THE POLITICISATION OR SECURITISATION OF MIGRATION? THE CASES OF BRAZIL, COLOMBIA, ECUADOR AND PERU DURING THE VENEZUELAN CRISIS[1]

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Abstract: The political, economic and social crisis in Venezuela has resulted in a wave of mass migration that has affected neighbouring South American countries. Since 2015, governments in the region have responded to the mass arrival of migrants in a variety of ways. The situation has led to the design and implementation of new migration practices, including the use of the military to deal with migration flows. This paper examines migration responses to the Venezuelan crisis and their relationship with the concept of security in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Drawing on interviews conducted on the basis of non-attribution, primary and secondary sources, and discourses and migratory practices, the paper questions whether Venezuelan migration has been securitised by governments in response to alleged threats, or whether it has remained a political matter in these four countries.

Keywords: Venezuelan migration; securitisation; politicisation; South America.

POLITIZAÇÃO OU SECURITIZAÇÃO DA MIGRAÇÃO? OS CASOS DO BRASIL, COLÔMBIA, EQUADOR E PERU DURANTE A CRISE VENEZUELANA

Resumo: A crise política, económica e social na Venezuela resultou numa onda de migração em massa que afetou os países vizinhos da América do Sul. Desde 2015, os governos da região têm respondido à chegada em massa de migrantes de várias formas. A situação levou à conceção e implementação de novas práticas de migração, incluindo o uso de militares para lidar com os fluxos migratórios. Este artigo examina as respostas migratórias à crise venezuelana e a sua relação com o conceito de segurança no Brasil, Colômbia, Equador e Peru. Com base em entrevistas conduzidas sob anonimato, fontes primárias e secundárias, e discursos e práticas migratórias, o artigo questiona se a migração venezuelana foi securitizada pelos governos em resposta às alegadas ameaças, ou se permaneceu uma questão política nestes quatro países.

Palavras-chave: Migração venezuelana; securitização; politização; América do Sul.

¿POLITIZACIÓN O SECURITIZACIÓN DE LA MIGRACIÓN? LOS CASOS DE BRASIL, COLOMBIA, ECUADOR Y PERÚ DURANTE LA CRISIS VENEZOLANA

Resumen: La crisis política, económica y social de Venezuela ha provocado una ola de migración masiva que ha afectado a los países sudamericanos vecinos. Desde 2015, los gobiernos de la región han respondido a la llegada masiva de migrantes de diversas maneras. La situación ha llevado al diseño e implementación de nuevas prácticas migratorias, incluido el uso de militares para hacer frente a los flujos migratorios. Este artículo examina las respuestas migratorias a la crisis venezolana y su relación con el concepto de seguridad en Brasil, Colombia, Ecuador y Perú. A partir de entrevistas realizadas bajo anonimato, fuentes primarias y secundarias, y discursos y prácticas sobre el terreno, el documento cuestiona si la migración venezolana ha sido securitizada por los gobiernos en respuesta a supuestas amenazas, o si ha seguido siendo una cuestión política en estos cuatro países.

Palabras-clave: Migración venezolana; securitización; politización; América del Sur.

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Introduction

Migration is a trans-boundary phenomenon since it implies the movement of people across national borders. Although the effects of migration can be positive, it can also result in the creation of stereotypes within political discourse and the media, for example, by linking migrants to crimes that threaten public safety (LUŠA et al, 2018). In this sense, migration is increasingly politicised and in some places securitised, especially when migration becomes associated with the security of states and/or their nationals. Politicisation means migration understood as a public problem but confined to the political sphere where it can be addressed through a range of mechanisms without resorting to exceptional measures in the name of national security (see van der BRUG et al, 2015). Migration has been increasingly associated with security or insecurity, referred to by some scholars as the 'securitisation of migration' (IBRAHIM, 2005; BOURBEAU, 2011).The securitisation of immigration usually emerges from speech acts that legitimise the implementation of exceptional policies (BUZAN et al, 1998), as well as from the practices of security personnel (BIGO, 2002), or more broadly from the combination of discourse, audience and governance on migration (BALZACQ, 2011; BOURBEAU, 2011). The nexus between immigration and security also varies by country according to the level of importance attributed to the issue, i.e. according to the different interpretations and agendas of the political actors involved (see e.g. HELBLING, 2013).

The Venezuelan crisis resulted in the mass migration of Venezuelan citizens. By the end of 2022, 7.18 million people had left the country, with the majority entering Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Chile and Brazil (R4V, 2023). The migration flow was classified as a regional crisis by collective forums such as the Lima Group, the Declaration of Quito (2018a) and the Quito Process Action Plan (PROCESO DE QUITO, 2018b), which put pressure on governments to develop a clear position on immigration as a policy issue.

