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## **From Humanitarianism to Securitisation: Brazil's policy responses in the face of the Venezuelan migration crisis**

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# FROM HUMANITARIANISM TO SECURITISATION

Brazil's policy responses in the face of the Venezuelan  
migration crisis



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# Introduction

This thesis explores Brazil's response to the Venezuelan migration crisis, a complex phenomenon that has significantly impacted the Latin American region. As millions of Venezuelans have fled political turmoil, economic collapse, and social instability, Brazil found itself on the front lines, grappling with the implications for its migration and national security policies. This migration phenomenon can be regarded as examples of forced migration and South-South migration, as the majority of Venezuelans fled towards neighbouring countries in the region. This study investigates how the influx of Venezuelan migrants has shaped Brazil's approach, revealing the interplay between humanitarian obligations and national security concerns.

The central aim of this research is to understand how the Venezuelan migration crisis has been constructed and framed within Brazilian policymaking. In doing so, it will examine how these framings have shaped the evolution of these policies. This thesis addresses the central question: how has Brazil's response to the Venezuelan migration crisis, from 2015 onwards, influenced its migration and national security policies? It explores the power dynamics, motivations, ideological influences, and shifting priorities that have guided Brazil's response.

This thesis is structured in three chapters. Chapter 1 offers a literature review of migration, including a discussion of the push-pull theory, various types of migration, and the impacts of forced migration on host countries. It also explores the concept of national security and the securitisation of migration. Chapter 2 provides a historical overview of the Venezuelan migration crisis, examining the political, economic, and social factors that have driven the mass exodus. It also examines Brazil's historical approach to migration and explores the initial responses to the crisis, looking at governmental and non-governmental efforts. Additionally, it focuses on shifts in immigration policy during various administrations, and the role of regional factors. Chapter 3 includes an empirical analysis of primary and secondary sources regarding pivotal legislation in Brazil as a response to the crisis, and present results of data collected.

The methodology used involves a qualitative approach centred on critical discourse analysis. By examining key policy documents such as Operation Welcome documents, the 2017 Migration Law, and Ordinance 666, this study aims to uncover the ways in which the Venezuelan migration crisis has been constructed and framed within Brazilian policymaking, and how these framings have shaped the evolution of national security

policies. This includes analysing the language, rhetoric, and underlying assumptions embedded in these documents. Finally, the results will be summarized, and an answer to the research question will be formulated. Additional suggestions for further research will also be provided.

Beyond the academic relevance of this topic, my interest derives from a growing concern about the rise of xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment in the context of large-scale migrations globally. From South America to my home country of the Netherlands, which grapples with increased migration from Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe, we see similar trends of rising nationalism, anti-immigrant punitive populism, and anxieties about cultural identity and social cohesion. This makes it even more crucial to understand how states balance humanitarian obligations with national security concerns when responding to migration crises and what factors can mitigate or exacerbate xenophobic attitudes, promoting a more humane and effective approach to migration policy.

# CHAPTER 1

## Framing the debate: migration and national security

### 1.1 Migration theory

This section will present an overview of the relevant scholarly work on migration theory. Attention will be given to the push-pull theory, the types of migration, and the impacts of forced migration on host countries.

#### 1.1.1 Push-pull theory

While many models explain migration, Lee's work is notable for its comprehensive and lasting relevance. Lee (1966) proposes a theory of migration, expanding on Ravenstein's earlier work on 'laws of migration'. For Lee, Ravenstein's insights were largely empirical generalizations rather than theoretically grounded explanations.<sup>1</sup> His framework focuses on four main factors: origin factors, destination factors, intervening obstacles, and personal factors.

Origin factors are push factors that drive people to leave their place of origin.<sup>2</sup> For everyone, these factors can vary immensely, including economic, social, political, environmental, and personal circumstances. Destination factors are pull factors that attract migrants.<sup>3</sup> These factors can include the same circumstances as origin factors but vary per individual. The inclusion of intervening obstacles acknowledges the barriers to migration, consisting of physical barriers and socio-economic constraints.<sup>4</sup> This substantiates Lee's framework as it provides an understanding how the decision to migrate is not simply determined by a balance of origin and destination factors. Personal factors exemplify this too, as individual-level components can influence migration decisions. This can include individual characteristics (e.g., age, gender, education, level of racialisation, potential factors of social discrimination), personal goals (e.g., career or family), and social networks.<sup>5</sup>

Although Lee provides a nuanced view, the model has limitations. Many factors are context-specific, making comparisons and generalisations difficult. Moreover, the

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<sup>1</sup> Everett S. Lee, "A Theory of Migration," *Demography* 3, no. 1 (1966): 48-49.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-52.

model's static nature downplays the dynamic processes of migration, where decisions are often made and revised in response to circumstances. Nonetheless, his work remains foundational, guiding empirical and theoretical research, and highlighting factors behind migration decisions and classifications.

### 1.1.2 Types of migration

Messina (2017) identifies four major categorizations of migration. These include labour migration, secondary migration (mainly family reunification), humanitarian or forced migration, and irregular migration.<sup>6</sup> Whereas the first two categories are clear concepts, humanitarian or forced migration and irregular migration require further examination.

Humanitarian migration is founded on the idea that migrants should be allowed entry to a host country, as refusing them would contradict a shared sense of humanity.<sup>7</sup> Watson (2009) includes 'refugees' (those people that have been recognized as such under the terms of the 1951 Refugee Convention, or under a country's domestic legislation) and 'asylum seekers' (those people that have requested international protection and whose refugee status applications are still under review) in this category.<sup>8</sup> The 'humanitarian' element exemplifies both a country's motivation for allowing access to migrants and migrants' reasoning for opting to emigrate.

Forced migration is a comprehensive concept including coerced forms of migration that can be induced by nature or humans.<sup>9</sup> For Reed, Ludwig & Braslow (2016), there are four types of forced migration: displaced by conflict, displaced by environment or disaster, displaced by development, and human trafficking. The first contains the displacements due to war, civil unrest, and political or social violence or persecution.<sup>10</sup> The second includes the displacements caused by natural and human-induced disasters, as well as broader environmental factors, like global climate change.<sup>11</sup> The third concerns the displacements because of developing projects (e.g., mining activity or construction of dams).<sup>12</sup> The final type, human trafficking, includes those that are compelled (often deceived under false pretences) to migrate for exploitative reasons, such as forced labour or sex trafficking.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Anthony M. Messina, "Migration as a Global Phenomenon," in *Handbook on Migration and Security*, ed. Anthony M. Messina and Philippe Bourbeau (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017), 16-17.

<sup>7</sup> Scott D. Watson, *The Securitisation of Humanitarian Migration: Digging Moats and Sinking Boats* (Routledge, 2009), 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Holly E. Reed et al., "Forced Migration," in *International Handbook of Migration and Population Distribution*, ed. Michael J. White (Springer, 2016), 605.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 606.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

There are various definitions in politics and media to describe individuals residing inside a country without permission, those who enter unlawfully, or overstaying their visas.<sup>14</sup> Scholars prefer terms like ‘irregular’ or ‘undocumented’ over judgemental labels, like ‘illegal’.<sup>15</sup> For Van Liempt et al. (2023), irregular migration is “the movement of people that takes place outside the laws, regulations, or international agreement governing the entry into or exit from the country of origin, transit or destination”.<sup>16</sup> Irregular migrants include irregular residents (lacking legal status and facing possible deportation) and irregular entrants (crossing borders without valid documents).<sup>17</sup> Their migration is unauthorized by immigration laws, unlike forced migration, which is involuntary and driven by crises.

Another important migration type is South-South migration. This type stems from the view that the world can be divided between countries belonging to the ‘Global North’, or the ‘Global South’. For Hujo and Piper (2005), South-South migration occurs between and among developing countries.<sup>18</sup> Zeleke and Smith (2024) describe how the term ‘Global South’ can also be linked to low- or middle-income countries. Consequently, South-South migration could be defined as migration flows occurring between developing or low- or middle-income countries.<sup>19</sup> Historically, South-South migration was largely involuntary, such as during the slave trade from Africa to colonies of countries belonging to the Global North.<sup>20</sup> Nowadays, it is increasingly driven by choice, though often influenced by poverty and limited economic opportunities.<sup>21</sup>

However, the term faces criticisms. It can mask the reality that migration systems are not confined to a specific area, but can expand from intra-regional levels to inter-regional settings.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, it assumes homogeneity among Global North or Global South countries.<sup>23</sup> Zeleke and Smith (2024) call for caution, and by adopting Fiddian-

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<sup>14</sup> Sarah Spencer and Anna Triandafyllidou, “Irregular Migration,” in *Introduction to Migration Studies*, ed. Peter Scholten (Springer, 2022), 192.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Ilse van Liempt et al., “Introduction: the production of irregular migration,” in *Research Handbook on Irregular Migration*, ed. Ilse van Liempt et al., (Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2023), 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Katja Hujo and Nicola Piper, “Linking Migration, Social Development and Policy in the South – An Introduction,” in *South-South Migration: Implications for Social Policy and Development*, ed. Katja Hujo and Nicola Piper (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2005), 2.

<sup>19</sup> Meron Zeleke and Lahra Smith, “Introduction: Intra-Continental Migration Dynamics in Africa and the Importance of South-South Migration (SSM),” in *African Perspectives on South-South Migration*, ed. Meron Zeleke and Lahra Smith (Routledge, 2024), 5.

<sup>20</sup> Heaven Crawley and Joseph Kofi Teye, “South-South Migration and Inequality: An Introduction,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of South-South Migration and Inequality*, ed. Heaven Crawley and Joseph Kofi Teye (Springer, 2024), 2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

Qasmiyeh and Carella (2020)'s reasoning, they argue that the immense diversification among South-South migrations results in the term being regarded as a generalization.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, Crawley and Teye (2024) identify several similarities among South-South migrations, including the trend that modern South-South migration occurs over shorter distances, frequently within the same countries or across nearby borders.<sup>25</sup> Other similarities include the predominantly irregular nature of South-South migrations and border control being more lenient in the Global South, as a result of limited enforcement capabilities.<sup>26</sup> Additional similarities are that South-South migrations are often characterized by a younger and lower educated demographic, and the connection between conflict and migration, which tends to be more evident in South-South migration contexts than South-North migration contexts.<sup>27</sup>

As previously discussed, the profile of the migration of Venezuelan migrants to Brazil from 2015 onwards can be regarded as both South-South migration (since both countries belong to the Global South) and forced migration. Therefore, it is crucial to analyse the impact of forced migrants on their host countries.

### **1.1.3 Impact of forced migration on host-countries**

Hosting forced migrants generates economic, social, and political impacts on those host countries.

#### ***1.1.3.1 Economic impacts***

The economic impact of forced migrants includes effects on economic development, labour market, pricing, and local trade. Kouni (2018) concludes that migrants generally benefit economic growth in high-income and lower-middle-income countries.<sup>28</sup> Possible reasons include these countries' high typical need for skilled and unskilled workers, and highly selective asylum policies.<sup>29</sup> Here, migrants significantly contribute to economic growth, although their influence varies across different host countries. However, when the migrant population significantly increases, the effect becomes negative.<sup>30</sup> In upper-middle and low-income nations, migrants have a direct negative effect on development. Possible reasons include the lack of suitable policies, the inability to accommodate an

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>28</sup> Mohamed Kouni, "Impact of migrant population on development: A comparative analysis for the case of host economies," *Review of Economic Perspectives* 18, no. 1 (2018): 83.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 86-87.

influx of migrants, or migrants lacking necessary skills requested by the host economy.<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, the impact will become positive if the migrant's population increases, possibly explained by disproportional spending when the number of migrants is relatively low.<sup>32</sup>

Regarding the labour market, Barman (2020) identifies that migration raises local labour supply, lowers wages, and increases job competition.<sup>33</sup> For Maystadt et al. (2019), this generalization is not sufficient. They distinguish between impacts from internally displaced persons (IDP) and migrants.<sup>34</sup> This is primarily because there are fewer humanitarian organizations present to help in IDP situations. In countries that host migrants, skilled workers might resign from their jobs to take positions with these organizations because of higher salaries, resulting in potential increased human capital.<sup>35</sup>

Migration can also affect prices, supply, and demand.<sup>36</sup> Basic economics suggests that more demand can increase prices, and vice versa. Maystadt et al. (2019) showcase the relationship between the presence of migrants and price increases in Tanzania and Sudan.<sup>37</sup> The supply response to such issues has been documented as well, as in the case study on Turkey.<sup>38</sup> It shows that price changes due to migrant influxes are incredibly context-specific, influenced by multiple factors affecting demand or supply. In turn, increased migration can benefit local trade by boosting demand and production.<sup>39</sup> A larger market allows producers to sell more goods across regions and nationally.<sup>40</sup> To illustrate, Taylor et al. (2016), in their case study on Congolese migrant camps in Rwanda, found that the presence of migrants enhanced the local economy's trade with the rest of Rwanda.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Bhajan Chandra Barman, "Impact of Migrants on Host Developing Countries," in *Migrant Crises and Third-World Economies: Policies and Perspectives*, ed. Sourav Kumar Das and Nidhi Chowdhary (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2020), 105.

