks people are willing to take. As demonstrated by a Syrian asylum seeker in Calais: 'if we die, if anything happens, no problem. I want to live there [in the UK], I want a better life' (Bish, Moore and Keohan, 2023). It is clear that this cooperation does not offer a long-term solution to the rise in asylum applications across the UK and Europe.

This case study of border externalisation between the UK and France has similarities with bilateral externalisation policies globally; responsibilities are shifted away from states, and asylum seekers are left in more dangerous circumstances. These externalisation policies are a symptom of the global refugee regime in which state sovereignty and control of borders is prioritised over refugee rights. The structure of the 1951 Refugee Convention is built around territorial access, creating an incentive for states to prevent refugees from entering to avoid any legal obligations for the state to offer protection (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Hathaway, 2015: 241). The outcome of such cooperation is often not consistent with the human rights protective framework of the liberal democratic state. The harmful conditions created and reinforced for asylum seekers at the French-British border demonstrate this.

Despite this lack of efficacy, it seems likely that this cooperation will continue for the foreseeable future. Given their close geo-political relations, France and the UK are inevitably intertwined. Both the Conservative and Labour parties are currently taking a hard stance on immigration, and unless there is a drastic change in British politics towards the prioritisation of migrant and refugee rights over the control over the British border, it is likely that this cooperation with France will continue.

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Appendix

Asylum applications per year (Sturge, 2024: 34):

Year	Asylum applications
1984	2905
1985	4389
1986	4266
1987	4256
1988	3998
1989	11640
1990	26205
1991	44840
1992	24605
1993	22370
1994	32,831
1995	43,963
1996	29642
1997	32502
1998	46014
1999	71158
2000	80315
2001	71027
2002	84132
2003	49407
2004	33960
2005	25712
2006	23608
2007	23431
2008	25932
2009	24487
2010	17916
2011	19865
2012	21843
2013	23584
2014	25033
2015	32733
2016	30747
2017	26547
2018	29504
2019	35737

2020	29815
2021	50042
2022	81130
2023	67337

Small boat crossings (Sturge, 2024: 32):

Year	Number of people crossed
2018	299
2019	1843
2020	8466
2021	28526
2022	45774
2023	29437

Money committed by the UK to France to prevent irregular migration each year (Gower, 2023: 2):

Year	Money committed (per million £)
2014	14.7
2015	45.96
2016	17
2017	36
2018	45.5
2019	5.5
2020	28.1
2021	54
2022	62.2
2023	476