The objective of this paper is to discuss whether and to what extent Venezuelan migration was politicised and/or securitised in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. It focuses on the discursive dimensions of politicisation and securitisation as well as practices in relation to Venezuelan migration. The research employed a qualitative approach. Deductively, I identify the key factors for analysis by drawing from wider literature on securitisation and migration governance, which are examined to better understand the variation between case

studies and their particular stance on immigration. Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, for example, were accustomed to the emigration of their own nationals abroad. Colombia in particular has a decades-long history of emigration to Venezuela in the context of internal violence. Brazil, however, has never experienced the levels and concentration of migration seen in the context of Venezuela, neither for its own citizens leaving the country nor for the arrival of migrants. In all four countries, the framing of immigration as a matter of public concern is the result of multiple factors: mass migrant inflows, public opinion, and government behaviour. However, none of these factors alone can fully explain the politicisation or securitisation of immigration. By cross-referencing the number of migrants entering these countries at specific times, public opinion on immigration, the politicisation of the issue, the association of Venezuelan migrants with public (in)security and legislative and military/police practices, this research seeks to establish whether Venezuelan migration was securitised in these countries or whether it remained a political issue.

The article is divided into five parts: the first section presents the conceptual and theoretical framework as well as criteria for analysis; the next sections present the cases; and the last section concludes.

1. Politicisation and Securitisation of Migration: theoretical framework and factors of analysis

According to the Copenhagen School, any public issue can be located on a spectrum ranging from not politicised (the state does not deal with it), to politicised (the issue is part of public policy and requires decisions and resource allocation), to securitised (the issue is presented as an existential threat that requires emergency actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure). The politicisation of an issue opens it up to debate and signals government responsibility (BUZAN et al, 1998). During times of mass migration, governments are pressured to develop a stance on immigration. This often leads to the adoption of policies relating to immigration control and management, which can range from keeping migrants out to integrating them. At the same time, the issue acquires a certain visibility which can influence citizens' position on the matter. When migration makes nationals feel uncomfortable, it tends to become part of the domestic political agenda. Politicians can also use the electorate's fears and uncertainties surrounding migration to further their own political gains (FARNY, 2016).

Securitisation is more extreme than politicisation as it enables the use of extraordinary means in the name of security. Securitisation is a process that involves constructing and interpreting situations to push them from regular politics into the realm of security - often regardless of their objective nature or the specific relevance of the alleged threat - by resorting to a rhetoric of emergency aimed at justifying the adoption of extraordinary measures. As a discursive process, securitisation takes place when an actor (often an institutional or political authority) claims that an issue is a threat (the reference object) and that it requires extraordinary countermeasures (normally above the law and the ordinary political process), convincing the audience that those measures are appropriate (OXFORD, 2022). In sum, the process involves the targets of existential threats, the securitisers (those that declare the threat), the audience (which if convinced by the securitiser, legitimises the measures adopted) and functional actors (who are not the securitisers but can influence decisions) (MCDONALD, 2008).

Politicisation and securitisation are not carried out exclusively through discourse but also in the field of practice, comprising the various actors with interests in and knowledge about threats (BALZACQ, 2019) who shape particular strategies and/or the governments' apparatus. Practices are influenced by a range of spheres, often combining the material (actors' aspirations), institutional (form of the organisation and its implications) and discursive (speech act) (BIGO, 2002). Hence, it is important to consider not only the context of migration, but also how institutional and legal practices are created and diffused, their effects on peoples' movement, as well as the public reactions that can legitimise or delegitimise those practices.

The main question is whether, and if so how, immigration has been politicised, securitised, or both. While the former recognises immigration as a problem that requires political action, the latter considers it a threat to national security.

In the context of South America, Venezuelan migration has not been presented as a threat to *national* but rather *public* security. In some countries, migrants are seen as having negatively impacted internal order, i.e. as a source of insecurity that undermines public safety and potentially perturbs internal normality. As such, the analysis here takes place at the level of internal security as opposed to nation-state security. Hence, the objective is to identify the key factors and processes that constitute the condition of public security.

Public security or public safety refers to protecting the population, institutions and properties and guaranteeing order. In this sense, public security/safety includes the prevention

of and protection from events that could endanger the safety and security of society at large, as well as public and private patrimony. The concept and its definition thus refer to: the situation of a subject, thing, entity or object whose security is at stake; variability in time (dependence on circumstances) and gradient (different levels of security); a specific context in which the conditions are understood as (un)safe; and various spheres of life, from the individual to the collective (see GIERSZEWSKI; PIECZYOK, 2021). Since public security is a government function, the government must ensure protection through public institutions and organisations. Consequently, public security/safety can also be framed as the ability of the government and its institutions to protect itself and the population from circumstances of domestic disorder, i.e. to assure internal order.

Public security and its relationship to migration can be analysed through the state's capacity to guarantee public order and govern migration. Capacity here is the government's ability to assure internal order given the availability of resources in a given context. The more resilient the institutions of the state, the less likely migration will be, or will become, a security issue. The less resilient the institutions, the more likely migration will be associated with internal (in)security. As such, state structures permit us to empirically analyse the relationship between mobility and security, in the context of this research, state structures include size, demography, economic configuration, and migration governance. Migration governance refers to how the state deals with the phenomenon. Thus, legislation is a good indicator of the degree to which migration has been politicised or securitised. Changes to regulation, for example, through restrictive measures, demonstrate that the government is responding to threats perceived by dominant political actors by discouraging migrants' flow or facilitate their interception.