<sup>34</sup> Jean-François Maystadt et al., "Impacts of Hosting Forced Migrants in Poor Countries," *Annual Review of Resource Economics* 11, no. 1 (2019): 449.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 449.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 446.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 447.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

In Turkey, price decreases were found in areas where Syrian migrants were hosted, which was attributed to migrants accepting lower wages, leading to reduced labour costs. Food aid projects have also been recognized for their abilities to counter price increases caused by increased demand.

<sup>39</sup> Barman, "Impact of Migrants," 106.

<sup>40</sup> Maystadt et al., "Impacts of Hosting," 445.

<sup>41</sup> J. Edward Taylor et al., "Economic Impact of Migrants," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences – PNAS* 113, no. 27 (2016): 7450.

### ***1.1.3.2 Social impacts***

Migrants can influence on the societal development of host countries. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)'s missions, focused on socio-economic impacts of migrant populations, reveal that in Tanzania, local support from donors increased, improving water, infrastructure, communications, and education.<sup>42</sup> Health facilities were also built or renovated, benefiting communities. Similarly, in Sudan, efforts in education and healthcare improved access, with migrant schools, training for teachers, and literacy and health programs.<sup>43</sup> However, these observations are specific to the contexts of Tanzania and Sudan and may not be applicable elsewhere, where other factors may influence the impact of migrants. Health effects can be multidimensional. In a case study on Rohingya asylum-seekers in Bangladesh, Babu (2020) finds that in camps the lack of sanitation, ventilation, and hygiene can result in disease spreading.<sup>44</sup> Kalipeni and Oppong (1998) note that inadequate sanitation, water contamination, undernutrition and exhaustion are prevalent in migrant camps and contribute to disease creation.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, local healthcare systems in host countries can be put under pressure, impacting healthcare needs of local communities.<sup>46</sup>

Concerns also exist that migrants increase security risks and crime rates. Issues such as prostitution and alcoholism are reportedly increasing in communities with significant migrant populations.<sup>47</sup> For Babu, this is correct as crime syndicate activities, forced prostitution, and identity fraud have been known problem in the case of the Rohingya displaced asylum-seekers.<sup>48</sup> Flowing from this, the reputation and perceptions held of migrants can be generalized and deteriorated. This interpretation is incredibly biased and negative towards migrants. Therefore, it can be regarded as a clear example of 'aporophobia', which means the discrimination (or rejection) by non-poor populations against poor populations.<sup>49</sup> It can fuel biases that poverty is self-inflicting.<sup>50</sup>

Messina (2017) finds four reasons why migrants can be resented by the population of a host country: they are seen as contributing less to welfare than labour migrants, the

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<sup>42</sup> UNHCR, "Economic and Social Impact of Migrant Populations on Host Developing Countries as Well as Other Countries," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2004): 172.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>44</sup> Kudrat-E-Khuda Babu, "The Impacts and Challenges to Host Country Bangladesh Due to Sheltering the Rohingya Migrants," *Cogent Social Sciences* 6, no. 1 (2020): 9-10.

<sup>45</sup> Ezekiel Kalipeni and Joseph Oppong, "The Migrant Crisis in Africa and Implications for Health and Disease: A Political Ecology Approach," *Social Science & Medicine* 46, no. 12 (1998): 1646.

<sup>46</sup> Maystadt et al., "Impacts of Hosting," 442.

<sup>47</sup> Barman, "Impact of Migrants," 106.

<sup>48</sup> Babu, "The Impact and Challenges," 10.

<sup>49</sup> Octasiano M. Valerio Mendoza et al., "Disentangling Aporophobia from Xenophobia in the EU-15," *Regional Studies* 58, no. 5 (2024): 911.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 912.

population tends to overestimate migrant numbers, they are perceived as driven only by economic motives, and migrants have often limited or hostile relations with the host country.<sup>51</sup> As ‘the other’, migrants may be wrongly blamed for social issues, despite the lack of direct causality, reinforcing their marginalized status.<sup>52</sup>

### ***1.1.3.3 Political impacts***

Politically, one of the impacts lies in the development of migration policies. Host countries may need to develop new policies to accommodate the influx of migrants. This has the potential to lead to significant changes in a host country’s national policy and budget allocations. Through this process, public opinion can be shifted towards either increased support for humanitarian policies or a rise in anti-immigrant sentiment. Another is that migration can contribute to the spread of conflict and instability.<sup>53</sup> Although migrant flows are often viewed as a consequence of conflict, it is argued they can actively contribute to them as well.

According to Salehyan & Gleditsch (2006), there are several ways this can occur. One is the expansion of rebel networks across borders through migration flows.<sup>54</sup> Migrant camps offer potential sanctuary locations for origin country rebels and a foundation for conducting operations.<sup>55</sup> These can include hostile operations in the country of origin against a regime or government, or can include the provision of support (in the form of weapons, personnel, ideas) to host country political opposition groups.<sup>56</sup> Hereby, rebel groups extend their networks into the host country. The second is that a significant surge in migrants puts pressure on the host country resources, resulting in economic challenges, social instability, and health risks.<sup>57</sup> The situation can intensify pre-existing conditions and spark internal conflict.

Maystadt et al. (2019) warn us that it is incredibly hard to distinguish between conflict caused by migrants and conflict stemming from economic or political grievances, ethnic tensions, or other factors.<sup>58</sup> They argue that since there is little proof that migrants directly cause conflict spread, it is hard to see them as a direct national security threat. This is inherently linked with the securitisation of migration, which will be discussed in the next part. Contrary to Salehyan & Gleditsch (2006), Zhou & Shaver (2021) show

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<sup>51</sup> Messina, “Migration,” 24.

<sup>52</sup> Barman, “Impact of Migrants,” 106.

<sup>53</sup> Idean Salehyan and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, “Refugees and the Spread of Civil War,” *International Organization* 60, no. 2 (2006): 338.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

<sup>55</sup> Barman, “Impact of Migrants,” 107.

<sup>56</sup> Maystadt et al., “Impacts of Hosting,” 443.

<sup>57</sup> Salehyan and Gleditsch, “Refugees and the Spread,” 342.

<sup>58</sup> Maystadt et al., “Impacts of Hosting,” 444.

that migrants do not have a direct impact on the onset of conflict.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, they demonstrate that, under specific circumstances (high migrant concentration, sufficient integration time, or the presence of a large migrant population) the likelihood of conflict significantly decreases.<sup>60</sup> However, this interpretation is based on a biased perspective that associates the presence of immigrants with conflicts and confuses the terminology of refugee and migrant. What Zhou & Shaver (2021) fail to address, is that migration is a diversified, multifactorial, silent, permanent and growing phenomenon in certain circumstances, whereas conflict-related migration (e.g., forced migration) is a specific segment. It must be acknowledged that the relationship between migration and conflict is complex and contested, which leads to the necessity to define and distinguish between types of migration.

## 1.2 Migration and national security

This section will present an overview of the scholarly work on the interconnectivity between migration and national security. Attention will be given to important questions and concepts, including a definition of national security, how migration can be perceived as a threat, and the securitisation of migration.

### 1.2.1 Defining national security

National security can be defined from various perspectives and settings, with included factors such as hard power, economy, international relations, backing from international organizations. Over time, definitions have changed, making it difficult to reach a consensus among scholars.<sup>61</sup> Paleri's (2022) research brings forth a comprehensive definition, which will be adopted in this thesis. He states that national security is:

“the measurable state of the capability of a nation to overcome the multidimensional threats to the apparent well-being of its people and its survival as a nation state at any given time, by balancing all instruments of state policy through governance, that can be indexed by computation, empirically or otherwise, and is extendable to global security by variables external to it”.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Yang-Yang Zhou & Andrew Shaver, “Reexamining the Effect of Migrants on Civil Conflict: A Global Subnational Analysis,” *The American Political Science Review* 115, no. 4 (2021): 1186.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 1192.

<sup>61</sup> Prabhakaran Paleri, *Revisiting National Security: Prospecting Governance for Human Well-Being* (Springer, 2022), 119.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

To elaborate, it includes the notion that not the nation's physical safety as the ultimate goal of governance, but rather the overall well-being of its people, although physical safety can be seen as a component of this.<sup>63</sup>

### **1.2.2 How can migration be perceived as a threat to national security?**

For Wohlfeld (2014), there is a distinction between a nation-centred and a human-centred perspective in assessing the migration-security connection. The nation-centred perspective concerns both border control issues and the actual (or perceived) dangers that migration poses to host country populations.<sup>64</sup> The human centred-perspective focuses on the security of migrants, the saving of migrants' lives, and safeguarding of their rights.<sup>65</sup> Adopting Koser's (2011) insights, Wohlfeld argues that a nation-centred perspective on migration leads to policies focused on combating threats (e.g., restrictions, imprisonment, surveillance, and deportation), thereby undermining migrants' human security.<sup>66</sup> This reasoning has a direct relationship with "punitive populism", which involves politicians employing strict crime-fighting language and strategies to boost their popularity and achieve political goals.<sup>67</sup> The foundation of punitive populism rests on demands for increased security and control, which often manifests as advocating for stricter laws, harsher punishments, and expanded police capabilities,<sup>68</sup> functionally associated with greater judicial and prison powers. Thus, punitive populism securitises the issue of crime in a similar manner as a nation-centred perspective does regarding migration.

Klotz (2018) opts to analyse three dimensions of security (interstate, societal, and human) to determine if migration can be seen as a security threat. Historically, migration has played a role in interstate conflicts, from prompting wars to strategically manipulated by states.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, migration can be seen as a threat to societal security by impacting a nation's cultural identity and social cohesion.<sup>70</sup> According to Klotz, each effort to secure borders, regardless of its effectiveness, must consider the actions and choices of individuals.<sup>71</sup> However, as individuals will find ways to cross

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Monika Wohlfeld, "Is Migration a Security Issue?" in *Migration in the Mediterranean: human rights, security and development perspectives*, ed. O. Grech & Monika Wohlfeld (Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, 2014), 69.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Michelle D. Bonner, *Tough on Crime: The Rise of Punitive Populism in Latin America* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019), 9.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>69</sup> Audie Klotz, "Migration," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Security*, ed. Alexandra Ghenciu & William C. Wohlforth (Oxford University Press, 2018), 443-445.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 446-47.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 449.

borders, migration will remain a security concern for policymakers, and requires an understanding of what drives people to migrate (see 1.1.1 *supra*), alongside researching what factors allow immigration to be associated with insecurity.

Staying focused on national security, Adamson (2006) identifies several ways how migration can be perceived as a threat to it. Firstly, it can undermine a state's sovereignty through impacting border control and national identity.<sup>72</sup> Countries have several reasons for wanting to control their borders, including population management, regulating labour markets and public resources access, and ensuring internal security.<sup>73</sup> Failure to do so may result in unwanted consequences, such as weakened institutions, internationalization of domestic conflicts, and unopposed criminal organizations' involvements.<sup>74</sup> Adamson's perspective derives from a populist and nationalist standpoint, with no regard to the lack of scientific basis for a direct causation between immigration and organized crime.

