

Populist Rhetoric and Policy Divergence in Peru's and Colombia's Responses to Venezuelan Migration: Between Securitisation and Solidarity

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SUMMARY

The Venezuelan exodus has resulted in over 7.7 million Venezuelans leaving their country, with Colombia and Peru hosting the largest numbers of migrants in South America. In this context, this thesis examines the contrasting migration policy responses Peru and Colombia have undertaken to manage the Venezuelan mobilisation crisis. Focus lies on the role that populism, along with narratives of securitisation and solidarity, have played in shaping policy responses.

The study applies a qualitative case-study design, utilising *Program Theory Reconstruction*, to analyse and compare the underlying assumptions and justifications behind the key migration policies implemented by both countries after Venezuela's suspension from MERCOSUR in 2016 and its transitional policy measures. Two measures have been selected: the Peruvian *Humanitarian Visa 2019* and the Colombian *2021 Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan Migrants (ETPV)*. The analysis draws on content analysis of official documents, media coverage, and secondary literature on Venezuelan migration management.

The findings reveal a significant divergence in approaches. In Peru, migration policy became increasingly restrictive, with the *Humanitarian Visa* representing a decisive turn towards securitisation. This policy was implemented in response to growing public concerns about national security and the strain on public service delivery, which were exacerbated by exclusionary media narratives and right-wing populist rhetoric from government authorities.

In contrast, Colombia adopted a strategy centred on solidarity aimed at regularisation and inclusion. The ETPV granted Venezuelans legal status, allowing them access to healthcare, education, and formal employment, among other advantages. This policy was intentionally framed within a humanitarian context, leveraging left-wing populist themes to position Colombia as a regional leader in migration management. Yet, domestically, it utilised right-wing populist language to mitigate public discontent and address concerns regarding the effects of Venezuelans on public order, institutional capacity, and efficiency. In both cases, Peru and Colombia, Venezuelan migration was instrumentalised by political leaders to respond to citizen pressures and serve political interests.

Recommendations highlight the need to broaden comparative research to other countries with similar migration dynamics and explore how regional migration frameworks affect domestic-national responses. The study further emphasises focused examination of the motivations driving Venezuelan migrants' reactions to these policies while urging policymakers to consider real assumptions and motivations derived from populist rhetoric to guide and produce more informed and coherent responses to migration.

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*“Solo le pido a Dios
Que el futuro no me sea indiferente
Desahuciado está el que tiene que marchar
A vivir una cultura diferente”
(Gieco, 1978)*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter situates the migration phenomenon within the context of the Venezuelan exodus in South America. It subsequently introduces the focus of this paper on Colombia's and Peru's responses to the influx of Venezuelan migrants and their contextual dynamics. The text then defines a research problem, proposing populism as a potential explanation for the contrasting migration measures undertaken by both countries. Finally, it articulates the research question and its societal and academic relevance, followed by a reading guide.

1.1 Migration in Context

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) defines migration as the movement of people from their usual residence to a new place of settlement (IOM, 2025). When limited to geographical boundaries, this movement of people can be differentiated between internal and external migration. Migration is not new in society and has existed since the onset of human life; as reflected by McNeill (1984), “the first human ancestors were already willing to move in pursuit of the big game” (pp.1-2).

With the rise of globalisation, scholars such as Czaika and De Haas (2014) note that although current technological developments in transportation and communication have facilitated migratory flows, political and ideological changes are also relevant in today's migration dynamics (pp.285). De Haas et al. (2020) emphasise the importance of moving beyond mainstream theories of migration, such as “push and pull factors” (Passaris, 1989) and giving significance to ideological and political processes where nation-states remain the focus for cross-border migration management.

1.2 Venezuelan Migration

While some regions, like Europe, experience patterns of mobilisation that reach an intercontinental scale, there are also other areas where the movement of people is stronger within continental borders. This is evident in South America, which currently faces a massive influx of Venezuelan migrants forced to flee their country due to almost a decade of economic, political, and social instability (McCarthy, 2022; Weitzman & Huss, 2024).

Following Venezuela's suspension from the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) and its Residence Agreement (MRA) in 2016 (CFR, 2024), a wave of harsh policy responses towards migrants sparked dramatically. South American States gradually mirrored the broader global trend of restrictive measures, prioritising border control and security over human-rights-based frameworks (Sacristán-Rodríguez, 2024). Furthermore, a

significant ideological issue emerged as the increasing expressions of xenophobia and populism from political leaders and citizens began shaping the narrative behind new strategies for addressing the migration crisis (Espinoza, 2023).

Regarding the latest reports from the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), by 2024, there were over 7.7 million Venezuelan migrants worldwide, with about 6.6 million located in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNHCR-Venezuela, 2025). Among the countries that have received the highest number of migrants, Colombia ranks first with about 2.9 million Venezuelans (UNHCR-Colombia, 2025), followed by Peru, which hosted around 1.5 million by 2024 (UNHCR-Peru, 2025).

1.3 Populism and the Management of Migration in South America

According to Geddes (2022), South America was long viewed as an example for “liberal and progressive measures” regarding migration (pp. 314-315). This was attributed to the early 2000s left-wing governments, which pursued new approaches based on openness and inclusivity, the Mercosur Resident Agreement being one of them (Arcarazo & Freier, 2015). Nevertheless, a recent wave of right-wing populist sentiment has begun to undermine the foundations of solidarity and humanitarian measures in the region (Espinoza, 2023; Docquier et al., 2024), with narratives of securitisation and exclusion increasingly shaping how South American countries respond to migration issues (Docquier et al., 2024).

Based on Macedo (2020), migration narratives and discourse in countries from the global north, such as in North America and Europe, are being emulated in wider regions, increasingly serving nationalism and racist sentiments; such dynamics leading to restrictive and segregating policies. Research by Destradi and Plagemann (2019) and Copelovitch and Pevehouse (2019) suggests that with the rise of populism and nationalism, contemporary political leaders not only instrumentalise issues on their ideological stances but also tailor responses in ways that help them garner political support.

1.4 Focus on Peru and Colombia

Research by Grundy-López et al. (2024) emphasises that the stigma surrounding Venezuelan migrants in Peru has intensified xenophobic sentiments in Peruvian society, adversely affecting their integration. Their study reveals that Venezuelans are often depicted as competitors for scarce resources and a locus for criminal activity, with media coverage influencing policymaking. In the same line, Blouin and Gómez (2022) argue that public institutions and restrictive migration policies in Peru have reinforced social exclusion and prejudice towards

Venezuelans. For scholars, societal attitudes and governmental measures, such as visa restrictions and other regulatory barriers, have contributed to migrants' vulnerability and suffering (Said et al., 2022). Migration measures have not only fueled negative public perceptions but also fostered an environment of hostility and discrimination towards migrants (Blouin & Gómez, 2022; Said et al., 2022; Grundy-López et al., 2024).