Politicisation and securitisation occur in a context in which migration is associated with insecurity. Different types of migration and migration streams may have different impacts on host communities and can likewise encounter a wide range of reactions (CHOUCRI, 2002). The situation of migrants, at least initially and independent of whether the migration was voluntary or forced, is also an important factor. Generally speaking, only legal migration is seen as beneficial to the host country, whereas irregular migration is considered a threat and a security problem (CARRASCOSA, 2018). In the domain of security and mobility, states, authorities, institutions, etc. define the terms and who will benefit from those terms in a given way; they define both the security threats themselves and the policies and strategies to keep the state and its society safe. A migrant's status (situation) is determined by

the state through regular and, in certain cases, exceptional means according to which an illegal migrant can become legal and vice-versa (what Choucri calls the 'transformation of migration') (CHOUCRI, 2002). Consequently, I argue that the extent of perceived insecurity depends on the number, type, composition, duration, and status of migrants.

Migration dynamics are more visible at the borders. When securitisation occurs, strategies to respond to migration as a threat usually include the reinforcement of border control (including border closure) often with significant military and/or police presence (MCDONALD, 2008). Consequently, the situation of borders and how states manage them during mass migration can also indicate the degree of politicisation or securitisation.

Drawing from the above, I offer an empirical analysis of the dynamics of politicisation and/or securitisation of Venezuelan migration across four South American countries (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) between 2015 and 2021. In each case, I aim to differentiate the politicisation of the immigration issue in general from the politicisation of its security aspects in particular. I draw from political discourses and practices that indicate the degree of politicisation and/or securitisation of Venezuelan migration. Thus, data were analysed in order to examine whether, where and how Venezuelan immigration developed both as a political issue and as a threat to public order.

The first stage of the research consisted of investigating political leaders and public concerns about Venezuelan migration and its possible association with insecurity. Data on political discourse were captured through the speech of political leaders reported by the media. Public opinion was captured through opinion polls carried out by universities, institutes, agencies and governmental institutions. The second stage involved focusing on the politicisation and/or securitisation of the issue through practices relating to Venezuelan migration. Political practices were collected through migration governance, which were evaluated using an array of indicators (see e.g. PASETTI; MONTSERRAT, 2021). I selected those I considered most important to achieving the objectives of this research. These were: the situation of migration and migrants; the rules created for and imposed upon migrants and variations thereof; the institutions created to deal with migration; practices such as reception, humanitarian assistance, and integration of migrants; and the situation and timing of border movements and activity, including the opening and closure of borders, as well as other additional measures.

2. Brazil: politicising despite the use of military means

Prior to 2016, the number of Venezuelans entering Brazil was practically negligible. In 2017, it reached 101,320 people; that number became 227,433 in 2018, 236,405 in 2019, 47,661 in 2020 and 62,419 in 2021 (BRAZIL, 2022b). As the fifth largest country in the world with a population of 208,846,892 and an economy that ranked 9th (LONDON, 2018) at the time of the peak of Venezuelan migration, Brazil's territorial and population size and the weight of its economy meant that the impact of migration was mostly felt in the state of Roraima, where the majority of Venezuelans were concentrated. With little impact, there were no concerns about migrants at the national level as they were mostly confined to the north of the country.

Throughout the arrival of Venezuelans, Brazilian authorities maintained a positive discourse by insisting that "the human rights of migrants should not be neglected or relativized under any pretext", and by promoting integration through legal, labour, productive and cultural facilities for insertion (SCM, 2016, my translation). When the migratory flow increased in 2017, President Temer reinforced the fraternal bonds between the two people (BRAZIL, 2017c). Negative discourse emerged in 2018, when the number of Venezuelans entering the country peaked, specifically in the state of Roraima where authorities felt the biggest impact and requested federal support as well as the restriction of the migration flow (e.g. GODOY, 2016). However, the federal government continued to emphasise a "fraternal feeling towards the Venezuelan people" (BRAZIL, 2018i, my translation).

A 2018 study by the Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV) analysing news-related blog posts, news sites, and Twitter publications indicated that immigration was far more likely to be used to criticise left-wing ideology than it was to discuss the issue of migration itself. While part of those engaged in debates were against the unrestricted entry of Venezuelans, others were in favour of welcoming them. Some groups were critical of "opening doors" to Venezuelans which was "privileging immigrants to the detriment of Brazilian citizens who face various problems of access to public services and will suffer from the competition of Venezuelans for employment and social benefits" (CALIL et al, 2018, my translation).

In the Brazilian case, the state of Roraima did not have the infrastructure necessary for dealing with the volume of Venezuelan migration. The mass arrival of people at the border and in the state capital made a significant impact and led to negative reactions amongst the local population. As a result, the authorities and the federal government had to create specific governance structures to deal with the problem. The resolutions adopted in the wake of Venezuelan migration were positive. In 2017, the granting of two-year temporary residence to

nationals of border countries was allowed, and regulated the following year (BRAZIL, 2017a), and the new Immigration Law was enacted (BRAZIL, 2017b). In 2018, the situation of vulnerability arising from the migratory flows caused by the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela was recognized (BRAZIL, 2018b). As such, fees for obtaining documents for migratory regularisation were exempted (BRAZIL, 2018k), emergency assistance was established for the reception of people in a situation of vulnerability (BRAZIL, 2018g), and the requirement of certain documents for migratory regularisation was waivered (BRAZIL, 2018j). Once migration was recognised as a matter of public policy that required decisions and resource allocation, the federal government created Operation Welcome to organise the reception of migrants and their integration (BRAZIL, 2018f). It also created federal subcommittees for Reception, Identification and Screening, Interiorisation, Health and Reception to deal with the issue of Venezuelans at the government level (BRAZIL, 2018a). In 2019, through the formal recognition of the seriousness of human rights violations in Venezuela, the granting of refuge and asylum to Venezuelans was facilitated (ACNUR, 2019).