Migration questions cultural foundations of a nation's identity and encourages them to adopt more liberal and inclusive national identities.<sup>75</sup> This is predominantly true for those nations that place ethnicity at the basis of their legitimacy. Also, migration can destabilize the balance of power between states. As populations have a big impact on a country's power in economic, military, and diplomatic terms, host countries that can organize migration efficiently through policy will benefit.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, migration can exacerbate internal conflicts through the diaspora funding of resources for groups involved in political or violent conflict in the home-country.<sup>77</sup> This finds resonance with Salehyan & Gleditsch (2006). Finally, migration provides opportunities for organized crime to prosper (through human trafficking and smuggling).<sup>78</sup> This often impacts the human security of migrants, it increases levels of corruption among civil society and provides funding of anti-government groups.<sup>79</sup>

### **1.2.3 Immigration in the perspective of securitisation**

Several authors (Wohlfeld 2014; Messina 2017) analyse securitisation of migration as heightening the portrayal of migration as a danger to national security. Securitisation is the process by which security threats are created and amplified through communication

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<sup>72</sup> Fiona B. Adamson, "Crossing Borders: International Migration and National Security," *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer, 2006): 176.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 177-78.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 191-192.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

and discourse.<sup>80</sup> These are primarily created by political elites in host countries. The majority of scholars in this field see the post-11 September period as the onset of a new wave of problematizing and securitising migration.<sup>81</sup> Securitisation of migration is instigated through two strands: the triggering of socio-political conflicts as a result of incoming minority groups in host countries, and the (real or perceived) difficulties involved for policymakers and host country populations.<sup>82</sup>

Interestingly, Wohlfeld and Messina have different views regarding the success of securitisation. Wohlfeld sees an increase of threat perception of migration, due to a surge in cross-border (illegal) migration, the expansion of security concerns to encompass a wider range of policy areas, and the connection of global threats and the ‘war on terror’ to the issue of migration.<sup>83</sup> Messina, however, argues that the absence of long-term studies of public opinion makes it impossible to find empirical evidence for the success of political elites’ securitisation of migration efforts.<sup>84</sup> Regardless, Messina sees securitisation as an intersubjective process, meaning that it can only exist through the validation and acceptance by target audiences.<sup>85</sup> This phenomenon may be more accentuated in societies that have a high concentration of media or a low level of press freedom. Here, the influence of aspects like rhetoric, xenophobia, and misinformation provide an interesting research topic in itself, but is out of the scope of this review. Ultimately, once validation and acceptance are achieved, a host country’s policymakers will develop responses to the (perceived or real) national security threats, commonly institutionalized through border security and immigration policies.

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<sup>80</sup> Wohlfeld, “Is Migration,” 72.

<sup>81</sup> Messina, “Migration,” 28.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>83</sup> Wohlfeld, “Is Migration,” 72-73.

<sup>84</sup> Messina, “Migration,” 29.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Origins and context: the Venezuelan exodus to Brazil**

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the Venezuelan migration crisis, linking historical, political, social, and economic dimensions to the situation in Brazil. By contextualizing the crisis within a broader framework of national security, it sets the stage for a detailed analysis of how this migration has influenced Brazil's response. Through this, the relationship between migration and national security that has defined Brazil's approach in recent years will be exemplified.

#### **2.1 The Venezuelan migration crisis**

The Venezuelan migration crisis has become a significant humanitarian and geopolitical challenge in recent years, with millions fleeing political turmoil, economic collapse, and social instability. Neighbouring countries, particularly Brazil, find themselves on the front lines of this evolving crisis. This section aims to explore the background of the Venezuelan migration crisis, examining factors driving the mass exodus and the characteristics of migrants seeking refuge in Brazil.

##### **2.1.1 Economic factors**

The early 2000s marked the beginning of significant emigration in Venezuela, influenced by the socialist policies of President Hugo Chávez (1998-2013). The policies implemented as part of the 'Bolivarian' and 'Chavismo' ideologies resulted in increasing uncertainty and speculation among Venezuelans. From an economic perspective, the nationalization of various sectors saw many middle-class entrepreneurs migrating to Europe and the United States.<sup>86</sup> Venezuela's economy has long been defined by its vast oil reserves, which traditionally served as its backbone. In 2019 alone, the oil industry contributed to 90% of the country's export revenues, underscoring an alarming dependence on a single resource.<sup>87</sup>

During the oil price boom (2004-2008) under Chávez, Venezuela experienced a form of financial prosperity. Unfortunately, this era did not produce sustainable investments in

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<sup>86</sup> Luisa Feline Freier & Nicolas Parent, "The Regional Response to the Venezuelan Exodus," *Current History* 118, no. 805 (2019): 57.

<sup>87</sup> Iga Kleszczyńska, "The humanitarian crisis of Venezuela and international response to its regional migration implications," *Studia z Polityki Publicznej* 4, no. 28 (2020): 36.

essential sectors such as education, health, and infrastructure, which are essential for long-term development.<sup>88</sup> However, around 2012, signs of distress began to emerge. The decline of the Latin American commodities boom, coupled with Chávez's election to a fourth presidential term, catalysed a new wave of emigration.<sup>89</sup> In this early stage of the crisis, predominantly middle- and lower-income citizens fled the country due to shortages of food and medicine, as well as intensified political repression.<sup>90</sup> The situation worsened dramatically following Chavez's death in 2013, as President Maduro took office. The collapse of oil prices in 2014 showcased Venezuela's vulnerability to oil price fluctuations. By 2015, the crisis intensified, marked by plummeting economic and social conditions.<sup>91</sup> Notably, Venezuela's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth plunged from -6.2% in 2015, to -17% in 2016.<sup>92</sup>

Beyond GDP, hyperinflation became a defining feature of life in Venezuela, with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reporting an annual inflation rate of 65,370% in 2018.<sup>93</sup> This economic malaise, driven by mismanagement, the failure to capitalize on the oil boom, the ongoing nationalization of businesses, strict currency and prices regulations, and diminished foreign investment, fuelled a new exodus.<sup>94</sup> Over time, not only were people fleeing hyperinflation, but also massive shortages of essential goods, which rendered the basic sustenance of life nearly impossible.<sup>95</sup>

### 2.1.2 Social factors

Kleszczyńska (2020) identifies increasing violence, crime, and gang wars as social catalysts for the migration crisis.<sup>96</sup> Arias (2024) states that these factors caused Venezuelans to flee the country, dubbing the choice to migrate as a "survival strategy".<sup>97</sup> Venezuelans' freedom of expression had faced significant threats, leading to arbitrary imprisonment of more than 15,000 members of the political opposition between 2014 and 2019.<sup>98</sup> Many detainees endured police brutality and torture, often based on

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<sup>88</sup> A. Venezuelan & James Ausman, "The devastating Venezuelan crisis," *Surgical Neurology International* 10, no. 145 (2019): 2.

<sup>89</sup> Freier & Parent, "The Regional," 58.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Jenny Garcia Arias, "The Demography of Crisis-Driven Outflows from Venezuela," *Population and Development Review* 50, no. 3 (2024): 644.

<sup>92</sup> International Monetary Fund, "Data Mapper: Real GDP Growth (Annual percent change)," International Monetary Fund, accessed April 15, 2025. [https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDP\\_RPCH@WEO/VEN](https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDP_RPCH@WEO/VEN).

<sup>93</sup> International Monetary Fund, "Venezuela, Inflation rate, average consumer prices (Annual percent change)," last modified 2023, <https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/VEN#countrydata>.

<sup>94</sup> Kleszczyńska, "The humanitarian crisis," 36.

<sup>95</sup> Freier & Parent, "The Regional," 58.

<sup>96</sup> Kleszczyńska, "The humanitarian crisis," 37.

<sup>97</sup> Arias, "The Demography," 645.

<sup>98</sup> Oriana Van Praag, "Understanding the Venezuelan Refugee Crisis," *Wilson Center*, September 13, 2019, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/understanding-the-venezuelan-refugee-crisis>.

accusations of plotting against the government.<sup>99</sup> Rampant corruption has led to the emergence of armed groups who oversee key industries in border regions, enforce curfews, and use repression and violence to maintain control.<sup>100</sup> This alarming trend was underscored by the grim reality in 2016, when the country recorded over 28,000 homicides, culminating in a rate of 91.8 per 100,000 individuals, reflecting the harrowing state of safety in Venezuela.<sup>101</sup>

Moreover, a healthcare crisis developed in Venezuela during this time. Infant and maternal mortality rates rose because hospitals lacked basic supplies. In 2016, a shocking 85% of medications were unavailable, undermining the ability to provide effective medical treatment.<sup>102</sup> The government's failure to combat re-emerging diseases, such as malaria, reflects a further collapse of public health, emphasizing the urgency and depth of the crisis.<sup>103</sup>

### 2.1.3 Political factors

Hugo Chávez was democratically elected in 1998 and became a prominent leader advocating for socialism and social justice. His presidency was characterized by regional alliances within the Latin American Pink Tide, a political movement marked by leftist governments seeking to challenge U.S. influence and promote pan-Latin American unity. He garnered substantial support among Venezuelans and regional allies, which solidified his power. However, his focus soon shifted toward excluding political opponents and increasing the militarization of the state.<sup>104</sup> After Chávez's death in 2013, the country faced a deep internal political crisis. Nicolás Maduro's subsequent rise to power was marked by efforts to undermine the separation of powers, consolidating authority within the executive branch and weakening democratic institutions.<sup>105</sup> He lacked the charisma and leadership of Chávez, resulting in increased authoritarianism, protests, economic instability, and a prolonged struggle for political legitimacy.

Since 2015, Maduro's authoritarian regime has been characterized by increased governmental repression, including the imprisonment of opposition leaders and the

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<sup>99</sup> "World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Venezuela," Reports, Human Rights Watch, last accessed 25 April 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/venezuela#9e2664>.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Benjamin N. Gedan, "Venezuelan Migration: Is the Western Hemisphere Prepared for a Refugee Crisis?" *The SAIS Review of International Affairs* 37, no. 2 (2017): 58.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Luis Ricardo Davila, "The Rise and Fall and Rise of Populism in Venezuela," *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 19, no. 2 (April 2000): 236.

<sup>105</sup> Amanda Benini Gelmini, "Refugee Crisis in Venezuela and Regional Cooperation: The Impact of Brazil, Chile, and Colombia Policies," (MA thesis, Università Degli Studi di Padova, 2022), 10.

violent suppression of protests.<sup>106</sup> The Supreme Court's decision to nullify the election of the National Assembly in 2017 led to extrajudicial killings and political violence against protesters.<sup>107</sup> The opposition regards Maduro's presidency as illegitimate due to rigged elections and the exclusion of various political parties and candidates, particularly evident during the 2019 presidential crisis when Juan Guaidó was installed as Interim-President, before being forced to exile.<sup>108</sup> Combined with the political instability and severe social issues, these factors have culminated in the current situation.

According to the UNHCR, approximately 695,000 people fled Venezuela by the end of 2015, marking the onset of a mass exodus.<sup>109</sup> As of December 3, 2024, the Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V) reports that over 7.8 million Venezuelans have left the country; of these, most have gone to other Latin American countries, such as Colombia (approx. 2.8 million) and Peru (approx. 1.6 million).<sup>110</sup> Brazil comes in third, with more than 620,000 having sought refuge in the country as of November 2024.<sup>111</sup> Other notable destinations include Chile (approx. 530,000) and Ecuador (approx. 440,000).<sup>112</sup>

## 2.2 Historical context of migration in Brazil

Brazil has experienced several distinct waves of immigration, each shaping the country's cultural, social, and economic landscape. While Europeans first arrived in the early sixteenth century, often through coercion (such as criminals sent to frontier regions and soldiers conscripted to serve)<sup>113</sup>, the country's strong immigrant character became prominent after the abolition of slavery in 1888. This created a labour vacuum that prompted Brazil to attract large numbers of European migrants seeking economic opportunities. Between 1872 and 1972, over five million immigrants arrived in Brazil.<sup>114</sup> However, it should be noted that these numbers are not always dependable, as numerous foreigners came on a temporary basis, and the government primarily recording entry

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-59.