In Colombia, contrastingly, Palma-Gutiérrez's (2021) research shows that the country addressed Venezuelan migration using regularisation strategies framed within a narrative of "generosity" (pp.1). Their research highlights that this approach is not solely a matter of solidarity but also a move to reinforce Colombia's domestic and foreign policy interests. Similarly, research by Ibáñez et al. (2022) and De Rodríguez et al. (2022) demonstrates that efforts to integrate Venezuelan migrants, particularly through access to formal employment and essential public services, are closely aligned with the government's interests in promoting economic development and social stability (Palma-Gutiérrez, 2021; Ibáñez et al., 2022; De Rodríguez et al., 2022).

1.5 Problem Definition and Relevance

Drawing on the aforementioned and acknowledging the challenges posed by the Venezuelan migration crisis in South America, it becomes **societally** relevant to understand the disparities in migration governance between Peru and Colombia. These differences can inform how fragmented responses affect migrant integration within host communities, thereby underscoring the importance of stronger regional coordination. Furthermore, **academically**, this study is imperative for examining the role of populism in shaping migration policies, particularly how policies are built over narratives that contribute to humanitarian or exclusionary approaches (Macedo, 2020).

Therefore, through the reconstruction of the "*Program Theories*" of the migration policies toward Venezuelans in Peru (2019) and Colombia (2021), the periods during which both countries have issued their most impactful policy responses post-Mercosur transition, this thesis aims to answer:

To what extent is populism reflected in the way Peru (2019) and Colombia (2021) have responded to Venezuelans in their migration policies?

The following sub-questions are posed:

- ***Which migration policies have Peruvian and Colombian authorities implemented regarding Venezuelan migration?***
- ***Which narratives are exhibited in the "program theory" of such policies?***

- *How have Colombian and Peruvian authorities justified their migration policies through populism?*

1.6 Outline

Chapter 2 delves into the literature on migration governance, program theory, migration narratives, and populism, examining how these factors shape and influence migration policy responses. Next, Chapter 3 outlines the qualitative case-study design that applies *Program Theory Reconstruction* as a content analysis strategy to examine migration policymaking in Peru and Colombia. Then, the results are presented in Chapter 4 through the reconstruction and comparison of the programme theories underlying Peru's and Colombia's migration policies toward Venezuelan migrants. Finally, Chapter 5 presents and discusses the conclusions and recommendations for policymaking and further academic inquiry.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the academic literature relevant to this thesis. It first addresses the South American migration crisis and afterwards expands on multilevel governance. Next, it introduces *Program Theory Reconstruction* and its association with narratives of securitisation and solidarity. Then, it elucidates populism and its impact on migration policymaking to finally depict a conceptual model that will guide the research.

2.1 Venezuela and the South American Migration Crisis

The Venezuelan migration crisis is considered one of South America's most impactful events in recent history (Barbieri et al., 2020; Muñoz-Pogossian & Tufró, 2020). The increasing number of Venezuelan refugees and migrants who have fled their country (over 7 million) also makes it one of the largest displacements globally (UNHCR-Venezuela, 2025; IMF, 2022). Socio-economic conditions, including poverty and violence, have massively propelled Venezuelan citizens toward bordering countries (Alarcón et al., 2022), with migrants finding it more financially accessible to reach the nearest destinations through land crossings (Said et al., 2022; IOM, 2022).

The recognition of the Venezuelan exodus as a *crisis* emerged as the number of migrants grew, and their humanitarian needs, along with those of the host communities in South America, became visible (Gómez-Ramírez, 2018; Muñoz-Pogossian & Tufró, 2020). International agencies such as UNHCR and IOM began coordinating regional responses in 2018, calling the situation a humanitarian emergency, requiring the urgent provision of safe shelter, healthcare, and opportunities for education and employment for migrants (Gómez-Ramírez, 2018; Kleszczyńska, 2020). This was further reinforced by the shift in migrant profiles, from primarily young adults seeking economic opportunity to entire families fleeing for survival (Vivas Peñalver et al., 2017). As the capacity of public services in host countries was strained, and institutional arrangements to manage the reception of Venezuelans became saturated, countries tightened migrants' access to services and legal status (Muñoz-Pogossian & Tufró, 2020; Lebow et al., 2024). This dynamic resulted in additional barriers that many migrants could not meet, leading some to resort to illegal crossings, aggravating the situation further (Vergara, 2024).

The humanitarian impact of the crisis is evident in host countries such as Peru and Colombia. The UNHCR (2025) reports that Peru has the largest population of Venezuelan asylum-seekers and ranks as the second-largest host country for forced displacement. By the end of 2023, Peru hosted approximately 493,476 asylum seekers and 4,906 refugees out of 1.54

million Venezuelan residents (UNHCR-Peru, 2025). Venezuelans migrate to Peru primarily for three reasons: family reunification, geographical proximity, and access to informal work (Vera Delzo, 2023). Conversely, Colombia currently accounts for over 2.4 million Venezuelans benefiting from Temporary Protection Status (UNHCR-Colombia, 2025), with around 488,974 refugees (R4V, 2024) out of the 2.9 million Venezuelans being hosted. Colombia's role as a transit hub is emphasised by its proximity to the Darién Gap, an essential migration route that 238,000 people crossed in 2024, primarily Venezuelans (158,000) seeking to reach North America (Obinna, 2024; UNHCR-Colombia, 2025).

2.2 Governance of Migration and Multilevel Governance

Governing migration, particularly through dynamics that go beyond solely central state-led direction, is crucial for policy responses to migration. Countries are often bound to international regimes and multilateral frameworks (Pécoud & Thiollet, 2023; Lietaert & Pécoud, 2024) that create obligations and constraints (Hooghe & Marks, 2003, pp. 233-243), making them more than ever dependent on coordination and collaborative arrangements.

Geddes (2022) and Pécoud (2024) note that “*Migration Governance*” encompasses processes and interactions across different societal sectors that influence, manage, and regulate the migration landscape (Geddes, 2022, p.311). Furthermore, unlike the traditional emphasis on state-led control, this concept recognises diverse actors, including local, national and supranational, which arrange *reactively* or *proactively* around the issue (Pécoud & Thiollet, 2023). Nevertheless, although migration governance recognises a multiplicity of interactions, shared power dynamics and responsibilities lie inherently in *multilevel governance* foundations.

Therefore, “*Multilevel Governance*,” as Marks (1993) defines it, not only implies an ongoing negotiation and decision-making process among interconnected governmental and non-governmental actors at various territorial levels, but it also involves the “*distribution of authority*” (pp. 391-410), from local to supranational or vice versa, emphasising shared collaborative problem-solving schemes and responsibilities in the policymaking process (Marks, 1993; Hooghe, 1995).

Furthermore, as Hooghe and Marks (2003) (pp. 233-243) delineate, there exist two types of “multilevel governance” illustrating how such dynamics are executed in practice:

- a. “*Type I governance*” resembles a traditional federal system, where power is divided among a limited number of levels, such as local, regional, and national, each with broad responsibilities and non-overlapping jurisdictions. “This governance structures

provide stability and clear boundaries by following established hierarchies” (Hooghe & Marks, 2003, pp. 236-237).