Operation Welcome involved more than a hundred civilian institutions, international agencies and companies. Shelters were set up in Pacaraima and Boa Vista in the state of Roraima, and Manaus, in the state of Amazonas. The reception of migrants was orderly and allowed for initial humanitarian assistance to be delivered to both those who would remain in shelters as well as those who would continue their journeys elsewhere. In October 2022, there was an average of 9,374 Venezuelans using the shelters and transit centres (BRAZIL, 2022a). The Operation Welcome improved management systems that allowed the speedy provision of documents to migrants and, therefore, the basic rights guaranteed to them by law. In the same way, the system for processing requests for refugee status (Sisconare, acronym in Portuguese) accelerated the evaluation and granting of refugee status to those who requested it. The focus on internalisation resulted in the movement of more than 100,000 Venezuelans to other parts of Brazil by March 2023 (BRAZIL, 2023).

Despite Operation Welcome being led by the military, government discourse presented it as a humanitarian operation, and it has subsequently been recognised as a model by international agencies (interviews to the author, Roraima, Brazil, Oct. 2022). Moreover, the military operation to control borders was an attempt to avoid criminal organisations connected to migration entering/acting in Brazil as well as to channel migrants through legal routes (interview to the author, Roraima, Brazil, Oct. 2022) to maximise their access to support. In 2019, Sisconare (BRAZIL, 2019a) was established, and the National Immigration Council

was created (BRAZIL, 2019b). Even when the federal government deployed police due to several hostile and xenophobic attacks on Venezuelans in Roraima, the security forces were more focused on protecting the migrants than on restricting their access (BRAZIL, 2018c,d,e).

Recognising the issue as being of public interest, the federal government adopted policies and practices that involved changing the migratory structure for both the reception and integration of immigrants. The use of the military and police personnel was not meant to restrict entry but rather to order it. The securitising discourse, linking migrants to an increase in crime, was restricted to the state of Roraima and did not resonate across the rest of the country. The tools used (decrees, resolutions, employment of military personnel) were confined to the political realm, and no exceptional measures were adopted, demonstrating that immigration was not securitised and remained in the politicisation field in the context of Brazil.

3. Colombia: politicising migration

Colombia has a land size of 1,138,910 square kilometres and its economy was ranked 39th in the world in 2018 (LONDON, 2018), at the height of Venezuelan migration into the country. The number of Venezuelans entering the country fluctuated from 291,539 in 2014 to 329,478 in 2015, 378,965 in 2016, 796,234 in 2017, 1,359,815 in 2018, 1,095,706 in 2019, 189,883 in 2020 and 260,628 in 2021 (PUBLIC TABLEAU, 2021). With a population of 49,661,056 in 2018, the total influx of more than 2 million Venezuelans had a strong impact on the country, particularly in the border provinces and the capital Bogotá, which received the largest number of migrants. Colombia had not experienced a mass arrival of migrants before; on the contrary, for decades it had seen its nationals migrate abroad and the country lacked the necessary infrastructure to deal with the phenomenon. This generated concern and reaction across much of the country with regard to migrants. Governments at all levels, from municipal to federal, had to adapt and structure a specific form of governance to address the problem. The initial reception of migrants was disorganised and initial humanitarian assistance came from local initiatives (municipalities and civil society institutions) (interviews to the author, Bogota and Barranquilla, Feb. 2023).

People involved with the management of Venezuelan migration identify two distinct large waves in the movement of Venezuelans. The first, which began under the Chavez government, was composed of people with resources who migrated to Colombia and invested in the country. The second, after the worsening of the crisis in Venezuela, involved people

with some schooling and resources, as well as those with low economic and educational levels. Between these waves, Colombia also experienced the return of Colombians who had migrated to Venezuela (or whose antecedents had migrated) in previous decades. This fact made Colombians receptive to Venezuelans, or, as popular sentiment would have it, "Venezuela has welcomed Colombians before, so now is the time for us to reciprocate" (interview to the author, Barranquilla, Feb. 2023). In particular, the border departments and the northern coastal areas such as Madalena and Atlantico, from where most of Colombians left for Venezuela, tended to be more receptive to migrants.

When the influx increased, President Santos reinforced the need for generosity and solidarity with Venezuelans and the rejection of xenophobia and discrimination (COLOMBIA, 2017a). However, he emphasised a policy of zero tolerance for crimes committed by Venezuelans (COLOMBIA, 2018b) and took action aimed at the maintenance of order - such as introducing policies on the use of public spaces, control of prostitution, illegal migration, and smuggling (COLOMBIA, 2018a). Although several episodes of xenophobia and discrimination against Venezuelans were reported throughout the country (e.g. EL TIEMPO, 2019a,b), the Colombian governments maintained the discourse against hostile attitudes toward Venezuelans (COLOMBIA, 2018a).