<sup>107</sup> Arias, "The Demography," 648.

<sup>108</sup> Venezuelan & Ausman, "The devastating," 4.

<sup>109</sup> "Refugees and migrants from Venezuela top 4 million: UNHCR and IOM," Press Releases, UNHCR, last modified 7 June 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/news-releases/refugees-and-migrants-venezuela-top-4-million-unhcr-and-iom>.

<sup>110</sup> "Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela," Statistics, R4V, last modified 3 December 2024, <https://www.r4v.info/en/refugeeandmigrants>.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Jeffrey Lesser, *Immigration, Ethnicity, and National Identity in Brazil, 1808 to the Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 10.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

data rather than exit data.<sup>115</sup> This mass migration was predominantly driven by Europeans (especially from Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Germany) escaping economic hardships and political crises in Europe, including revolutions, conflicts and unrest.<sup>116</sup>

Beyond Europe, significant numbers also arrived from Japan, the Middle East, and other parts of the world, contributing to Brazil's multiculturalism.<sup>117</sup> These waves were often intertwined with the ideology of 'whitening', a belief among Brazilian elites that European immigration would improve the nation's demographic structure and achieve development and modernity.<sup>118</sup> This scientific racism shaped immigration policies and social attitudes toward different migrant groups.<sup>119</sup>

The last major wave followed Haiti's devastating earthquakes (2004, 2010), resulting in a migration to Brazil, driven by political instability, poverty, and economic prospects.<sup>120</sup> In 2013, asylum requests surged by 600%, tripling the Haitian migrant population and straining resources as Brazil's government was largely unprepared for this influx.<sup>121</sup> Most immigrants did not qualify for refugee status under the Geneva Convention.<sup>122</sup> As a response, Brazil issued limited humanitarian visas, but this quota proved insufficient.<sup>123</sup> While visa requirements were eased in April 2013, this shifted the responsibility to Brazil for providing basic living conditions.<sup>124</sup>

Haitian migrants faced hardships in route and upon arrival, living in overcrowded shelters amid resource shortages, leading to a humanitarian crisis.<sup>125</sup> Outdated immigration laws hindered the granting of proper legal status to immigrants, but eventually, the National Migration Council granted five-year residency permits after acknowledging the humanitarian factors involved.<sup>126</sup> Some undocumented Haitians were granted permanent residency, enabling their integration.<sup>127</sup> Despite work permit efforts, many Haitians faced exploitation due to a lack of socioeconomic integration

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>120</sup> Heloisa Harumi Miura, "The Haitian Migration Flow to Brazil: Aftermath of the 2010 Earthquake," in *The State of Environmental Migration 2014: A Review of 2013*, ed. François Gemenne et al. (International Organization for Migration, 2014), 149.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>122</sup> Cedric Audebert, "The recent geodynamics of Haitian migration in the Americas: refugees or economic migrants?" *Revista Brasileira de Estudos de População* 34, no. 1 (2017): 66.

<sup>123</sup> Miura, "The Haitian Migration," 154.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 157-58.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>127</sup> Audebert, "The recent geodynamics," 66.

policies.<sup>128</sup> Ultimately, migrants concentrated in Brazil's southern states, finding work in sectors such as construction and agriculture.<sup>129</sup> The overall response faced criticism for being slow and inadequate in addressing root causes and protecting migrants' human security.<sup>130</sup>

In Brazil, 'immigrant' extends beyond someone born abroad. It is intrinsically linked to the country's national identity, with the term sometimes applied to those born within Brazil.<sup>131</sup> Newcomers were viewed as agents of positive change, seen as enhancing a nation marked by its colonial past and the legacy of slavery.<sup>132</sup> As time progressed, the meaning of the term broadened, including heritage and impacting the understanding of race and ethnicity.<sup>133</sup> Events celebrating immigration, for example the commemoration of the first Japanese arrivals, underscores ongoing efforts of embracing diversity.<sup>134</sup> Nowadays, immigration continues to shape Brazil's self-image as a diverse nation aspiring to become "better".<sup>135</sup>

## 2.3 Initial response of Brazil to the Venezuelan migration crisis

### 2.3.1 Governmental responses

The Venezuelan crisis resulted in a surge of Venezuelans seeking refuge across the border, placing heavy demands on Brazil's asylum and integration systems. In 2017, there were over 17,865 applications from Venezuelans, accounting for more than half of all asylum requests.<sup>136</sup> This highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive and humane action.

Brazil's initial response combined humanitarian aid with legal and policy reforms to support Venezuelan migrants. A pivotal element was the extension of the humanitarian visa, originally created for Haitian citizens after the 2010 earthquake.<sup>137</sup> This extension included protection from deportation during asylum processing, the right to seek

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<sup>128</sup> Miura, "The Haitian Migration," 160.

<sup>129</sup> Audebert, "The recent geodynamics," 67.

<sup>130</sup> Miura, "The Haitian Migration," 161-62.

<sup>131</sup> Lesser, *Immigration*, 2.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>136</sup> José Antônio Peres Gediél & Soledad Castillo Jara, "Advances and Setbacks in Brazilian Migration Policy and Legislation," in *Voluntary and Forced Migration in Latin America: Law and Policy Reforms*, ed. Natalia Caicedo Camacho & Luisa Feline Freier (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022), 53.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

employment, and access to education for children.<sup>138</sup> Such measures demonstrated Brazil's commitment to addressing the needs of vulnerable individuals. Additionally, Brazil embraced the 1984 Cartagena Declaration, broadening refugee definitions to include those fleeing "because their lives, security or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order".<sup>139</sup> This made it easier for Venezuelans to obtain refugee status, a stance upheld by Brazil's Supreme Court.<sup>140</sup>

The implementation of the 2017 Migration marked a significant step in Brazil's approach. This law enshrined core principles of non-discrimination and rejection of xenophobia and racism.<sup>141</sup> By emphasizing a human rights-based approach, the law prioritized the protection of migrants over security concerns. It streamlined regulations, institutionalized humanitarian visas, decriminalized immigration, and granted previously unrecognized rights to migrants.<sup>142</sup> These legal frameworks created a more inclusive society. The Brazilian government further allocated financial resources through Provisional Measure No. 697 to bolster the asylum system, provide humanitarian aid, and facilitate integration, demonstrating recognition of the complexity and scale of challenges posed by the influx.<sup>143</sup>

Additionally, the government established the Federal Emergency Assistance Committee, designed to coordinate aid for Venezuelan migrants.<sup>144</sup> Co-led by UNHCR and International Organization for Migration (IOM), this committee oversaw initiatives such as creating and managing shelters, enhancing border security, administering vaccines, and providing assistance for voluntary relocations.<sup>145</sup> These services were particularly crucial in Roraima, a key entry point for Venezuelan migrants. Between 2016 and 2018, over 62,000 Venezuelans applied for refugee status in Roraima, increasing in the state's population by 8% in 2018.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Rafael Alfena Zago, "Impacts of Forced Immigration: The Venezuelan Diaspora and the Brazilian Labor Market," *The International Trade Journal* (2024): 11.

<sup>139</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Summary Conclusions on the interpretation of the extended refugee definition in the 1984 Cartagena Declaration*, Expert Roundtable 15 and 16 October 2013, Montevideo, Uruguay, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/53bd4d0c9.pdf>.

<sup>140</sup> "The Venezuelan exodus: The Need for a Regional Response to an Unprecedented Migration Crisis," Reports, Human Rights Watch, last modified 3 September 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/09/03/venezuelan-exodus/need-regional-response-unprecedented-migration-crisis>.

<sup>141</sup> Gediel & Jara, "Advances and Setbacks," 68.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>144</sup> Shannon Doocy et al., "'Venezuelan Migration and the Border Health Crisis in Colombia and Brazil,'" *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 7, no. 3 (2019): 88.

<sup>145</sup> Gisela P. Zapata & Vicente Tapia Wenderoth, "Progressive legislation but lukewarm policies: The Brazilian response to Venezuelan displacement," *International Migration* 60, no. 1 (2022): 142.

<sup>146</sup> Alfena Zago, "Impacts of Forced," 2.

**Figure 1: Venezuela and Brazil (including Roraima)**



Source: George Alberto Garcia de Oliveira, "Use of the Brazilian Military Component in the Face of Venezuela's Migration Crisis," *Military Review* (2019): 95.

### 2.3.2 Non-governmental responses

Additionally, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) played a vital role in supporting Venezuelan migrants during this crisis. Numerous international and local organizations mobilized to provide essential services to migrants. For example, organizations such as Caritas, Missão Paz, and SOS Children's Villages were instrumental in managing shelters and reception facilities.<sup>147</sup>

Further support came from United Nations agencies including UNHCR, IOM, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), particularly in the Roraima region.<sup>148</sup> A variety of international NGOs, along with philanthropic and religious organizations, also contributed significantly.<sup>149</sup> Notably, the Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, and the International Red Cross provided assistance.<sup>150</sup> An exemplary initiative emerged from the Consolata Church in Boa Vista, which not only offered shelter and assistance but also collaborated with UNHCR and military support.<sup>151</sup> One specific NGO, Los Hermanos, has been actively involved in providing food and donations to Venezuelans in Boa Vista on a weekly basis.<sup>152</sup> This

<sup>147</sup> Zapata & Wenderoth, "Progressive legislation," 142.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>149</sup> George Alberto Garcia de Oliveira, "Use of the Brazilian Military Component in the Face of Venezuela's Migration Crisis," *Military Review* (2019): 99.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>151</sup> Jacqueline Salmen Raffoul, "Crisis in Venezuela: The Brazilian response to the massive flow of Venezuelans in Roraima," *Revista de Direito Internacional* 15, no. 2 (2018): 21.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

organization places particular emphasis on integrating Venezuelans into Brazilian society and communities. These diverse initiatives from NGOs highlight the essential role of civil society in addressing the humanitarian needs of Venezuelan migrants in Brazil. Together, governmental and non-governmental responses form a comprehensive network aimed at alleviating the challenges faced by migrants.

## 2.4 Shifts in immigration policy

### 2.4.1 Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016)

Her administration was associated with a centre-left political ideology. She was a member of the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT), which has its roots in labour movements and advocates for social justice, economic equality, and progressive policies. Rousseff served as Brazil's first female president, and her administration continued the policies initiated by her predecessor, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Rousseff's administration promoted policies aimed at humanitarian assistance and access to essential services. To illustrate, the 2017 Migration Law, which was originally proposed by Senator Aluísio Nunes, originated from initiatives discussed during the Rousseff presidency.<sup>153</sup> Although Rousseff's administration maintained an alignment with the Maduro government, they found a way to respond positively to the surge of Venezuelan migrants. Welcoming them, even without formal refugee status, served the government not only to uphold humanitarian commitments, but also to deflect attention from escalating domestic political challenges, such as the increasing calls for her impeachment.<sup>154</sup> During Rousseff's term, the number of Venezuelan immigrants was relatively low, with the UNHCR reporting an increase of 14,400 between 2014 and 2017, resulting in a total of 20,000 to 30,000 Venezuelan immigrants in 2017.<sup>155</sup> At mid-2015, Venezuelans did not belong to the five largest immigrant groups within Brazil.<sup>156</sup>

Rousseff's government reacted promptly to the initial influx of migrants in Roraima, taking proactive measures, showcasing a sharp contrast to policies adopted by

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<sup>153</sup> Igor José de Renó Machado, "Securitisation (Re)Turn: Analysis of the New Brazilian Migration Laws (2016-2019)," *Middle Atlantic Review of Latin American Studies* 4, no. 2 (2020): 217.

<sup>154</sup> Roberto Rodolfo Georg Uebel & Caroline Adorne da Silva, "Politics, Policies and International Immigration in Brazil: recent changes and perspectives," *Revista de Estudos e Pesquisas sobre as Américas* 13, no. 1 (2019): 183.