- b. “*Type II governance*” is more flexible and task-specific, involving multiple, often overlapping jurisdictions created to address specific policy issues. “These governance structures arise from voluntary cooperation and adaptation to changing needs” (Hooghe & Marks, 2003, pp. 237-238)

2.3 The “Program Theory” of a Policy and Migration Narratives: Between Securitisation and Solidarity

According to Hoogerwerf (1990) and Leeuw (2003), the “*Program Theory*” of a policy refers to the “total set of causal and normative assumptions underlying a policy” (Hoogerwerf, 1990; p. 285); it explains how policymakers justify their choices and anticipate policy outcomes when implementing measures. To understand why policies work or do not work, it is essential to detect the causal logic behind them, calling for reconstructing the assumptions used to build the policy, “*the program theory itself*” (Hoogerwerf, 1990, pp. 285-290).

Furthermore, Leeuw (2003) emphasises that understanding underlying policy assumptions is crucial for policymaking studies, as flawed or oversimplified considerations about the problem can lead to ineffective or misguided responses. Thus, a policy’s “*Program Theory*” is informed not only by institutional frameworks and political objectives but by the *dominant narratives* shaping such policy assumptions (Crow & Jones, 2018; Banulescu-Bogdan et al., 2021).

Considering the *dominant narratives* influencing migration governance and, henceforth, the “*program theories*” of such policies, a dynamic exists between “*securitarian, utilitarian, and humanitarian*” narratives (Boswell et al., 2011; Smellie & Boswell, 2024, pp. 15-16). This trend is significant as such narratives have become key drivers for debate, structured to mobilise public opinion and legitimise policy choices, mainly encompassed in exclusionary (securitisation) or humanitarian (solidarity) approaches.

On the one hand, Ceyhan and Tsoukala (2002) define the “*securitisation of migration*” as the process of presenting migration as a security risk by “politicians, security agencies, and the media” (pp.24), resulting in exclusionary and restrictive policy responses, usually grounded under four threat logics (pp.23-24):

- a. Socio-economic Threat (*economy, employment, welfare state, and environment*);
- b. Securitarian Threat (*sovereignty, borders, and national security*);
- c. Identitarian Threat (*national identity and demographics*); and

d. Political Threat (*anti-immigrant rhetoric, racism, and xenophobia*)."

On the other hand, regarding "*solidarity in migration*", Schwiertz and Schwenken (2020, pp. 409–410) and Garcia and Jørgensen (2021, pp. 859–862) conceptualise it as the migration policy processes through which humanitarian expressions are enacted in response to migration challenges. Within this framework, the notions of solidarity "*from above*" and "*from below*" are helpful to understand such practices:

- a. "*Solidarity from Above*" refers to welfare-state actions taken by formal national or supranational authorities that promote well-being through social policy frameworks and top-down initiatives, sometimes prioritising the needs of native communities over those of the migrants (Schwiertz & Schwenken, 2020, pp. 412-413).
- b. "*Solidarity from Below*" or "*Transversal Solidarity*" refers to welfare-state actions based on humanitarian and equality-oriented approaches, which through inclusive social-welfare policies and human rights-based measures, pursue societal well-being, making no distinction of migration status (Garcia & Jørgensen, 2020, p. 870).

Finally, according to Schmidt (2008) and Smellie & Boswell (2024), these narratives are transmitted differently between the "*Communicative Sphere*", which encompasses media and political debate, and the "*Coordinative Sphere*", which pertains to policy development (Schmidt, 2008, pp. 309-310). In turn, these manifest in the form of:

- a. "*Lay narratives*" (simple, intuitive, and often highly emotive stories designed to resonate with a broad public audience) (Smellie & Boswell, 2024, pp. 7-8).
- b. "*Technocratic Narratives*" (sober, factual, and evidence-based stories designed to coordinate actions among policymakers and implementers) (Smellie & Boswell, 2024, pp. 7-8).

2.4 Entangling Populism and Governance of Migration

According to Copelovitch and Pevehouse (2019) and Macedo (2020), populist and nationalist ideologies have risen worldwide. This becomes evident as scholarship has identified an increasing prioritisation of "economic nationalism, nativism, and disapproval of international regimes" in the current affairs countries engage in (Copelovitch & Pevehouse, 2019, pp.1.71-173). Besides, as Cadier (2023) illustrates, political leaders often use salient issues through assumptions of fear or support to advance their agendas and foreign policy, suggesting how populism is now ever more contingent on crisis contexts.

Similarly, scholars such as Destradi and Plagemann (2019) and Cadier (2023) have explored the phenomenon of populism, demonstrating a global trend toward politicised

domestic policy-making with significant impact on international relations. Their research suggests that domestic political actors, particularly at the executive level, often direct their public choices and foreign policy to strengthen their political battles and undermine opposition factions (Cadier, 2023). This includes utilising assumptions around pressing issues, such as migration, in positive and negative ways, cultivating biased perceptions in citizens, ultimately legitimising their actions (Destradi & Plagemann, 2019; Cadier, 2023).

Regarding populism, Mudde (2017) reconciles it as a dichotomy of ideological struggles between “the people and the elite” (pp. 5-6), where the sovereignty of action rests with the majority rather than the few. Traditional academia usually contrasts populism in two streams: right-wing and left-wing populism.

According to Gagnon et al. (2018) (pp. 6-7), *right-wing populism* is characterised by political appeals that utilise “neo-nationalistic rhetoric against the principles of liberal democracy”; alternatively, *left-wing populism* is conceived as that which conveys “civic, political, and economic values” to strengthen the democratic project. Populism does not fit neatly into either rightist or leftist categories. This is to say, populism can align itself with various thick ideologies, sometimes leftist and sometimes rightist, letting the populist actor shape its strategies conveniently (Mudde, 2017; Gagnon et al., 2018).

In the migration debate, *right-wing populism* manifests through exclusionary policies anchored in “securitisation and nativism” (Mudde, 2007, pp. 11-31). These measures often impose stricter entry requirements and border controls while restricting access to essential social services, reflecting a prioritisation of native citizens over migrants (Eriş & Öner, 2021; Yogo, 2025). Such policies frequently employ law-and-order rhetoric (Koning & Puddister, 2022), legitimising segregation practices.

Conversely, *left-wing populism* adopts inclusionary approaches, emphasising “regularisation and integration” (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, pp. 21-23). Policies focus on granting legal status to undocumented migrants, facilitating access to civic participation, and promoting humanitarian pathways for asylum seekers (Madariaga & Kaltwasser, 2019). This paradigm positions migrants as contributors to societal diversity and development while framing them as victims of structural inequalities and restrictive welfare policies, perpetuated by neoliberal or conservative regimes (Stavrakakis et al., 2016; Salmela & Von Scheve, 2018).