Surveys on the perception of migration carried out by the Venezuela Migration Project have shown that 62% of respondents believed that Venezuelan migration had led to increasing poverty levels, while only 34% believed that the migrants represented an opportunity for development. 72% also considered that migratory irregularity implies greater crime or citizen insecurity, and between 59% and 61% perceived Venezuelans as untrustworthy (PROYECTO, 2021).

When the Venezuelan influx increased, the government allocated financial resources for humanitarian aid in response to the crisis in Venezuela (COLOMBIA, 2017b) and created the Special Stay Permit (PEP) for Venezuelan migrants (COLOMBIA, 2017c). In 2018, the government established the Administrative Registry of Venezuelan Migrants (COLOMBIA, 2018c) and required criminal records checks in order to obtain the PEP (COLOMBIA, 2018d). In 2019, at the same time that a special and exceptional procedure for children of Venezuelans – either in a regular migratory situation or in the process of applying for refugee status – was established (COLOMBIA, 2019a), and control standards were strengthened (COLOMBIA, 2019b). In 2021, the Temporary Protection Permit (PPT) (COLOMBIA, 2021a) and the Comprehensive Migration Policy (IMP) were created (COLOMBIA, 2021b).

The government has tried to improve the existing systems for managing the migratory crisis, however, the waiting times for acquiring documentation for both the PPT and the refugee status are still lengthy (interview to the author, Bogota, Feb. 2023). The Interagency Group on Mixed Migration Flows (GIF) was created in 2016 as a coordination platform for migration management. The Colombian government created the Border Management agency in 2017 to deal with Venezuelan migration, linked directly to the Presidency of the Republic in order to facilitate the various connections and coordination with other ministries and secretariats. In 2021, the Border Management agency was replaced by an Office linked to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which disappeared with the election of President Petro (interview to the author, Bogota, Feb. 2023). Cities that received a large influx of Venezuelans and returning Colombians adopted their own initiatives such as the creation of integrated centres (for example, in Bogotá and Barranquilla). The positive outcomes of these centres led the government to encourage other cities to do the same. In addition, as of the end of 2018, coordination desks were set up in several cities (interview to the author, Bogota, Feb. 2023).

The Colombian government emphasised regularising the situation of migrants and combating illegal entry to the country, which is particularly difficult given the country's extensive land border with Venezuela and the difficulty Venezuelans face in obtaining the documents necessary for legal entry. Thus, a large proportion of migrants entered (or still enter) illegally and, as such, were not subject to the rights that Colombian law guarantees to legal migrants. At the peak of the migration wave, the military were sent to reinforce patrols on the border crossings (THE GUARDIAN, 2018).

According to the above description, we cannot conclude that immigration has been securitised in the case of Colombia. By recognising the issue as being of public interest, various levels of government have adopted policies and practices that involved changes in the migratory structure for the management of the flow. The reinforcement of the military at the border was meant to curb irregular entry and combat crimes associated with it, not to restrict access. The securitising discourse, linking migrants to an increase in crime, was restricted to particular authorities and individuals, in the same way that cases of discrimination and xenophobia were not widespread. Despite public opinion presenting prejudice in relation to immigrants, the evidence does not allow us to link this negative opinion with the securitisation of the issue. Moreover, and despite shortcomings, the tools used for crisis management remained in the political realm and no exceptional measures were adopted to address migrants as a security threat.

4. Ecuador

Ecuador lies on the route of those migrants intending to reach countries further to the south, as part of the so-called 'Andean Corridor' that begins at the Simon Bolivar international bridge (Colombia-Venezuela) and continues towards Argentina. The number of Venezuelans entering the country was 95,909 in 2015, 102,910 in 2016, 286,689 in 2017, 956,109 in 2018, decreasing to 509,510 in 2019, 12,173 in 2020 and 10,544 in 2021 (ECUADOR, 2021a). With a small territory of 256,370 square kilometres, an economy ranked 62nd in the world in 2018 (LONDON, 2018) - the high point of Venezuelan migration - and a population of just over 17 million inhabitants that year, the number of Venezuelan arrivals impacted the country, particularly in the border provinces and the capital Quito, which received the largest number of migrants. Ecuador was also fairly accustomed to the exit of its own nationals and the entry of Colombians because of the violence in their country, from the 1990s until approximately 2006 (ACNUR, 2014). In addition to being a route for Venezuelans who intended to go further south in the sub-continent, a proportion of them remained in the country. Unprepared to deal with the mass migration of Venezuelans, authorities at all levels had to adapt to address the issue of both the transit and the permanent residence of migrants in the country.

President Rafael Correa (2007-2017) kept good relations with Venezuelan governments, employing a rights-based discourse based on the non-criminalisation of human mobility (ECUADOR, 2015) and "solidarity" with "Venezuelan brothers" (ECUADOR, 2018d, my translation). Notwithstanding, relations with the Venezuelan government deteriorated and migration became subject to several changes.