<sup>155</sup> UNHCR, "Venezuela Situation," Situation Update, August 2017.  
<https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/58966>.

<sup>156</sup> Migration Data Portal, "International Data: Groups (Venezuela)," accessed May 8, 2025,  
<https://www.migrationdataportal.org/international-data?i=groups&t=2015&cm49=76>.

subsequent governments.<sup>157</sup> However, it is crucial to note that this approach underwent a significant change following Rousseff's impeachment. After her dismissal in August 2016, as a result of a political process characterized by 'lawfare', the governmental stance on immigration began to shift.

#### 2.4.2 Michel Temer (2016-2019)

Temer's administration is generally considered to have a centre-right political orientation. Temer was a member of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (Movimento Democrático Brasileiro, MDB), a centrist party that emphasized pragmatism and coalition-building. Initially, the Temer administration responded positively to the influx, focusing on upholding migrants' rights and promoting integration through legal, employment, and cultural processes.<sup>158</sup> However, when the influx peaked in 2018, negative sentiments began to surface, particularly in Roraima. Although the administration stressed its brotherly sentiment to the Venezuelan people, their approach became more security-focused.<sup>159</sup>

His administration implemented a new immigration control policy in response to the influx of Venezuelan migrants, which involved assigning responsibilities to the military.<sup>160</sup> This became known as Operation Welcome (or *Operação Acolhida*). In Roraima, the Army took charge of managing the reception in designated centres. This approach treated the management of migrants as a public security issue and aimed to regulate immigration.<sup>161</sup> Operation Welcome was launched with three main goals: border control, facilitating shelter, and assisting in relocating migrants. The military was responsible for delivering humanitarian aid while maintaining public order.<sup>162</sup>

This represented the first instance of the government entrusting humanitarian responsibility to the military.<sup>163</sup> Reception centres were termed 'hybrid refugee camps', because they housed Venezuelan immigrants and asylum seekers under military supervision, aiming to keep them off the streets of Boa Vista.<sup>164</sup> One of the most notable consequences was the relative exclusion of civil society from managing reception activities, as the Army assumed total control, backed by international organizations,

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<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Sergio Luiz Cruz Aguilar, "The Politicisation or Securitisation of Migration? The Cases of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru during the Venezuelan Crisis," *Revista Espirales* 7, no. 2 (2022): 123.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> Machado, "Securitisation," 223.

<sup>161</sup> Igor José de Renó Machado & Iana dos Santos Vasconcelos, "Military Reception and Venezuelan Migrants in Brazilian far North: New Policies of Securitisation and Hybrid Refugee Camps," *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 23, no. 3 (2022): 1219-1220.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 1218.

<sup>163</sup> Machado, "Securitisation," 223.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

such as UNHCR.<sup>165</sup> During Temer's presidency, the number of Venezuelan immigrants grew from 43,948 in April 2018 to approximately 90,000 at the beginning of 2019.<sup>166</sup> Despite increasingly handing control over to the military, their involvement was intended to maintain order, rather than to limit access.<sup>167</sup> This would change drastically under the Bolsonaro administration.

### 2.4.3 Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2023)

Bolsonaro's administration is widely recognized for its extreme right-wing political ideology. He was a member of the Social Liberal Party (Partido Social Liberal, PSL), which advocated for conservative policies, nationalism, and a strong approach to law and order alongside the glorification of the Brazilian military dictatorship. His rise to power was characterized by denouncing the Venezuelan government under Maduro, labelling it a socialist dictatorship that has to be confronted through all possible means.<sup>168</sup> The migration crisis heightened tensions and fostered negative sentiments, resulting in demands for strict measures, especially in northern Brazil.<sup>169</sup> This paved the way for Bolsonaro to adopt a migration policy that prioritized security (securitisation) and protection of national sovereignty.<sup>170</sup> During his term, the number of Venezuelan immigrants grew from 96,000 in March 2019 to over 416,000 at the end of his term in January 2023.<sup>171</sup>

He expressed his opposition to the UN Migration Pact in 2018, arguing that it was too lenient, and that Brazil needed to have authority over border control. His rhetoric characterized migrants as criminals and intruders.<sup>172</sup> In 2019, Bolsonaro withdrew Brazil from the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, stating that his administration had the authority to determine which migrants could enter.<sup>173</sup> In July 2019, his government endorsed Ordinance 666, which aimed to block the entry of foreigners deemed a threat to national security, enabling their deportation.<sup>174</sup> Brazilian civil society heavily criticized this as it regulated and contradicted the 2017 Migration Law, ambiguously defined 'dangerous' migrants, and disregarded due process rights.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> R4V, "Refugees and Migrants."

<sup>167</sup> Aguilar, "The Politicisation," 125.

<sup>168</sup> Victor M. Mijares & Nastassja Rojas Silva, "Venezuelan Migration Crisis puts the Region's Democratic Governability at Risk," *German Institute of Global and Area Studies*, no. 6 (2018): 8.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> Gediel & Jara, "Advances and Setbacks," 71.

<sup>171</sup> R4V, "Refugees and Migrants."

<sup>172</sup> Felipe A. Filomeno & Thomas J. Vicino, "The Evolution of Authoritarianism and Restrictionism in Brazilian Immigration Policy: Jair Bolsonaro in Historical Perspective," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 40, no. 4 (2021): 606.

<sup>173</sup> Gediel & Jara, "Advances and Setbacks," 71.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> Filomeno & Vicino, "The Evolution," 606.

The Bolsonaro administration's response showed a regression from previous humanitarian approaches. Instead, it upheld the narrative and reasoning of securitisation through its policies and decisions,<sup>176</sup> contributing to a climate where immigration was increasingly viewed through a security lens.

#### 2.4.4 Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2023-present)

Lula's administration has a leftist political orientation. He was a founding member of the PT. His first term emphasized reducing poverty and inequality, leveraging social welfare programs and education to promote economic growth and social equity. Understanding the complexities of this humanitarian crisis, Lula's administration emphasized both humanitarian aid and regional cooperation. During his current term, the number of Venezuelan immigrants grew from 416,000 to over 620,000 in November 2024.<sup>177</sup>

Marking a significant change from Bolsonaro, Lula held talks with Maduro in 2023 to restore the ties between the two countries.<sup>178</sup> This faced backlash from critics, stating he lost an opportunity to play a role in aiding Venezuela out of the crisis.<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, Lula reignited the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) by hosting its first summit since 2014 to facilitate increased regional cooperation and integration.<sup>180</sup> However, Lula's sentiment towards Maduro revealed differing perspectives among its members, some criticizing Lula's acceptance of Maduro as a democratic leader.<sup>181</sup> As per their statement of being committed to human rights, social justice, and democracy, the recreation of UNASUR may prove to serve as a regional cooperation setting discussing the Venezuelan migration crisis.<sup>182</sup>

In September 2024, Lula reinforced Brazil's commitment to accepting Venezuelan refugees and supporting the state of Roraima in their activities through Operation Welcome.<sup>183</sup> However, the recent freeze on U.S. foreign aid announced by Donald

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<sup>176</sup> Zapata & Wenderoth, "Progressive legislation," 144.

<sup>177</sup> R4V, "Refugees and Migrants."

<sup>178</sup> "Venezuela's Maduro Meets Lula in Brazil as Relations Improve," *Al Jazeera*, May 29, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/29/venezuelas-maduro-meets-lula-in-brazil-as-relations-improve>.

<sup>179</sup> Maria Laura Canineu & Martina Rapido Ragozzino, "Brazil's Lula Misses Crucial Chance to Uphold Rights in Venezuela," *Human Rights Watch*, May 30, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/05/30/brazils-lula-misses-crucial-chance-uphold-rights-venezuela>.

<sup>180</sup> Lisandra Paraguassu & Anthony Boadle, "Lula's call for South American unity faces opposing views on Venezuela," *Reuters*, May 31, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/south-american-presidents-led-by-lula-look-for-new-shared-agenda-2023-05-30/>.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> Andreia Verdélio, "Lula affirms Brazil will remain open to receiving Venezuelan refugees," *Agência Brasil*, September 12, 2024, <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/en/politica/noticia/2024-09/lula-affirms-brazil-will-remain-open-receiving-venezuelan-refugees>.

Trump in January 2025 jeopardizes the operation, as UNHCR and IOM (core partners of Operation Welcome) heavily rely on U.S. funding.<sup>184</sup> As a result, Brazil and its regional partners are in a precarious position to seek alternative funds to ensure the continued support and integration of Venezuelan refugees.

## 2.5 The role of regional factors

There are some regional factors worth discussing which have influenced Brazil's strategy regarding the Venezuelan migration crisis. These have contributed to the country's efforts to balance humanitarian support with national security concerns.

During the early stages of the Pink Tide period in Latin America, Brazil implemented forward-thinking, human rights-oriented immigration policies driven by regional cooperation and integration efforts.<sup>185</sup> To illustrate, it was the first country to incorporate the expanded refugee definition of the Cartagena Declaration in its legislation in 1997.<sup>186</sup> The initial approach of Brazil, together with other nations, focused on protecting migrant rights and maintaining open borders.<sup>187</sup> This was in line with the 2002 MERCOSUR Residence Agreement (RAM), which Brazil incorporated into its national legislation and extended to include all South American nations.<sup>188</sup> In 2017, when Venezuela's membership was suspended, it was reiterated that Venezuelan citizens should not suffer negative consequences from the suspension, resulting in countries applying the RAM's provisions and similar protective measures for Venezuelans.<sup>189</sup>

The Quito Process, a term ascribed to those countries that established the Quito Declaration (or 'Declaration of Quito on Human Mobility of Venezuelan Citizens in the Region'), became an important development. This declaration was signed on 4 September 2018 by eleven Latin American countries after an initiative by Ecuador.<sup>190</sup> Its focus is on regional coordination and cooperation among countries to address the Venezuelan migration crisis, ensuring humanitarian assistance, protection, and

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<sup>184</sup> Ricardo Brito & Lisandra Paraguassu, "Brazil seeking funds for Venezuelan migrant program after Trump freezes US aid," *Reuters*, January 29, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/brazil-seeking-funds-venezuelan-migrant-program-after-trump-freezes-us-aid-2025-01-29/>.

<sup>185</sup> Freier & Parent, "The Regional," 58.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>187</sup> Andrea C. Bianculli & Juan Carlos Triviño-Salazar, "Venezuelan migration in South America: coordinating regional responses to a transboundary reception crisis," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 50, no. 20 (2024): 5113.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 5114.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 5115.

<sup>190</sup> Freier & Parent, "The Regional," 61.

integration within host countries.<sup>191</sup> It is backed by the UNHCR and IOM, as they have been instrumental in its development.<sup>192</sup> Additionally, it is endorsed by the Group of Friends, comprising a list of countries, including Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the UK, the US, and the EU.<sup>193</sup>

Nonetheless, it shifted its policy emphasis towards the importance of national laws in establishing the rights of migrants in host countries.<sup>194</sup> These enabled countries to adopt more restrictive policies while operating within the confines of the guidelines.<sup>195</sup> Brazil's approach appears to have been affected by the Quito Process, as it adopted "novel and unique visas".<sup>196</sup> This suggests a shift toward handling the issue through national policies, aligning with the Process's focus, but at the same time representing a departure from the regional consensus under the RAM, which emphasized a human rights-based approach. This trend highlights how governments' framing has taken precedence in regional migration efforts, potentially contributing to the securitisation of migration.<sup>197</sup>

In conclusion, Brazil's strategy reflects a complex interplay of regional human rights frameworks and international organizational influence, resulting in a combination of regional cooperation and nationally-defined migration policies.

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<sup>191</sup> UNHCR, *Declaration of Quito on Human Mobility of Venezuelan Citizens in the Region*, Quito, September 4, 2018, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/68099>.

<sup>192</sup> Bianculli & Triviño-Salazar, "Venezuelan migration," 5118.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 5117.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 5116-7.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 5117.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 5115.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 5118.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Analysing Brazil's policy response: approach and results**

This chapter aims to assess how Brazil's response to the Venezuelan migration crisis, from 2015 onwards, has influenced its migration and national security policies. This analysis will explore key policies, focusing on themes such as securitisation of migration and the tension between humanitarian obligations and national security concerns.