2.5 Theoretical Model

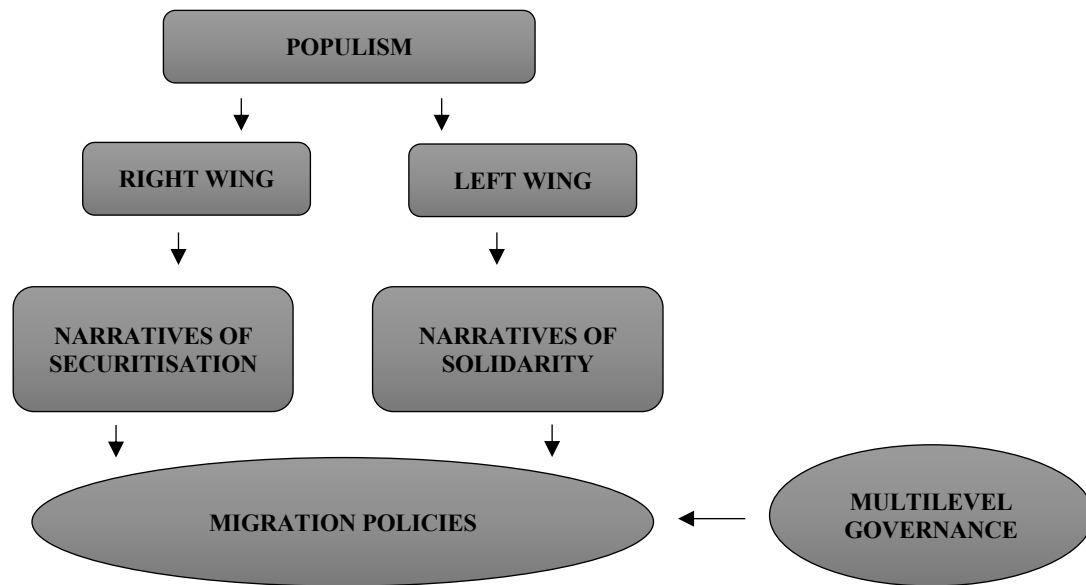


Figure 1. Theoretical Model

Figure 1 shows a model integrating previous theorisations and visualising how populism interplays with migration policymaking through dominant exclusionary or humanitarian approaches. The central premise is that populism, defined as a political ideology appealing to “the people against a perceived elite” (Mudde, 2017, pp. 5-6), shapes migration policy measures through narratives of securitisation and solidarity. Populism is divided into two distinct paths: right-wing and left-wing, with both forms influencing migration management. Finally, the model suggests that existing regional and multilevel governance structures can impact how intended policy responses are translated into final, concrete policy measures.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodological Justification

This chapter features the research design and methodology for the comparative case study. It utilises *Program Theory Reconstruction* as a content analysis strategy to examine the migration policies of Peru (2019) and Colombia (2021) in response to Venezuelan migration, aiming to unveil the assumptions, narratives, and populist expressions underpinning such measures. Data collection includes official migration policy documents from Peruvian and Colombian authorities and media coverage on the development of the policies. Ultimately, the section on methodological reflections addresses biases and limitations that ensure rigour, transparency, and positionality.

3.1 Research Design

This thesis employs a qualitative research approach using *Program Theory Reconstruction* (Hoogerwerf, 1990; Leeuw, 2003) and content analysis of media coverage to investigate the migration policies for Venezuelans in Peru (2019) and Colombia (2021). This approach offers a structured pathway to understanding both countries' assumptions and justifications for their measures in an increasingly populist context. This qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the migration phenomena by harnessing the information, in this case, of both public and private textual data and identifying the narrative patterns behind the policymaking process (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Furthermore, this study adopts a comparative lens (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Krippendorff, 2019), examining Colombia and Peru as distinct yet interrelated cases within the Southern American migration governance system. Although both nations have adopted divergent migration policies, they function under the same regional framework, MERCOSUR, elucidating the nuances of multilevel governance (Hooghe & Marks, 2003).

3.2 A Case Study and Justification

This research is structured as a case study, focusing on the migration policies enacted by Peru in 2019 and Colombia in 2021, capturing the evolution of these measures and their effects on the Venezuelan migrant population.

The country's timeframes are particularly relevant as they signify their first impactful measures to manage Venezuelan migration post-transitioning MERCOSUR agreements. Thus, a case study is suitable for this research as it generally focuses on a specific event, period, or trend, allowing for an intensive examination (Van Thiel, 2014; Yin, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2022). This approach does not seek broad generalizability but rather a deep

contextual understanding of the case (Van Thiel, 2014), which can offer insights into migration governance dynamics in similar settings. Especially because policy measures that emerged during the timeframes became turning points for shaping the broader regional migration governance landscape and triggering diverse media reactions.

3.3 Programme Theory Reconstruction

The “*Programme Theory*” of a policy is referred to as “the total set of causal and normative assumptions underlying a policy” (Hoogerwerf, 1990, pp. 285- 290). As Leeuw (2003) posits, program theory reconstruction is an approach to understanding and evaluating policies and interventions, which involves unveiling the underlying logic that policymakers believe leads to desired outcomes, emphasising the importance of uncovering mechanisms assumed to produce policy effects (Hoogerwerf, 1990; Leeuw, 2003).

Leeuw (2003) outlines three approaches for reconstructing an underlying programme theory: “*policy-scientific approach, strategic assessment approach, and elicitation approach*” (pp. 7-12). However, Hoogerwerf (1990), from which these approaches are derived, emphasises that during a policy theory reconstruction, the process is flexible in ways that fit the nature of the case (pp. 287–288). Therefore, this research employs an adapted version of Leeuw’s (2003) “policy-scientific approach” (pp.7-9), which remains aligned with Hoogerwerf’s (1990) fundamental principles of policy theory reconstruction (pp. 287-290).

3.3.1 An Adapted Version of Leeuw’s Policy-Scientific Approach

The *Policy-Scientific Approach* (Leeuw, 2003, pp. 7-9) offers a structured pathway for reconstructing program theories by systematically identifying and assessing the underlying assumptions of policies. This approach emphasises using empirical evidence and theoretical reconstruction to critically appraise policy interventions. When integrated with Hoogerwerf’s (1990) fundamental principles for policy reconstruction, the policy-scientific approach works as follows:

- I. Contextualise the scene and the problem.
- II. Identify the key mechanisms (policies/measures) believed to address the issue.
- III. Describe key aspects of the mechanisms (policies/measures) and analyse statements (narratives/assumptions) within the mechanisms that clarify their purpose and means to achieve their goals.

- IV. Utilise argumentation analysis to discuss and refine reconstructed evidence, exploring connections to broader or alternative frameworks that may address ambiguities, gaps, and contradictions.