The 2008 Constitution granted foreigners the same rights and duties as nationals and condemned discrimination on the basis of nationality (ECUADOR, 2008). In the wake of increased Venezuelan migration, in 2017 the Organic Law on Human Mobility was enacted, which regulated rights, obligations, institutional governance and legal mechanisms linked to migrants (ECUADOR, 2017). However, positive legislation in relation to migrants was compromised by actions that restricted their mobility. Ecuadorian authorities reinforced the focus on migratory control and security (RAMÍREZ, 2018).

In 2018, an emergency was declared along the border areas of Carchi, El Oro and Pichincha (ECUADOR, 2018e). The requirement of a passport for Venezuelans was brought in on 18 August 2018 (ECUADOR, 2018a). The measure was viewed as a means to restrict the entrance of Venezuelans to the country and was criticised for violating the Constitution,

the Human Mobility Law and international agreements. Consequently, it was revoked and replaced by an identity card (ECUADOR, 2018b), however migrants still needed to present a certificate of identity, which in practice restricted entry into Ecuador. In January 2019, following a femicide that occurred in the city of Ibarra, the government began requiring criminal record certificates from the country of last residence for all Venezuelans (ECUADOR, 2019). The President also announced the creation of 'brigades' to check the legal situation of migrants on the streets, places of work and at the borders (RAMÍREZ et al, 2019). In July that year, the government began to require a temporary residence visa (ECUADOR, 2019). The new President Guillhermo Lasso argued that national sovereignty was being threatened by illegal migration (ECUADOR, 2021b).

Negative attitudes towards migrants was apparent before the mass arrival of Venezuelans. Studies indicated that 93% of Ecuadorians were in favour of increasing border controls, 73% in favour of deporting migrants and 65% believing that foreigners generated insecurity (RAMÍREZ; ZEPEDA, 2014). A 2018 opinion poll indicated Venezuelan migration was believed to be the fifth greatest problem facing the country (CELAG, 2018). In addition to the perception that migrants were taking away employment opportunities from Ecuadorians, there was a tendency to blame Venezuelans for insecurity and the increase in delinquency (CUEVAS, 2018), which also explains why insecurity was rated as the second greatest problem facing the country. According to the Americas Barometer survey, 54% of Ecuadorian respondents expressed the belief that migrants worsened crime in the country, where 71% blamed migrants in general and 56% identified Venezuelan migrants in particular for having made crime worse (WORLD BANK, 2020).

In the country, applicants for international protection such as asylum seekers, refugees or stateless persons were granted a humanitarian visa until their status was recognised, and migrants could request temporary residence and then permanent residence. (ECUADOR, 2017). However, the documents required for a residence permit were difficult for Venezuelans to obtain and furthermore expensive, which restricted access to these categories of status. Thus, many migrants remained in an irregular situation in the country and were excluded from or granted limited access to basic rights and services (interview to the author, Quito, Apr. 2023).

The government created migration management mechanisms. Local emergency committees and asylum systems were established. In May 2018, the government launched the Human Mobility Plan in order to implement the 2017 law (ECUADOR, 2018c), and in

August, migration authorities reinforced staffing levels at the border to process arrivals (R4V, 2020). The National Bureau for Human Mobility was created to oversee, coordinate and evaluate the implementation of public policies at the inter-institutional level. Like any inter-agency coordination mechanism, it depended on the participation of the humanitarian community and government agencies to be effective. Moreover, the Working Group on Refugees and Migrants (WGRM) was created, led by UNHCR and IOM (NGOs) (interview to the author, Quito, Apr. 2023).

In the Ecuadorian case, Venezuelan migration was marked by two key moments. The political affinity between Presidents Correa and Chávez and the moderate migratory flow even allowed the signing of the Statute of Migration, a bilateral convention that facilitated the residence status of migrants, as well as the implementation of the MERCOSUR Residence Agreement and the South American Citizenship of UNASUR that allowed the free transit of Venezuelans in the country towards other countries in the region. When the flow increased, Venezuelans became a problem for the authorities and resulted in the reinforcement of control measures, increasing anti-migrant discourse, and the stigmatisation of and discrimination against this group (RAMÍREZ et al, 2019). Crucially, these measures were not restricted to politicisation. The association between Venezuelans and an increase in crime was used to declare an emergency in the provinces of Carchi, El Oro and Pichincha, followed by the requirement of passports to enter and stay in the country as well as the reinforcement of border control. With these measures, the border was in practice closed, leaving Venezuelans with no realistic possibility of entry. The requirements of the identity card with its validity certificate and a clean criminal record were also clearly aimed at curtailing entry. Moreover, the context in which this particular state of emergency was triggered allows us, according to the narrative above, to conclude that there was a securitisation of immigration. The securitising discourse linking migrants to an increase in crime also registered in opinion polls. As negative perceptions of Venezuelan migrants existed before the crisis, it is more likely that the authorities took advantage of the crisis by securitising migration rather than audiences having assimilated and legitimised this securitisation. This was because there were reactions against the measures which caused some of the measures to be changed.