#### **3.1 Methodology**

##### **3.1.1 Research design**

This study uses a qualitative research design centred on discourse analysis to investigate how Brazil's response to the Venezuelan migration crisis (2015-2022) has influenced its migration and national security policies. Critical discourse analysis is particularly well-suited for this research as it allows for a nuanced examination of the language, rhetoric, and underlying assumptions embedded in key policy documents. By analysing the discourses surrounding migration and security, this study aims to uncover the ways in which the Venezuelan migration crisis has been constructed and framed within Brazilian policymaking, and how these framings have shaped the evolution of national security policies. This approach will facilitate an understanding of the power dynamics, motivations, ideological influences, and shifting priorities that have guided Brazil's response to the migration crisis.

##### **3.1.2 Data collection**

Data collection will focus on key policy documents related to Brazil's response to the Venezuelan migration crisis. The primary data sources will include Operation Welcome documents, encompassing Law No. 13.684 and Decree No. 9.970; the 2017 Migration Law (Law No. 13.445); and Ordinance 666. Additional secondary data (e.g., academic analyses) will be consulted to provide context and triangulation.

Data will be accessed through official government websites, legislative archives, and online databases. The focus will be on identifying key themes, concepts, and discursive strategies employed in these documents to construct narratives about migration and national security. The period of data collection will span from 2015 to December 2022.

### **3.1.3 Data analysis techniques**

The primary method of data analysis will involve discourse analysis, informed by critical discourse analysis (CDA) principles. This involves a systematic examination of language, rhetoric, and underlying assumptions in policy documents. Special attention will be given to representations of migrants, definitions of security, and constructions of national identity. Secondary sources will provide contextual information.

### **3.1.4 Timeframe justification**

The year 2015 marks a critical turning point in the Venezuelan crisis. A combination of factors, including a steep decline in oil prices, escalating hyperinflation, and increased political instability, intensified the economic and social crisis. This intensification led to a significant increase in the number of Venezuelans seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, including Brazil, making it a logical starting point for analysing the impact on Brazilian migration and national security policies. While the crisis remains an ongoing situation, this research concludes its analysis as of December 2022. This cut-off point, which coincides with the end of Bolsonaro's term, allows for a comprehensive assessment of the available data and policy developments during this defined period. This timeframe also captures the Bolsonaro administration's securitisation shift, exemplified by Ordinance 666.

It is important to acknowledge that the situation continues to evolve, and developments beyond December 2022 may further influence Brazil's migration and national security policies. The change in presidential administration in January 2023 introduced potential shifts in migration and border management strategies that are still unfolding. However, this research provides a valuable baseline understanding of the key trends and challenges that emerged during the initial phase of the crisis. Future research could build upon these findings by examining the longer-term impacts and assessing the effectiveness of policies implemented from 2023 onwards.

### **3.1.5 Potential limitations and mitigation**

This study involves interpreting government documents, which requires judgement. To ensure objectivity, clear analytical guidelines will be used. Official documents do not tell the whole story, so additional secondary literature will provide a fuller picture. The temporal scope of the study (2015-December 2022) offers a snapshot, not long-term effects, requiring acknowledgement of potential changes since then. Furthermore, the original policy documents are in Portuguese. However, for the 2017 Migration Law an

official English translation will be utilized. Professional online translation tools will be used for the analysis of the two public policy documents.

### **3.2 Application of research techniques**

The analysis will focus on how humanitarian and security objectives are balanced within the overall discourse, and on how migration is potentially securitised in the discourse. The 2017 Migration Law marks a critical moment in Brazil's approach to migration. The discourse analysis will focus on how its emphasis on human rights, non-discrimination, inclusion and integration, and national sovereignty is articulated and discursive strategies regarding the balance of humanitarian obligations and national security. Ordinance 666 represents a notable shift towards a more security-oriented approach. The analysis will focus on the justifications provided for the ordinance, how 'dangerous' migrants are defined within its language and the measures put in place to block their entry and enable their deportation. Any accompanying statements will be used to reveal the government's underlying reasoning and assumptions concerning the link between migration and national security.

The analysis will seek to identify indicators of securitisation. Where migration is framed as a perceived threat to public order or national security, emergency measures are invoked, border control is emphasized, and migration is linked to crime or terrorism. The language used will be examined to determine how migration is portrayed as a security issue, rather than a humanitarian one. Understanding how policymakers perceive migration, and implications for national security, is critical to understanding the shifts in policy. Finally, the research will explore power dynamics by identifying key actors involved in shaping migration policy. Through this application of discourse analysis, the research will discern how policy is framed and enacted in response to the Venezuelan influx, as well as evaluate the link between migration management and securitisation efforts. By highlighting the underlying thought processes and priorities of the Brazilian government, this analysis will contribute to an understanding of how migration crises can shape, and reshape, national security policies.

### **3.3 Data analysis, triangulation and results**

This section presents the findings from the discourse analysis of Operation Welcome, the 2017 Migration Law, and Ordinance 666. It then combines these findings to address the research question.

### 3.3.1 Operation Welcome

Operation Welcome (or *Operação Acolhida*) is a humanitarian program launched by the Brazilian government in April 2018. It was created in response to the increasing number of Venezuelan migrants entering the country. The program was developed partly due to public concern over the pressure on local resources in Roraima.<sup>198</sup> The operation had three core objectives: border control, facilitating shelter, and assist in relocating migrants.<sup>199</sup> Border control operations were primarily executed by the Brazilian Army, with efforts including the operation of reception and identification centres, screening facilities, providing assistance with documentation and access to justice, and vaccinations provision.<sup>200</sup> Shelter initiatives involved the provision of accommodation, which was coordinated by the Ministry of Citizenship and UNHCR, with logistical support from the Army. These shelters facilitated communications services, Portuguese language classes, cultural activities and mental health support.<sup>201</sup> Relocation efforts aimed at fostering socioeconomic integration and local inclusion. Venezuelan migrants were voluntarily relocated to other regions in Brazil to alleviate pressure on the resources in Roraima.<sup>202</sup>

Operation Welcome was established through Provisional Measure No. 820 in 2018, later transformed into Law No. 13.684 by the National Congress. It addresses emergency aid aimed at assisting individuals in vulnerable conditions due to migration caused by humanitarian crises. It also created the Federal Committee for Emergency Assistance, which is regulated by Decree No. 9.970 in 2019.

#### 3.3.1.1 Key themes and concepts

The discourse analysis of Law No. 13.684 and Decree No. 9.970 reveals three central themes: the state's humanitarian obligations, its role in migration management, and the pursuit of 'orderly' migration.

##### 3.3.1.1.1 Humanitarian assistance

Law No. 13.684 frames humanitarian assistance as a legal obligation of the state, not merely an act of charity. It addresses extraordinary circumstances, such as migration

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<sup>198</sup> Benjamin Stevenson and Colin Zentmeyer, "Unsupported Innovation in Migration Governance: Comparing Colombian and Brazilian State Responses to Venezuelan Mixed Migration," *Journal of International Service* 2, no. 1 (2021): 10.

<sup>199</sup> Matheus Augusto Soares & Nerissa Krebs Farret, "Brazilian response to the Venezuelan humanitarian crisis: Operation Acolhida as a politics of hope," *Contexto Internacional* 45, no. 1 (2023): 11-12.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

caused by humanitarian crises, by establishing a framework to guide government action.<sup>203</sup> The law emphasizes aid for nationals and foreigners in disorganized migration, focusing on individuals made vulnerable by crises. This assistance aims to expand social protection, healthcare, education, human rights measures, and support for vulnerable groups such as women, children, elderly people, disabled persons, and indigenous communities. The law emphasizes urgency by requiring government bodies to prioritize resource allocation and streamline procedures, reflecting the emergency nature of the response. Additionally, ethical considerations are reinforced through repeated references to ‘human rights’ and ‘social protection’, framing aid as a moral obligation to protect those most at risk. However, the law lacks specific criteria for defining ‘vulnerability’, leaving room for a variety of interpretations.

Decree No. 9.970 frames humanitarian assistance as a formal and institutional responsibility of the government, centred on structured management rather than direct aid provision. This is evident in the creation of the Federal Emergency Assistance Committee, which serves as the main body overseeing the response.<sup>204</sup> The decree prioritizes coordinated efforts across government levels and agencies, with the committee positioned as the central authority responsible for managing and supervising humanitarian assistance. It also recognizes partnerships with diverse entities, acknowledging that government efforts alone may not suffice. The decree underscores the importance of monitoring and evaluation to ensure accountability and effectiveness. Overall, it conceptualizes humanitarian assistance as a systematic, managed effort carried out through structured procedures, with the government acting as the primary actor.

### *3.3.1.1.2 State management of migration*

Law No. 13.684 highlights the state’s role in ensuring ‘social protection’, ‘health care’, and ‘human rights’ (Article 5), framing migration management as a humanitarian endeavour. This humanitarian discourse legitimizes state intervention. Also, while recognizing international agreements, the law focuses on internal management of migration including distribution, integration, and potential repatriation (Article 5). This shows the state’s aim to manage the mobility of migrants but emphasizes the need for prior consent. The creation of the Federal Emergency Assistance Committee (Article 6) signals a centralized, top-down approach to migration management. The law promotes intergovernmental cooperation (Article 4), with the federal government taking the lead.

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<sup>203</sup> Presidência da República, *Lei No. 13.684*, June 21, 2018, [https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/\\_Ato2015-2018/2018/Lei/L13684.htm](https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_Ato2015-2018/2018/Lei/L13684.htm), accessed May 15, 2025.

<sup>204</sup> Presidência da República, *Decreto No. 9.970*, August 14, 2019, [https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/\\_Ato2019-2022/2019/Decreto/D9970.htm](https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_Ato2019-2022/2019/Decreto/D9970.htm), accessed May 15, 2025.

The law emphasizes the management within the national territory, reinforcing the state's control over its borders and population through legal and bureaucratic frameworks.

Decree No. 9.970 frames the state's management of migration as a necessary response to crises, positioning 'migratory flows' as a challenge arising from humanitarian emergencies. This framing justifies state oversight by presenting migration as an exceptional crisis requiring intervention. Centralized control is a key element, demonstrated by the establishment of the Federal Emergency Assistance Committee, signifying a move toward a unified state strategy. However, this legitimization of state power can potentially limit the autonomy of migrants and other involved parties. Security and control are subtly included in the framework, exemplified in references to 'screening of immigrants' and the focus on monitoring and evaluation, bolstered by the involvement of security-focused ministries. This positions migrants as potential risks requiring assessment and management. While it recognizes the vulnerability of migrants in humanitarian crises, this humanitarian language serves to justify state intervention while potentially obscuring underlying security and control considerations. Underlying assumptions include that migration is inherently problematic, that the state is the most effective in managing migration, and migrants are vulnerable people needing assistance. The decree presents a vision of state management as essential for addressing migration challenges within a national framework, with a focus on control, coordination, and formalized processes justified by both security concerns and humanitarian obligations.

#### *3.3.1.1.3 'Orderly' migration*

While Law No. 13.684 does not explicitly mention 'orderly' migration, the concept is implied as a goal, achieved through structured management of migration. The policy documents suggest that migration caused by humanitarian crises can be disorganized and that the goal is to create a more structured and manageable process. The focus on border security, intergovernmental coordination, and resource distribution reflects an intent to regulate migration, ensuring orderly entry and integration. Through the provision of assistance and expanding policies regarding health, education, and social protection, it is implied that orderly migration can contribute to reducing the vulnerability of migrants and Brazilian host communities. Underlying assumptions include that unmanaged migration can create challenges and strains on resources, and that the state has a legitimate role in managing and regulating migration to ensure order and stability.