3.3.2 Reconstructing a Programme Theory in this Thesis's Context

Table 1 shows the steps that will be taken in the present research to reconstruct the programme theory of migration policies in Peru (2019) and Colombia (2021):

Table 1. Adapted Program Theory Reconstruction

I. Contextualise the scene and the problem	Objective: Establish the situational context of Venezuelan migration flows and mobility patterns in Peru and Colombia. Method: Analyse empirical data and migration policy documents to identify key contextual factors shaping migration dynamics.
II. Policy identification and description	Objective: Identify and describe key migration policies implemented in Peru and Colombia during the timeframes established. (<i>see point 3.2</i>) Method: Examine formal policy documents, their design, objectives, measures, and implementation strategies.
III. Exploration of policy narratives and reconstruction of the Program theory	Objective: Identify dominant narratives within policy documents and supporting materials, focusing on how Venezuelan migration is presented, including its connection to populist rhetoric. Method: Conduct content analysis to reveal assumptions embedded in these narratives and use supporting materials from media outlets to examine their connection to the migration populist debate. <i>A code tree is developed using insights from Chapter 2. (see extended versions in Appendix C)</i>
IV. Program Theory comparison and discussion	Objective: Compare the reconstructed Program Theories in Peru and Colombia, and discuss them in terms of assumptions, objectives, tools, mechanisms, outputs, outcomes to highlight similarities, differences, and implicit justifications. Method: Conduct comparative analysis and discussion to identify divergences or commonalities in the reconstructed Program Theories.

3.4 Data Collection and Operationalisation

The data collection includes information from official policy documents, migration reports, and media outlets relevant to the present study. While content analysis serves as the overarching tool, the parts of the research that extend beyond mere description, such as examining narratives and populist nuances, will be operationalised, coded, and analysed using Atlas.ti. This software will facilitate the organisation and interpretation of textual data

by constructing deductive codes for each section based on the concepts developed in the theoretical framework (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The coding process consists of open, axial, and selective coding. The coding structure will systematically compare Peru and Colombia's different migration governance approaches while tracing their connections to the reconstructed program theory of their policies and their links to populism.

3.4.1 Operationalisation

The following table summarises the theoretical concepts transformed into variables relevant to this research. These are derived from theorisations in Chapter 2 and used for the qualitative sources' content analysis. (*See the extended version in Appendix D*)

Table 2. Concepts' Operationalisation

Variable	Concepts	Operationalizations	Methods
Populism (x) "A thin-centred ideology appealing to the people against a perceived elite" (Mudde, 2017)	Right-wing populism (a): Immigration is undesired. Elites are to blame for failing to protect the people. It advocates for restrictive and exclusionary policies. Left-wing populism (b): Immigration is a result of systemic injustices. It emphasizes anti-oligarch-capitalist critiques while advocating for inclusive and rights-based policies.	a) Nativist expressions "illegal-migrant" "law-and-order" "national-security" Anti-elite expressions "corrupt-establishment" "the-elites" "enemies-of-the-people" Exclusionary policies expressions "deportation" "detention-centers" "forced-returns" b) Open migration expressions "free-movement" "regularization" "universal-rights" Anti-Oligarch-Capitalist expressions "capitalist-oligarchy" "anti-imperialism" "inequalities-injustices" Inclusive policies expressions "no-discrimination" "family-reunification" "protections"	Content Analysis

Migration Policies and their Program Theory (y) “The total set of causal and normative assumptions underlying a migration policy”. (Hoogerwerf, 1990; Leeuw, 2003)	Humanitarian Narratives (a): Portrays migrants as vulnerable individuals deserving rights-based protections, emphasizing solidarity and inclusive policies. Exclusionary Narratives (b): Portrays migrants as existential threats, using fear to justify securitarian and restrictive policies.	a) Solidarity from above expressions: “capacity-building” “national-solidarity” “resource-allocation” Solidarity from below expressions: “dignity” “equality” “generosity” b) Securitization of migration expressions “socio-economic-threat” “securitarian-threat” “identitarian-threat” “political-threat”	
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3.4.2 Sources for Analysis

Concerning the independent variable (**x**), populism, 43 media reports were chosen from the selected outlets in Peru and Colombia: 23 from Peru and 20 from Colombia (*see Appendix E for a full list of documents analysed in the study*), in a three-month time lapse before and after the policy executions. These reports provide insights into the policy and political debates surrounding the issue. The outlets’ selection was based on the SCImago Media Ranking, the 4imn World Newspapers Directory, and the Press Freedom Index, which validate these media sources for their credibility, independence, and societal impact.

Regarding the dependent variable (**y**) (Peru’s and Colombia’s policy narratives) was based on their most comprehensive public-official migration policies: Peru’s Humanitarian visa 2019 (*Supreme Decree 0177-2019* and *Official Letter N° 2-10/9*) and Colombia’s Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan Migrants (ETPV) (*Decree 216 -2021 and Resolution 971 of 2021*).

Finally, official reports from the IOM, UNHCR, and the Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (R4V) were used to subtract the descriptive information necessary to establish Venezuelan migration’s situational and migratory background in Peru and Colombia.

3.5 Methodological Reflection

While this study's objectives are grounded on principles of social science and scientific rigour, it is imperative to acknowledge potential methodological challenges that could impact the validity and reliability of the findings.

Firstly, content analysis, while offering a comprehensive perspective, necessitates meticulous data management and committed focus. The data collected from policy documents, media reports, and government statements requires careful organisation to ensure consistency and accuracy (Neuendorf, 2017). Secondly, the reliance on Spanish-language sources to understand the Latin American context presents a translation challenge. Translating nuanced political discourse and policy justifications into English can introduce subtle shifts in meaning, potentially misrepresenting the intended message (Van Nes et al., 2010). Thirdly, while there is a growing body of literature on populism and migration, the specific intersection of these phenomena within the Venezuelan migration context has been explored less in English-language scholarship, potentially reducing the availability of direct academic analytical frameworks.

To address these challenges, I will adopt a comprehensive data management strategy that aligns closely with the "*Programme Theory*" design principles discussed earlier. This approach will also include a well-defined operationalisation and coding scheme to minimise subjective bias and ensure consistency throughout the analysis. By doing so, I aim to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings and make academically informed conclusions based on transparent and objective data (Krippendorff, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Moreover, I will ensure that my translations from Spanish to English accurately convey the underlying meanings of the political debate surrounding migration, as presented in the selected sources from both countries. I will do this by reading and cross-referencing the news reports in their official Spanish and English versions, if available. This will ensure that Spanish-language materials are interpreted correctly and in context.

3.6 Positionality

As to my positionality, I, as a Colombian who has witnessed the Venezuelan exodus in Latin America and developed close ties with migrant communities through personal experiences and academic studies, acknowledge that my background may influence my research perspective. This "insider-outsider" position (Carling et al., 2013) offers unique insights yet potential biases. To mitigate this, I commit to maintaining transparency and practising constant reflexivity throughout the research process (Berger, 2013). By adhering to rigorous methodological

procedures and actively questioning my assumptions, I aim to produce balanced, ethical research that leverages my unique perspective while minimising undue personal influence on the findings (Nowell et al., 2017).