5. Peru

The number of Venezuelans entering Peru over the course of the migration crisis ranged from 223,158 in 2017, to 814,821 in 2018, 440,925 in 2019, 15,523 in 2020 and 5,177

in 2021. With a territory of 1,285,220 square kilometres, Peru had a population of 31,989,265 and an economy ranked 51st globally (LONDON, 2018) at the peak of Venezuelan migration in 2018. In this context, the number of Venezuelans arriving in the country had an impact, especially in border provinces and Lima, the capital city, which received the highest number of migrants. Located in the 'Andean Corridor', Peru was both a route for migrants heading further south and a place for migrants to stay. Without the infrastructure to deal with the mass migration of Venezuelans, authorities at all levels had to adapt to address the issue.

Peru traditionally held a positive stance on migration. As regards to Venezuelans, in 2017, President Pedro Kuczynski emphasised the extension of the temporary stay permit for "Venezuelan brothers and sisters" who were "welcome" (PERU, 2017c, my translation). Peruvian legislation was regarded as an advance in terms of human rights; a paradigmatic model of humanitarian reception and hospitality (SAID; JARA, 2020) due to the way they facilitated the regularisation of migrants. However, after the resignation of Kuczynski in March 2018, President Martín Vizcarra adopted a more restrictive approach to migration policy (SAID; JARA, 2020). From August 2018, passports became mandatory entry documents, apart from certain exceptions for vulnerable persons (OIM, 2019). The following year, a humanitarian visa was also required (extended in 2021) (PERU, 2021). The border with Venezuela was closed, the policing of migration control posts increased, and a 'clean card' became a requirement for the entry and permanence of Venezuelan migrants in the country. Around 200 Venezuelans have been expelled from the country, on four occasions in 2019 charged for crimes and falsifying documents in relation to criminal records (REUTERS, 2019).

In Peru, therefore, the association between Venezuelan immigration and crime became significantly more pronounced as the number of migrants increased. In fact, "deteriorating public opinion likely had a significant effect on Vizcarra's framing of, and policy response to, Venezuelan immigration", even though the immigration-insecurity link was "based on oversimplification and prejudice, rather than on facts" (SAID; JARA, 2020, p. 14). Although authorities kept the discourse of "support for our Venezuelan brothers and sisters to tend to their most basic needs" (PERU, 2019, my translation), some politicians continued with pronouncements on strict migratory control (LA REPUBLICA, 2020) and the expulsion of migrants (EL COMERCIO, 2021).

Surveys conducted in late 2018 and 2019 in Lima indicate that the number of people with negative opinions of and attitudes towards Venezuelans has increased. 81% of

respondents considered Venezuelans to be involved in criminal offences (IOP & IDEHPUCP, 2020). Ipsos research in April 2019 indicated that 67% of Lima residents were against Venezuelan migration in general, and 54% because it increased the delinquency (EL COMERCIO, 2019). The association of migration with delinquency and insecurity contributes to xenophobia, criminalisation and victimisation of migrants. Surveys carried out by the UNHCR showed that 70% of Peruvians considered Venezuelan displacement to have had a negative impact, emphasising the increase in citizen insecurity and crime (63%), a higher level of informality and fewer jobs in the country (39%). Only 8% considered the arrival of Venezuelan refugees and migrants to have had a positive impact (ACNUR, 2021).

In 2017, the Temporal Permanence Permit (PTP) and the migratory status of 'special residence' were created (PERU, 2017a). The PTP became the most common form of regularisation, permanence, and access to rights and work for Venezuelans. The Act of Extraordinary-Provisional Work Permit allowed Venezuelans to work legally while in the process of obtaining the PTP (PERU, n/d). However, they could only obtain the PTP if they had arrived before 31 October 2018 (with a deadline for obtaining it by 31 December of that year), which restricted the options for regularising their status. As a result, from November of that year, more and more Venezuelans began to apply for asylum as they could not obtain the PTP (OIM, 2019). Although the government sought to improve its management systems, the volume of applications caused delays in decisions and limited access to public services. For instance, applying for asylum or PTP did not give access to the public health system (with the exception of pregnant women and children under five), social programmes or integration opportunities (OIM, 2019).

In 2017, the government launched the National Migratory Policy 2017-2025 to respond to the entire migration cycle and ensure interinstitutional and intergovernmental articulation (PERU, 2017b). The country also counted on a Permanent Multisectoral Commission, titled the Intersectoral Working Table for Migration Management (MTIGM), which was created in 2011. In addition, UNHCR, IOM and humanitarian partners established the Working Group on Refugees and Migrants (WGRM) in April 2018 as a platform for coordinating the response. The Special Commission for Refugees was created and established a post at the Binational Border Care Centre in Tumbes (OIM, 2019).

In this way, Peruvian authorities recognized migration as a problem that required policies and mechanisms for management. The association between Venezuelans and deteriorating public security was used by the Vizcarra government to justify the adoption of

restrictive measures, including the closure of borders at certain times. The requirements for passports, criminal records and humanitarian visas were clearly aimed at reducing entry. Although the measures adopted were not above and beyond those legally foreseen, the form and context in which they appeared allow us to conclude that they contributed to the securitisation of immigration. Even before these measures, the discourse of securitisation existed in negative public opinions that associated migrants with public insecurity. This fact, plus the political crises that Peru suffered in the midst of Venezuelan migration, created an opportunity for securitisation to legitimise government in front of the population. At the end of April 2023, amidst a serious political crisis, the Peruvian government decreed a new state of emergency and militarisation of the borders to combat the insecurity caused by the Venezuelan migratory crisis (CRAVEIRO, 2023). In any case, and despite efforts to improve the management of migration, securitisation caused damage to Venezuelan migration in the country.