In Decree No. 9.970, it is suggested that orderly migration is achieved through structured state management, characterized by control, coordination, and formal procedures. This vision is inherently linked to a crisis response, implying that migration is potentially

chaotic and requires governmental intervention to bring it into a manageable form. As centralization is vital, the Federal Emergency Assistance Committee is designed to bring various governmental efforts into a cohesive format, suggesting orderly migration requires a unified command. The emphasis on ‘screening’ and monitoring further implies that orderly migration involves careful assessments and categorization of migrants, ensuring that only those who meet specific criteria are permitted entry.

### ***3.3.1.2 Discursive strategies***

The discourse analysis reveals several strategies used to frame migration in Operation Welcome’s policy documents. These include the portrayal of migrants as vulnerable groups and the subtle securitisation of migration.

#### *3.3.1.2.1 Balance between humanitarian obligations and national security concerns*

The law does not explicitly frame them as inherently contradictory, but rather interconnected aspects that can coexist. It operates on the assumption that addressing humanitarian needs occurs within a context where national security considerations are necessary. To reconcile these two aspects, emphasis is put on the importance of intergovernmental coordination and transparency, accountability, and compliance with existing laws as essential for dealing with issues that involve both humanitarian aid and national interests. It adopts a balanced, coordinated, and transparent approach, suggesting that humanitarian obligations can be fulfilled within a framework that acknowledges and manages potential security implications. The decree suggests the same, although it leans more towards the humanitarian side in its provisions. The heavy focus on providing assistance, the creation of the federal Emergency Assistance Committee and need for coordinated response exemplify this. The structure and coordination mechanisms to address migration (i.e., the Federal Subcommittee for Internalisation) suggest an attempt to address security concerns indirectly through effective management and integration efforts.

#### *3.3.1.2.2 Securitisation of migration*

The decree’s inclusion of security-focused ministries (e.g., Justice, Defence) in the Federal Emergency Assistance Committee signals a dual humanitarian-security lens, where migration is managed alongside national security priorities. Border security mechanisms (i.e., reception, identification, and screening) are emphasized, implying that migrants are subjects of risk assessment even within a humanitarian framework. Furthermore, the Operational Coordinator’s role and operational plans reflect a structured, control-oriented approach, implying a security perspective is present.

The law adopts a soft securitisation approach, emphasizing protection and rights while still legitimizing state control through public security measures. It does not overtly frame migration as a security threat, but incorporates securitisation through public security measures, border security, resource allocation, and bureaucratic oversight. The primary focus remains humanitarian, yet the tools for managing migration align with broader securitisation trends. For example, in Article 5 VIII, “public security and strengthening border control” is mentioned as one of the measures to address migration. This reflects a securitisation approach by framing migration as a potential threat to public order, necessitating surveillance and control. Another example, in Article 8 (par. 3), the law mandates that funds for emergency assistance be prioritized for “health and public safety actions and services”, linking migration management to security expenses. This reinforces the idea that migration may require security responses. Notably absent is any criminalizing or securitising language about migrants, they are neither portrayed as threats nor subjected to restrictive measures beyond routine border controls.

### **3.3.2 The 2017 Migration Law**

Law No. 13.445 represented a significant evolution in Brazil’s immigration policy, transitioning towards a framework explicitly grounded in human rights principles. The law recognizes migration as a human right, guaranteeing immigrants access to public services like healthcare, education, and social security. It simplifies visa processes, provides protections against deportation for vulnerable groups, and eliminated discrimination and xenophobia.<sup>205</sup> While praised for its progressive stance, challenges remain in implementation, particularly regarding border control and the integration of large migrant groups, such as Venezuelans. Overall, the law reflects Brazil’s commitment to a more inclusive and human rights-based migration system.

#### ***3.3.2.1 Key themes and concepts***

The discourse analysis of the 2017 Migration Law reveals four key themes: human rights, non-discrimination, inclusion and integration, and national sovereignty.

##### ***3.3.2.1.1 Human rights***

While the law establishes human rights as a universal framework, it also negotiates the application of these rights. The law establishes a baseline of rights the state is expected to uphold, employing the language of ‘guarantees’ and ‘protections’.<sup>206</sup> However, the

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<sup>205</sup> Gediel & Jara, “Advances and Setbacks,” 68.

<sup>206</sup> Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública, *Lei No. 13.445*, May 24, 2017.

inclusion of articles outlining conditions for deportation, expulsion, and visa denials introduces difficulties, revealing the limits of these guarantees. The law outlines a broad range of human rights, encompassing civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. This approach aims to ensure that migrants are not only protected from physical harm but also have access to essential services and opportunities for integration.

For example, the right to family reunification (Article 3 VIII, Article 37) recognizes the importance of family for the well-being of migrants. It underscores a commitment by the government to consider the human impact of migration policies. Also, the right to justice (Article 4 IX) ensures access to legal assistance for those with insufficient resources, thereby upholding human rights and allowing migrants to defend their rights. The right to education (Article 4 X) provides access to public education without discrimination, recognizing the role of education in integration efforts. The law pays special attention to the rights and protection of vulnerable groups (i.e., children, refugees), acknowledging their heightened vulnerability.

Article 45 has the potential to limit human rights in practice, as it lists reasons for preventing entry into Brazil due to acts “contrary to the principles and objectives set forth in the Federal Constitution”. This is very broad and could be interpreted as security reasons, thus overriding a migrant’s right. Articles 81-91 emphasize the legal framework for extradition, which can potentially jeopardize the human rights of people.

#### *3.3.2.1.2 Non-discrimination*

The framing of non-discrimination goes beyond simply stating that all migrants should be treated the same. It recognizes the need for measures to counter biases and ensure equality. This can be seen in specific aspects targeting xenophobia and racism. The law lists specific grounds for discrimination (i.e., nationality, migration status), thereby aiming to subtly preventing forms of bias. Furthermore, extends discrimination protection not only to migrants but to their families as well. A key question is how these non-discrimination principles are translated into practice. It is dependent on government processes and oversight. Article 3 IX, on equal treatment, lacks information on what specifically constitutes as equal treatment, potentially resulting in complexities in implementation.

#### *3.3.2.1.3 Inclusion and integration*

The discourse acknowledges that inclusion and integration are not solely the responsibility of migrants but require engagement from Brazilian society and state institutions, thereby proposing a two-way process. Integration is directed by economic

inclusion, social inclusion, and civic participation. Economic inclusion is emphasized in Article 3 X and Article 21 XXI, including access to labour markets, investment, and the recognition of professional qualifications. This presents migrants as contributors to the Brazilian economy, not just beneficiaries of welfare. In Article 3 XII, social inclusion is promoted through access to healthcare, education, social services, and cultural activities. Although less prominent, civic participation is included through Article 3 XIII, providing social dialogue and migrants' participation in the formulation and evaluation of policies. This suggests an interest by the government to empower migrants and giving them a voice.

Sometimes integration is framed as a condition for enjoying certain rights or benefits. This reflects a perspective that migrants themselves have a responsibility to adapt to and contribute to the Brazilian society, exemplifying the two-way process. A challenge remains the success of inclusion and integration, as it is dependent on resource availability, public institutions capacity and attitudes in society towards migrants. Additionally, there is a potential that the law pressures migrants to assimilate to receive benefits or rights, abandoning their cultural identities or conform to dominant norms in Brazilian society.

#### *3.3.2.1.4 National sovereignty*

The power to control who enters and exits the country is a fundamental aspect of sovereignty. The law reflects this through visa requirements, border controls, and the power to deport or expel people. Article 1's statement "this law... regulates their entry and stay in the country..." establishes the state's role in this. Article 38 assigns the Federal Police to ensure securing the country's borders and points of entry, stating that "the functions of maritime, airport, and border police shall be conducted by the Federal Police".

The law includes several conditionalities that allow the state to act in its national interest, even if it might infringe on individual rights. This includes visa acceptance and denial in Articles 6 through 18, with Article 7 giving the government the power to allow or reject a visa request, and Article 10 stating that visa requests can be denied "to those who do not meet the requirements for the type of visa requested". Article 45 grants officials the power to deny someone entry "after individual review and by reasoned act". Another conditionality lies in the articles concerning deportation and expulsion (Articles 47-54). They represent the state's power to remove individuals from the country, even though they are subject to legal safeguards, as in Article 48 which states that "the head of the Federal Police unit may represent before the federal court, respecting, in judicial proceedings, the rights to adversary proceedings and a fair hearing". While governed by

treaties and legal procedures, extradition can potentially override individual rights in the interest of international relations and combatting crime. Article 81 exemplifies this in defining it as:

“the measure of international cooperation between Brazil and another State by which one surrenders or requests a person on whom a definitive criminal conviction rests or for the purpose of investigating ongoing criminal proceedings”.

While not explicitly stated, the concept of ‘national interest’ can be found from several articles that allow for exceptions. This creates ambiguity, as the definition can be broad and subject to interpretation. Particularly the security and visa-related articles are based on the government point of view, therefore likely aligned with the national interest.

### ***3.3.2.2 Discursive strategies***

#### *3.3.2.2.1 Balance between humanitarian obligations and national security concerns*

The text of the law states that it “provides for the rights and duties of migrants and visitors” and “establishes principles and directive guidelines for public policies for migrants”. It lists several principles and guidelines that focus on human rights (e.g., rejection and prevention of discrimination, right to family reunification, and equal access to essential services). However, it also includes sections that address security concerns, such as defining conditions for denying visas and preventing entry (Article 10 and 45). The law seems to aim to balance human rights with security considerations by prioritizing the rights and well-being of migrants while also outlining specific conditions under which entry or stay may be restricted on security or legal grounds. Therefore, it seems to be presented as more of a pragmatic compromise than a purely humanitarian endeavour.

#### *3.3.2.2.2 Securitisation of migration*

While the law’s primary focus is on regulating migration and protecting the rights of migrants, it also includes provisions that securitise migration. It does this by defining categories of people who may be excluded or removed from Brazil based on security-related criteria. Article 45 frames certain migrants as potential threats to national security as it lists categories of people prevented from entering (e.g., those previously expelled, convicted or facing trial for serious crimes). The existence of repatriation, deportation, and expulsion measures (Articles 46-60) inherently securitises migration by associating it with potential risks and the need for enforcement. Article 38 indicates a focus on securing borders and controlling the entry and exit of people, as it assigns the functions of maritime, airport, and border police to the Federal Police. Finally, the law

established penalties for those entering or staying in the country illegally. This reinforces the idea that irregular migration is a problem that needs to be addressed through law enforcement.

### **3.3.3 Ordinance 666**

Published in July 2019, during Bolsonaro’s presidency, this policy aims to regulate aspects of the 2017 Migration Law. It establishes procedures for the prevention and removal of individuals involved in certain serious criminal activities, including terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking, and sexual exploitation, all considered as threats to national security.<sup>207</sup> The ordinance introduces provisions for the summary deportation of those deemed highly dangerous, enabling expedited removal without standard notification.<sup>208</sup> It specifies that deportation is limited to cases involving specific conduct and does not apply to foreigners with legal ties to Brazil. It reflects an effort to balance migration control with crime prevention measures within Brazil’s legal system.

#### ***3.3.3.1 Key themes and concepts***

The discourse analysis of Ordinance 666 reveals three central themes: the construction of ‘dangerous’ migrants, the framing of national security threats, and the emphasis on deportation.

##### ***3.3.3.1.1 ‘Dangerous’ migrants***

The ordinance constructs a category of migrants considered ‘dangerous’ not simply based on criminal convictions, but also on suspected involvement in certain activities.<sup>209</sup> This is a key aspect of its framing, as it is about potential risk and perceived threats rather than established facts. This approach allows for the targeting of individuals based on less evidence. It defines a dangerous person as someone “that have acted contrary to the principles and objectives disposed in the constitution”, which can be very broadly interpreted, and thus a wide range of actions can be considered as against the constitution. In Article 2, it states that those involved in terrorism, organized crime, drug or weapons trafficking, child pornography, sexual exploitation, and individuals with a documented history of violent behaviour can be regarded as ‘dangerous’.

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<sup>207</sup> “Portaria regulamenta Lei de Migração,” Assuntos Notícias, Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública, last modified November 11, 2022, <https://www.gov.br/mj/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/collective-nitf-content-1564166850.53>.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública, *Portaria do Ministro No. 666/2019*, May 13, 2020.