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the results of the *Program Theory Reconstruction* of the two most comprehensive migration policy responses toward Venezuelan migrants in Peru and Colombia: Peru's 2019 Humanitarian Visa and Colombia's 2021 Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan Migrants (ETPV). While these two cases addressed similar migration challenges, they reflected contrasting responses shaped by domestic regulations, public narratives, and the broader populist context in which each policy emerged.

The chapter begins by providing background on how the Venezuelan migration crisis unfolded and examines the policy environment in Peru and Colombia after the MERCOSUR's Resident Agreement. Next, it reconstructs the programme theory underlying each country's migration policy, exhibiting how Venezuelan migration was presented and justified as a security or a humanitarian issue, and how these narratives aligned with the populist rhetoric employed by each government. Then, both programme theories are schematised in a comparative table by delineating their **assumptions, goals, mechanisms, tools, outputs, and outcomes**. Finally, a comparative analysis highlights the main similarities and differences between the two cases and discusses how these findings connect to the insights provided in the theoretical framework.

Note: All original quotes in Spanish have been translated into English by myself.

4.1 Venezuelan Migration Crisis and Post-MERCOSUR Resident Agreement

Venezuelan migration in South America dates to the late 1990s and early 2000s, during the Chávez authoritarian regime (Hetland, 2018; Delgado et al., 2024). However, the current large-scale migration intensified during President Maduro's term (2013-present), which is described as a humanitarian-crisis dictatorship (Ausman, 2019; Briones & Quispe, 2019) characterised by severe economic and social decline.

Unlike the pre-2013 migration wave, which was driven by pull factors such as better opportunities and lifestyle appeals in other destinations, the post-2014 wave is considered a forced migration, vastly composed of low-income individuals (Alarcón et al., 2022; Mazza & Villarreal, 2023). This group primarily comes from marginalised sectors of Venezuelan society, both in urban and rural areas, migrating to neighbouring countries due to unemployment, hyperinflation, food and medicine shortages, as well as violence and widespread state repression (Carroll et al., 2020; Pirovino & Papyrakis, 2023). Moreover, it is in the post-2014 context that the **Mercosur Residence Agreement (MRA) (2002)**, which

granted Venezuelans visa-free residency in other member states, ended in 2016 (Caichiolo, 2019).

To illustrate what the MRA entailed for Venezuelans, its key provision stipulated that (pp.1-2):

“Nationals of a State Party wishing to reside in the territory of another State Party may obtain legal residence in the latter, per the terms of this Agreement, by demonstrating their nationality and presenting the requirements outlined in Article 4.”

(MRA, 2002)

Article 4 included identity proof and nationality, namely, a valid passport, an ID card, or a consular certificate of nationality. Once temporary residency was granted (up to two years), applicants could transition to permanent status under each national regulation (MRA, 2002). However, after Venezuela left the MRA, and migration flows continued, migration shifted from more formal pathways to more urgent and irregular (Bianculli & Triviño-Salazar, 2024). Consequently, bordering nations such as Peru and Colombia were urged to respond under independent migration governance schemes.

On the one hand, in early 2017, Peru implemented the **Permit for Temporary Permanence (PTP)**. The PTP was a pragmatic and protection-oriented measure, granting Venezuelans entering Peru before specific dates the opportunity to regularise their status. This permit, which evolved in three phases (see table 3), provided temporary legal residency, the right to work, and access to essential services such as healthcare and education (UNHCR, 2018). By 2018, the PTP enabled 248,038 Venezuelans to integrate into Peruvian society (UNHCR, 2018; R4V, 2025), making it one of the world’s largest hosts of Venezuelan migrants and asylum seekers.

Table 3. Migrants’ Regularisation via PTPs in Peru.

PTP Phase	Eligibility (Entry Cut-off Date)	Key Notes	Venezuelans Regularized
PTP I Supreme Decree No. 002-2017-IN	Migrants that entered before Feb 2, 2017	First phase -Regularization for early arrivals.	By 2018, there were approximately 635,000 Venezuelans residing in Peru from which 248,038 were regularized via the PTPs. (R4V, 2025; UNHCR, 2018).
PTP II Supreme Decree No. 023-2017-IN	Migrants that entered before Aug 1, 2017	Second phase - Extended eligibility to new arrivals.	
PTP III Supreme Decree No. 001-2018-IN	Migrants that entered before Oct 31, 2018	Third extension and final large-scale regularization.	

Source: (UNHCR- Refworld, 2018, pp .1-3; R4V, 2025)

As arrivals increased, the PTP was discontinued in October 2018. Consequently, in 2019, Peru shifted to a more restrictive policy, the “**Humanitarian Visa**”, valid for one year and renewable up to two times. According to scholarship, this policy can be seen as a disguised call for securitisation under the idea of controlled migration due to the documentation often being difficult for Venezuelans to obtain, such as passports and criminal records (Mazza & Villarreal, 2023). This shift limited the capacity of new migrants to regularise their status, leading Peruvian society to view Venezuelans as a threat to national security, as will be further explored during the reconstruction of the policy’s underlying program theory.

Conversely, Colombia introduced a transitional regularisation measure known as the **Temporary Stay Permit (TSP)**. Established by the Colombian government in July 2017, the TSP extended its effects across five regularisation phases (see table 4), operating under specific eligibility criteria based on entry dates until 2021. The TSP granted Venezuelan nationals temporary legal status for up to two years, renewable, and provided access to formal employment, education, healthcare, financial services, and other social benefits. By 2020, the TSPs had facilitated the regularisation of about 762,857 Venezuelan migrants, contributing substantially to regional humanitarian and migration management strategies (USAID, 2020).

Table 4. Migrants’ Regularisation via TSPs in Colombia.

TSP Phase	Eligibility (Entry Cut-off Date)	Key Notes	Venezuelans Regularized
TSP I Resolution 5797 of 2017	Migrants that entered before July 28, 2017	First phase, initial regularization for early arrivals.	By August 2021, there were approximately 1.842.390 Venezuelans residing in Colombia (IFRC, 2023) from which up to 2020 762,857 had already been regularised via TPSs (USAID, 2020).
TSP II Resolution 0740 of 2018	Migrants that entered before Feb 2, 2018	Expanded eligibility to new arrivals.	
TSP III Resolution 8470 of 2018	Migrants that entered before Apr 6 Jun 8, 2018	Allowed migrants registered in the Administrative Registry for Venezuelans (RAMV) to regularize, even if previously undocumented.	
TSP IV Resolution 5797 of 2018	Migrants that entered before Aug 31, 2018	Further expanded eligibility.	
TSP V Resolutions 3316/2019, 2052/2020, 2359/2020	Migrants that entered before Dec 17, 2018, and up to Aug 31, 2020	Extended dates for arrivals and renewals up to Aug 31, 2020	

Source: (IFRC, 2023; USAID, 2020, pp. 24-27)

As the migratory flow intensified and the limitations of short-term regularisation became evident in mid-2021, the government introduced a new policy instrument: the ***“Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan Migrants” (ETPV)*** with a ten-year protection scheme. While widely recognised as a progressive step in regional migration governance, the ETPV also signalled a strategic recalibration, shifting from emergency-driven responses toward a more structured, long-term integration framework (Poveda-Clavijo & Mena, 2024). This policy reorientation, though grounded in humanitarian rhetoric, also served to reassert state oversight of migrants and enhance international image-building and support, a dynamic that will be observed through the reconstruction of its policy’s underlying program theory.