Conclusions

The securitisation of migration involves the perception that migration is a threat (existential or otherwise). This perception is proposed by a securitising actor, and is diffused through discourses and practices (including institutional ones) that deal with migration through regular and exceptional means. The extent to which migration is securitised also depends on whether or not audiences accept or acquiesce the discourse. While the processes of politicisation and/or securitisation are analytically complex, this research has focused on particular elements of the politicisation and securitisation of immigration to focus on four South American countries.

Firstly, the governments of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru all generally paid attention to Venezuelan immigration and took positions on policy in the field due to the magnitude of the phenomenon. All countries shifted their immigration policy by creating and/or modifying norms and institutions to address the crisis. While in Brazil norms changed for the better, and the authorities endeavoured to facilitate the reception and integration of Venezuelans, in Colombia greater emphasis was placed on facilitating regularisation and combating irregular migration. By contrast, in Ecuador and Peru, norms were clearly adopted with the aim of restricting the movement of Venezuelans. Secondly, public opinion followed different logics. In Brazil, negative perceptions of migrants were concentrated in the region with the most Venezuelans and did not resonate in the rest of the country. In the other three

countries, the broader public already had negative opinîons on immigration. This was more pronounced in Ecuador and Peru, particularly in relation to the association between migrants and crime and delinquency. The impact of public sentiments on political decisions is important however it is not within the scope of this paper, and should instead be addressed separately in future research. What can be said is that these findings show that the nexus between immigration and security varies by country as well as decisions on the issue. In Brazil, the military was deployed to lead a specific operation to deal with migrants, however, neither government discourse nor public perceptions indicated that the issue was undergoing securitisation, as it remained firmly in the field of politicisation. In Colombia, the military and police were sent to the borders to reinforce security measures, and authorities emphasised a zero tolerance on crimes and required the regularisation of migrants. Despite this, discourses and practices did not indicate a securitisation of the issue, which also remained in the political domain. When the number of Venezuelans entering Ecuador and Peru increased, authorities started to emphasise their impact on public security, Venezuelans were deported, borders were temporarily closed, and norms restricting the movement were adopted. Discourses on public safety resonated with public opinion and were influenced by negative sentiments already present among the population. Consequently, the issue was securitised in the sense that immigrants were seen as a threat to public safety. The conceptual/theoretical framework, empirical data, and initial findings are summarised in the table below.

Table 1 –Politisation and securitisation of migration in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru

	BRAZIL	COLOMBIA	ECUADOR	PERU
Object of Reference (what is existentially threatened)	Immigrants, The State (due to criminal organisations and crimes associated with migration)	Immigrants, Society (due to immigration compromising on public security)	Society (due to immigration compromising on public security)	Society (due to immigration compromising on public security)
Securitisers (who declare the threat)	Brazilian authorities	Colombian authorities	Ecuadorian authorities	Peruvian authorities
Functional Actors (who influences decisions)	Armed Forces, Police, Civil society, International Agencies	Armed Forces, Police, Civils Society, International Agencies	Armed Forces, Police, Civils Society, International Agencies	Armed Forces, Police, Civil society, International Agencies
Discourse	Positive toward migrants, Negative discourse localised in the North	Positive toward regular migrants, Negative towards irregular migrants	Positive turned negative by associating migrants with public safety	Positive turned negative by associating migrants with public safety
Norms	Positive toward migrants	Predominantly positive with moments of restriction	Positive turned restrictive	Positive turned restrictive
Emergencies; Measures	Operation Welcome for reception and integration. Operation Control targeting criminal organisations and crimes associated with migration	Military and police reinforcing security at the borders	Deportations, temporary border closures, State of emergency in departments of the borders	Deportations, temporary border closures
Audience (engagement on the issue)	Low level	High level	High level	High level

Conclusion	Migration was politicised	Migration was politicised	Migration was securitised	Migration was securitised

Finally, it is interesting to note that the political context influenced the posture of governments. The Colombian government was a key factor in the migratory crisis due to its regular dealings with the Venezuelan regime. For example, President Duque ignored Maduro's government in January 2019, considered him a dictator, broke diplomatic relations with the country and recognised the self-proclaimed president Juan Guaidó. President Moreno broke diplomatic relations with Venezuela as result of disagreements regarding the figures of migrants (BBC, 2018). In Peru, an internal political crisis that led to three changes in the Presidency between March 2018 and November 2020 certainly influenced the posture adopted on Venezuelan migration. In Brazil by contrast, and despite both the governments of president Temer and Bolsonaro being opposed to Maduro's government, the treatment of Venezuelan migrants was rather positive. Going beyond the focus of the paper, the different mechanisms applied to immigration and their consequences should also be part of the sequence of analysis. Similarly, future studies will consider the role of the media in contributing to the politicisation and/or securitisation of migration as well as other possible triggers that result in securitisation.

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