

Case Studies

*IMPERIALISM AND
IMMIGRATION PT.2/2*

of Imperialist Destruction

As we saw in part 1 of this series, historical and contemporary structures of imperialism are driving the so-called 'illegal' immigration that the ruling class scapegoats so viciously.

Now let's investigate specific country cases to demonstrate in practice how imperialism produces the conditions that pressure people to migrate to the imperial core →

Mexico

Mexico is the largest source of migration into the US. It also accounts for around half of 'illegal' immigration.

This is not surprising.

The US deliberately underdeveloped the Mexican economy by maintaining semi-feudal social relations after WWII.

This kept the peasantry oppressed, undermining the productive development of the Mexican economy **and trapping huge swathes of the population in poverty.**





Mexico's status as a semi-colony in the imperialist world-system was further entrenched when NAFTA* was signed in 1994, surrendering much of Mexico's remaining economic independence.

The imposition of market relations has opened up Mexico to exploitation by US corporations, which depends on the impoverishment of the Mexican people. Every year, many thousands of Mexicans make the dangerous journey to cross the increasingly militarised border in search of their share of this stolen wealth.

* NAFTA is the North American Free Trade Agreement, which liberalised trade between the US, Canada, and Mexico.

Cuba and Venezuela

US imperialist aggression in Latin America is currently concentrated on the revolutionary states of Cuba and Venezuela.

Both are subject to devastating economic blockades designed to foment regime change.

The imperialist blockades include sanctions, targeting leaders, banning imports, limiting medical inputs, exclusion from financial markets, stealing assets abroad, and embargoing oil exports (in the case of Venezuela).

Sources: Lugo, Progressive International (2024); Venezuela Analysis, A War Without Bombs (2023).
Image: The Globe and Mail.

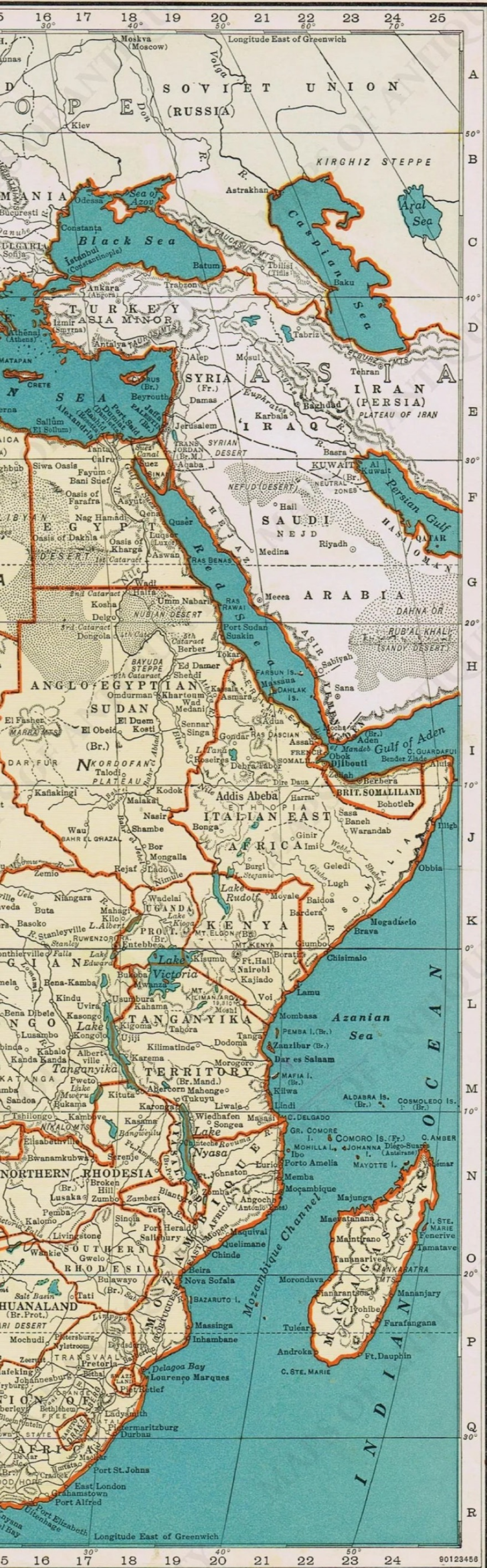




While failing to topple the Cuban or Venezuelan governments, the imperialist blockades have been devastating for their citizens. Former UN Special Rapporteur Alfred de Zayas estimated that 100,000 Venezuelans died between 2017 and 2020 due to sanctions. **Worsening conditions have been a major driver of increased emigration from both countries.**

After creating the very conditions that forced people to leave their homes, the Trump administration has been deporting undocumented Venezuelans from the US to El Salvador where they are detained without trial, sentences, or release dates.

Eventually, they were released and returned to Venezuela, with reports that prisoners were physically and psychologically tortured.



CLIMATE VANGUARD

East Africa

A significant proportion of undocumented migrants arriving in the UK are from East Africa. For example, Eritreans and Sudanese represented almost 15% of the highly publicised small boat arrivals in 2023.

Both countries share a history of colonialisation, as Africa was divided up and systematically underdeveloped to fuel imperialist accumulation.

Eritrea was colonised by Italy (and later Britain) and Sudan by Britain. This has produced both extreme poverty and political instability, driving high rates of current emigration. Let's look at each country in greater detail →

Source: Home Office, Statistics relating to the Illegal Migration Act (2024). Image: Colonial map of East Africa (1939).



Eritrea

The Eritrean state was founded to further Italian colonial ambitions by facilitating the exploitation of people and the land.

Following formal decolonisation, Eritrea and Ethiopia were federated* in 1952 – **a move driven not by the will of the people, but by US imperialist interests. This has been the foundation for violent conflict between the countries ever since,** which has included forced conscription and slave-like labour conditions.

* This involved the formation of a political union where Eritrea was placed under the political-economic authority of the Ethiopian Empire.



Sudan

Sudan is facing one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Between April 2023 and April 2025, 13 million people fled the ongoing war fuelled by ethnic and proxy conflict.*

The crisis is rooted in decades of civil war, which itself can be traced back to British colonialism. In 1899, British administrators divided Sudan into two countries. The partition was designed to maximise the Arab-Muslim North's exploitation of underdeveloped peripheral regions, which are home to a vast diversity of marginalised ethnicities. **This border division underlies the conflict today.**

* Egypt and Saudi Arabia support the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) while the United Arab Emirates support the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), both different arms of the Sudanese state.

“Mechanisms of unequal development produce structural conditions, such as unemployment and inequality, which catapult the massive migration of dispossessed and marginalized people.

Compelled by the need to have access to means of subsistence or at least minimal opportunities for social mobility, large segments of the population are in practice expelled from their territories to relocate within their own country or abroad. Labor oversupply and worsening living conditions turn migration, particularly from peripheral countries, into a form of forced displacement.”

– Raúl Delgado Wise