4.2 Programme Theory Reconstructions

As previously indicated, this section reconstructs the *Programme Theories* behind the **Peruvian Humanitarian Visa (2019)** and the **Colombian Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan Migrants (ETPV) (2021)**, tracing their development and rationale. Special attention is given to the words in **bold**, which signal how the different elements of the programme theory reconstruction arise during the events unfolding. Namely, **assumptions, objectives, tools, mechanisms, outputs, and outcomes**, illustrating how these policies were shaped by domestic regulations and the political context, revealing the interplay between narratives that display exclusionary and humanitarian approaches.

4.2.1 The Peruvian Case: The 2019 Humanitarian Visa for Venezuelans

“In light of Venezuela’s severe political and humanitarian crisis and to ensure an orderly, regular, and safe migration of its nationals... Peru will only allow Venezuelans with a valid Visa. - Applying for the “Humanitarian Visa” must be processed at the designated General Consulates of Peru.”

(Gov-Peru, 2019a)

In response to the increasing number of Venezuelan migrants, Peru’s President Vizcarra declared on 15 June 2019 the cessation of the previous **Permits for Temporary Permanence (PTP)** and mandated a new **“Humanitarian Visa”**, valid for one year and renewable up to two (El Comercio, 2019a). Until then, Peru had been among the most welcoming nations in South America for Venezuelans, however, as the influx continued, exceeding 800,000 by mid-2019 (R4V, 2025), **concerns** grew about the negative impact that migration could have on public service capacity, social cohesion, and national security (Mazza & Villarreal, 2023; Boruchowicz et al., 2024).

“Peru has a long tradition of welcoming citizens from other countries, but as a nation, we also must ensure the security, tranquillity, and peace of all Peruvians - President Vizcarra.”
(Gov-Peru, 2019b)

Behind the **justifications** for the visa requirement, the government cited constitutional obligations to guarantee national security and public order. Its primary **policy tool**, the **Supreme Decree N° 000177-2019** supported by Legislative Decree No. 1130-2012 explicitly reference Article 163 of the Peruvian Constitution, which mandates the state **goal** to ensure *“the security of the Nation”* as an *“integral and permanent”* responsibility, both *“internally and externally”* (SD-0177, 2019, p.1). This legal framing under national security and constitutional mandates, along with articles 2 and 14, which create the *“National Superintendence of Migration”*, stressed Venezuela’s position outside the **MERCOSUR** agreements, portraying migration management as a national defence **priority** (p.2). The documents additionally emphasise coordinated action across government agencies through domestic governance with the **objective** to prevent any phenomenon that threatens public tranquillity or internal order (pp. 1-4):

“Since Venezuela is suspended from all the rights and obligations inherent to its status as a State Party of MERCOSUR, the right of Venezuelan nationals to transit without a passport or visa in Peru is now ended.”
(SD-0177, 2019, p.2)

Furthermore, **public discourse** made **assumptions** and **justifications** evident when President Vizcarra announced on national television that the new Humanitarian Visa would be linked to the government’s **goal** to fight Venezuelan criminal activity (Gov-Peru, 2019c). In several statements reported in El Comercio (2019b), Vizcarra stressed that Peru’s openness to migration must be balanced with responsibility for public safety:

“We are not restricting Venezuelans... We are asking for minimum conditions ...it is logical and justified to require a visa to have greater control.”
(El Comercio, 2019b)

Moreover, Vizcarra declared while airing on TV under the *“Safe Migration Operation 2019”* the deportation of a group of undocumented Venezuelans: *“We are not allowing persons who continue to offend the country”* (Gov-Peru, 2019d, p.4; La República, 2019a). This statement was utilised to reassure the public that the government was taking concrete steps with the **objective** of addressing rising anxieties about crime. The president further emphasised that the new visa requirement would allow authorities to *“restore order to the process of*

migration” by ensuring that “*only those who met the criteria would be admitted into the country*” (El Peruano, 2019; La República, 2019a)

An important observation regarding the **policy tools** and **official documentations** on the “*Humanitarian Visa*” is that despite being introduced as a migration policy centred on **solidarity** (Vera Delzo, 2022), in fact the **Supreme decree No. 000177-2019** outlined a general policy measure which in its **mechanism** compels all Venezuelans to hold a visa to enter Peru, where the Humanitarian Visa is one of **three available options**:

“For Venezuelans to enter the country (Peru), they must apply for either: (a) A temporary visa, (b) a Resident Visa, or (c) a Resident Humanitarian Visa.”
(SD-0177, 2019, pp. 2-3)

Therefore, the Peruvian government appeared to have masked the imposition of a general visa requirement behind the humanitarian opportunity it claimed to offer Venezuelans. This is true since the **mechanisms** for eligibility for this visa were limited to individuals who met the conditions outlined in a separate **regional framework**—the Ushuaia Protocol. Thus, the **narrative** of a **Humanitarian Visa** was used to soften the public reaction to the new visa requirement (p.2):

“Within the framework of the Ushuaia Protocol and the Fourth Axis of the National Migration Policy, it is through the new Visa requirement, to also admit, for humanitarian reasons, Venezuelan nationals who do not have a valid passport.”
(SD-0177, 2019)

Moving forward, Peruvian authorities and the general public were also concerned about the **presumed** unregulated nature of the Venezuelan migration (Parent, 2022). A significant challenge was the absence of valid passports or identification documents among many migrants, which complicated efforts to identify them (El Comercio, 2019c; La República, 2019b). Thus, the Peruvian government also added, through the “**Official Letter No. 2-10/9 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**” new **technical requirements** for the Humanitarian Visa, reinforcing again a **narrative** of “*security and order*” (SD-0177, 2019, p.2), and shifting the burden of documentation and background checks to Peruvian consulates abroad.

“The Peruvian government is concerned about all the people who may enter into informal work, and particularly those who put in danger their human dignity, which may involve people-trafficking, labour and sexual exploitation.”
(New-Humanitarian, 2019, p.1)

These requirements in the form of **coordination mechanisms** between **consular offices** mandated that migrants apply for visas at Peruvian consulates outside the country, and

fill forms that check on identity verification and biometrics (Gov-Peru, 2019e), encouraging thousands of migrants, including underaged, to flock to the country before the new law came into force, worsening the border flows (El Comercio, 2019d; La República, 2019c):

“Thousands of migrants cross into Peru before the deadline for all Venezuelans to have valid visas and passports.”