This framing can lead to the dehumanization of migrants, portraying them as inherently threatening and underserving of protection. It also justifies pre-emptive measures (e.g., denial of entry or deportation) based on suspicion rather than proven evidence, thereby undermining due process. Another implication is that it contributes to the stigmatization of migrants, and it could create an atmosphere of fear and distrust, influencing public perspectives towards them. Another possibility is that this framing could lead to the targeting of specific groups or individuals based on discriminatory motivations under the guise of security concerns.

#### *3.3.3.1.2 National security threats*

The ordinance directly links immigration to national security. It implies that certain migrants can be a threat to the safety and stability of Brazil. This is evident in Article 1, which states that the purpose of the ordinance is to protect the security of Brazil. This connection is not merely about individuals, but about the potential for these individuals to undermine the nation's principles and well-being. This framing strengthens the argument for stricter border security and more aggressive handling of immigration.

The framing of national security threats can heighten public fear and anxiety about immigration, as well as providing rationale for restricting immigration, increasing surveillance, and expanding the powers of the Federal Police. Furthermore, it can justify limiting the rights and protections of migrants in the name of national security, shifting away from the economic and cultural benefits of migration towards negative perceived risks, thus posing a significant obstruction for integration efforts.

#### *3.3.3.1.3 Deportation*

The deportation measures are framed as a necessary tool for protecting national security and upholding the constitution. In Article 1, the possibility of 'summary deportation' is introduced, which means deportation with little to no due process. While some due process safeguards are formulated, such as notification and the right to a defense, the emphasis on speed and efficiency suggests a prioritization of removal over individual rights. This is evident in Article 3, which outlines the notification process of deportation, giving individuals 48 hours to present a defense or leave voluntarily. This can also be found in Article 4, as appeals of deportation decisions have a limited timeframe of 24 hours.

A significant implication is that summary deportations without adequate due process can violate international human rights standards. Also, deportation can separate families and disrupt migrant communities, causing additional challenges to integration and inclusion

efforts. The focus on speed and efficiency leaves room for error, increasing the risk of mistaken deportations and sending individuals back to dangerous situations. This focus can also lead to a lack of transparency and accountability in deportation proceedings. As it is framed as the solution to national security issues, it can exacerbate xenophobia, racism, and other forms of discrimination within Brazilian society.

### ***3.3.3.2 Discursive strategies***

#### *3.3.3.2.1 Balance between humanitarian obligations and national security concerns*

The primacy of national security concerns is evident in Ordinance 666, as it allows for the restriction, repatriation and deportation of those deemed dangerous. While Article 2 states that no one will be restricted from entering, repatriated, or summarily deported based on race, religion, nationality, etc., this protection is limited. The strong focus on security threats suggests that humanitarian considerations are secondary when security is at stake.

The attempt to balance security measures with due process fall short as the relatively short timeframes (e.g., 48 hours for defense) have the potential to limit the effectiveness of these protections in place. Finally, Article 8 suggests that the head of the Federal Police has the authority to initiate and decide on the procedures, indicating a degree of power based on discretion in balancing security concerns and individual rights. Overall, while humanitarian considerations and due process are important, Ordinance 666 allows national security concerns to override these in certain circumstances.

#### *3.3.3.2.1 Securitisation of migration*

The ordinance assumes strongly that migration can pose a security threat. For example, there is an implicit link between migration and criminal activities like terrorism and organized crime in Article 2. By identifying these activities as grounds for restrictive measures, the document securitises migration by associating it with crime. Also, it allows for a broad interpretation of who is considered ‘dangerous’, potentially encompassing a wide range of migrants based on suspicion or perceived risk rather than evidence of one’s involvement in criminal activities. Additionally, there is a strong law enforcement-centred approach to migration management, highlighted by the empowering of the Federal Police in Article 5.

The reliance on intelligence gathering from domestic and foreign sources, as described in Article 2, indicates that migration is being monitored and managed through security intelligence networks. Notably, the ordinance allows for restrictions on the rights and

protections of migrants based on security concerns. This suggests a willingness from the government to compromise individual rights in the name of national security.

### **3.3.4 Triangulation**

To enhance the reliability of the findings, this research employed triangulation, involving multiple sources of data and methods to cross-validate evidence. This approach aimed to mitigate potential biases and ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between the Venezuelan migration crisis, Brazil's policy responses, and national security concerns.

Triangulation was achieved through contrast verification, which involved using multiple data sources, including primary policy documents, secondary data from Brazilian government agencies, and scholarly literature. By comparing and contrasting information from these, the research sought to identify patterns and interpretations of policy discourses. Furthermore, while this research was conducted by a single investigator, efforts were made to mitigate individual biases through continuous engagement with existing literature and consultation with the academic supervisor. This process included critical reflection on choices and ensuring that interpretations were grounded in theoretical frameworks. The analysis was informed by multiple theoretical perspectives, including securitisation theory, human rights frameworks, and migration studies. Additionally, Latin American academic works and sources were included in formulating the analysis. By considering these diverse perspectives, the research aimed to provide a nuanced analysis of Brazil's policy responses, avoiding reliance on a single theoretical or geographical framework.

### **3.3.5 Results**

The discourse analysis of Operation Welcome document, the 2017 Migration Law, and Ordinance 666 reveals a complex and evolving approach to migration in Brazil, particularly in response to the Venezuelan migration crisis. The analysis highlights a tension between humanitarian obligations, national security concerns, and securitisation, which has shifted over time.

Initially, the discourse surrounding Operation Welcome emphasized humanitarian assistance and the integration of Venezuelan migrants. The program framed state intervention, led by the military, as a necessary response to a humanitarian crisis, focusing on providing shelter, healthcare, and social services. However, subtle securitising tendencies also emerged, evident in the involvement of security-focused ministries, the emphasis on border control, and the implementation of screening

measures. While Operation Welcome was primarily presented as a humanitarian initiative, the participation of security forces and the screening processes demonstrated a concern for managing and controlling migration.

The 2017 Migration Law marked a significant move toward a human rights-based approach. Its discourse emphasized migrants' rights, non-discrimination, and inclusion. The law aimed to promote economic, social, and cultural integration, while also recognizing the state's responsibility to protect vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, the analysis identified limitations within this framework. Provisions for deportation, expulsion, and visa denial could be used to restrict entry or remove individuals perceived as security threats or risks to public order. Although rooted in human rights perspective, the law included elements of securitisation, such as provisions that allow for the exclusion of individuals deemed threats, indicating a willingness to prioritize security concerns, when necessary.

In contrast, Ordinance 666 signified a notable shift towards securitisation within Brazil's migration policy. Its discourse constructed a category of 'dangerous' migrants based on potential risk and perceived threats rather than established facts. The analysis revealed a strong emphasis on national security, with the ordinance framing migration as a potential threat to Brazil's safety and stability. Restrictive measures, such as summary deportation, were justified in the name of protecting national security and upholding the constitution. The ordinance prioritized border control and law enforcement, often downplaying humanitarian considerations and due process. It explicitly linked migration to national security, framing certain migrants as threats and justifying measures that could otherwise be viewed as violations of human rights.

Overall, the discourse analysis illustrates an evolving trajectory in Brazil's migration policies. The shift toward securitisation, exemplified by Ordinance 666, contrasts with the initial focus on humanitarian obligations in Operation Welcome and the human rights framework of the 2017 Migration Law. This evolution reflects a changing balance between migration management objectives as Brazil grapples with the challenges and opportunities presented by the Venezuelan migration crisis.

## Conclusion

The Venezuelan migration crisis has posed significant challenges to Brazil, testing the country's capacity to balance humanitarian obligations with national security concerns. This thesis has examined how Brazil's response to the crisis, from 2015 onwards, has influenced its migration and national security policies, revealing a complex interplay between humanitarianism and securitisation.

Initially, Brazil's approach under Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016) was rooted in humanitarian principles, exemplified by the extension of humanitarian visas to Venezuelans and the progressive 2017 Migration Law. This law marked a shift toward a human rights-based framework, emphasizing non-discrimination, inclusion, and the protection of migrants' rights. However, even during this period, subtle securitisation tendencies emerged, particularly in the state's centralized management of migration, thereby relating to the works of Wohlfeld (2014) and Messina (2017).

The Michel Temer administration (2016-2019) introduced Operation Welcome, which formalized the military's role in managing crisis. While the operation maintained a humanitarian focus, its structure signalled a growing emphasis on control and order. This period laid the groundwork for a more explicit securitisation of migration, as the crisis intensified and public sentiment in border regions like Roraima grew increasingly hostile toward Venezuelan migrants. This relates to the works of Kouni (2018) and Barman (2020) and the impacts of migration on host countries, explaining the economic and social pressures that contributed to this shift.

Under Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2023), Brazil's migration policies underwent a transformation, prioritizing national security and sovereignty. Ordinance 666 emphasized this shift, framing migration as a security threat and enabling summary deportations of individuals deemed 'dangerous'. Bolsonaro's rhetoric and policies, including Brazil's withdrawal from the UN Global Compact for Migration, reinforced the securitisation narrative, linking migration to crime and instability. Here it is evident the connection to the analysis of authors like Adamson (2006) and Klotz (2018) and their approaches on how migration can be perceived as a threat to national security. This period highlighted the tension between humanitarian obligations and security-driven policies, with the latter often overriding the former.

This transition between administrations may be influenced by objective factors, such as the varying intensities of migration flows. For example, the number of incoming migrants was lower during Rousseff's presidency, saw a significant rise during Temer's term, and reached its peak under Bolsonaro. Additionally, these shifts could be tied to their differing ideological perspectives on migration. Rousseff and the PT had a political and ideological connection with Venezuelan presidents Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro. In contrast, Temer adopted a more conservative stance on migration, while Bolsonaro employed a strong militaristic rhetoric to address and depict the migration situation.

Key findings reveal several critical dynamics in Brazil's response. First, Brazil's approach evolved from a humanitarian framework to one increasingly dominated by security concerns, particularly under Bolsonaro. This shift was influenced by political rhetoric, public sentiment, and the practical challenges of managing large-scale migration. Second, Operation Welcome demonstrated the militarization of migration management, blending humanitarian aid with border control and surveillance. Third, while Brazil's policies were shaped by regional frameworks like the Quito Process and the Cartagena Declaration, as well as by international actors such as the UNHCR and IOM. However, national interests often took precedence over regional solidarity. Finally, the tension between humanitarian commitments and security objectives remains unresolved, as seen in the coexistence of inclusive laws like the 2017 Migration Law and restrictive measures like Ordinance 666, although the latter has since been revoked under the Inácio Lula da Silva administration.

The Venezuelan migration crisis has underscored the need for Brazil to develop cohesive policies that address both the humanitarian needs of migrants and the legitimate security concerns of host communities. Although securitisation may offer short-term solutions, it risks exacerbating xenophobia and undermining long-term integration efforts. In conclusion, Brazil's response to the Venezuelan migration crisis reflects broader global tensions between openness and restriction, human rights and security. The country's experience offers valuable lessons for managing large-scale migration in a way that upholds human dignity while safeguarding national security.

While this thesis provides a valuable analysis, some limitations should be considered. Firstly, the temporal scope of the research does not allow for an examination of more recent policy shifts. Secondly, the primary reliance on the discourse analysis of policy documents may not fully capture the experiences and perspectives of migrants, civil society organisations, or local communities. Thirdly, the research was conducted by a single researcher, which could introduce potential biases in interpreting the data. This thesis could be expanded to include a more in-depth analysis of social and political

consequences of framing migration as a security threat, such as impacts on public attitudes, discrimination, and integration.

Future research could also explore the socio-economic impacts on migrants and Brazilian society, evaluating labour market outcomes and social inclusion. Assessing the effectiveness of regional cooperation, like the Quito Process, is crucial. Furthermore, assessing to what extent migration policy in Brazil depended on ideological factors or conjunctural factors deserves closer examination. Lastly, comparing Brazil's policies with other countries may offer valuable lessons as well.

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