(BBC, 2019a; Jazeera, 2019)

Among the most polemic visa requirements was a “**criminal record certificate**” from Venezuelan authorities, which was previously unrequired, and many Venezuelans found it challenging to obtain due to fears of state repression (El Comercio, 2019e):

“It’s a dictatorship [in Venezuela] and [officials] can interpret the law as they wish,” – “obtaining a copy of a clean criminal record can cost more than \$100, in addition to \$300 or more for a passport.”

(New humanitarian, 2019, p.1)

Alternatively, the **political context** in Peru during 2018 and 2019 was marked by instability. President Vizcarra, a **centre-right-wing politician** who assumed office in March 2018 after the resignation of the previous president amid corruption allegations, presided over a fragmented political landscape (Paredes & Encinas, 2020). The country was immersed in corruption scandals, clashes between the executive and legislature, and widespread public distrust in political institutions, leading to Vizcarra’s dissolution of Congress in September 2019 (Castro & Mosquera, 2022). In this unstable environment, the issue of Venezuelan migration was further **politicised**. As Venezuelan arrivals surged, and media coverage increasingly linked migration to crime and insecurity, the government found an opportunity to **reshape** the national **narrative** (Aguilar, 2022, pp. 131-134). Therefore, managing Venezuelan migration under securitisation grounds seemed both a response to logistical and legal challenges and a calculated move to channel public anxieties while reinforcing the authority of a contested administration.

“Peru will continue its efforts, together with other countries in the region, so that Venezuela soon returns to the path of democracy; but while this happens, the respective measures must be taken to ensure orderly migration and do not allow the entry of bad elements.”

(Gov-Peru, 2019c)

Besides, the **public debate** in Peru became increasingly **polarised**. Concerns about security, employment, and public services fuelled heated discussions in the media and political arenas (El Comercio, 2019f). A particularly controversial moment occurred when right-wing congresswoman Saavedra of the Fujimorista party declared in Congress:

“Venezuelans, whether bad or good, have to leave Peru.” - “One million immigrants, both legal and illegal, both workers and criminal bandits, need to eat, need to sleep, and they come to take jobs away from our Peruvians.”

(La República, 2019d)

This statement, widely reported in national and international media (BBC, 2019b), sparked outrage, and intensified the debate about xenophobia and the rights of migrants with exclusionary measures (Amnesty, 2020a). Numerous civil society groups, human rights organisations, and members of the public condemned the remarks as discriminatory, warning that such **populist rhetoric** could further stigmatise an already vulnerable population, “*A humanitarian visa only in name*” (Amnesty, 2020b, p.17). They also highlighted how migration measures targeting Venezuelans were being instrumentalised for **political purposes**, rather than genuinely addressing humanitarian concerns.

“Peru has been an example of solidarity and safe refuge. Instead of resorting to restrictive politicised policies, it should continue to demonstrate leadership and welcome Venezuelans.”

(Amnesty International, 2020a)

Finally, the policy’s outputs and outcomes became evident by 2020, when only **10.588** Venezuelans had managed to access Peru via **Humanitarian Visa**, compared to over **248.038** who had previously benefited from the **Permit for Temporary Permanence (PTP)** (Equilibrium, 2020, p.34; UNHCR, 2018). The visa process became too tedious for Venezuelans, forcing them to request **asylum** instead, resulting in figures rising to **530.000** asylum seekers by 2022 (Vera Delzo, 2022, p.217). Thus, the **Humanitarian Visa** marked a significant tightening of Peru’s migration regime, resulting in fewer beneficiaries than earlier, more open policies, and a surge in **asylum requests**. A prevailing **narrative** that framed migration as a **public threat**, reinforcing **populist exclusionary and securitising rhetorics**.

4.2.2 The Colombian Case: The Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan Migrants (ETPV)

“We are making public our country’s decision to create a Temporary Protection Statute, which will allow us to carry out a regularisation for Venezuelan migrants in Colombia”. -

“Today, Colombia shows the world that we act with fraternity and solidarity.”

(President Duque)

(Colombia-USA Embassy, 2021a)

On February 8, 2021, Colombian President Duque announced the creation of the **Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan Migrants (ETPV)** with a ten-year protection scheme, alongside UN and UNHCR representatives (Press-UNHCR, 2021a). The government **justified** the ETPV as a “*humanitarian response to the multidimensional crisis unfolding in Venezuela and their mass migration exodus*” (ETPV, 2021, p. 2) which, by that point, over 1.7 million Venezuelans were in Colombia (R4V, 2021), with more than half in irregular status and deprived of fundamental rights.

“The statute is created considering that more than 56% of Venezuelans in Colombia are in an irregular situation, and understanding that irregularity affects not only the migrant, but the country.” (President Duque)
(El Tiempo, 2021)

Decree 216, 2021, the ETPV’s primary **policy tool**, signals that it was designed as a humanitarian gesture with the **objective** to create a comprehensive, rights-based mechanism to integrate Venezuelan migrants into Colombian society, strengthening the state’s capacity to manage migration flows effectively (ETPV, 2021, pp.1-2). The document **justifies** this by explicitly referencing Article 1 of the **Colombian Constitution**, which defines the nation as a “*Social State under the Rule of Law*” and “*founded on respect for human dignity, solidarity, and the primacy of the general interest*”(p.1). This constitutional reference compels the government to uphold the rights of all individuals within its territory in line with Article 100, which also guarantees that foreigners enjoy the same rights as nationals, “*except where the Constitution or law provides otherwise*”(p.1-2).

Furthermore, by referencing **Decree 216, 2021** (p.2-3), the **ETPV** highlights Colombia’s commitment to international human rights treaties as enshrined in Article 93 of the **Colombian Constitution** which elevates **instruments** such as the “*International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*” and the “*1951 Refugee Convention*” to a constitutional status in their management of migration. These legal obligations collectively **justify** the **ETPV** as a necessary policy to protect migrants’ fundamental rights, including access to health, education, and formal employment, along with other international commitments to global and orderly migration.

“As to the ETPV, Colombia signed the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018), which aims to join efforts to address the migration phenomenon globally.”
(ETPV, 2021, p. 2)

Later, the document also explicitly **acknowledges** “*the humanitarian crisis that led the Venezuelan exodus*” and remarks on the “*urgent need to provide migrants with legal certainty*”

and access to rights” (pp. 1-5). Hence, along **Resolution 971-2021**, it establishes the “**Administrative Registry for Venezuelans (RUMV)**” (R-0971, 2021), as a **mechanism** for identifying migrants during the **10-year ETPV** period (p.8).

“The ETPV grants Venezuelans who entered Colombia before January 31, 2021, or through official channels within two years, a ten-year permit.”
(R-9071, 2021, p.5)

Beyond humanitarian concerns, the ETPV was also **justified** on **pragmatic grounds**. The official document **Decree 216, 2021**, acknowledges that irregular migration poses social cohesion, public health, and security challenges for migrants (pp. 1-3). By regularising migrants’ status, the Colombian state aimed to reduce their vulnerabilities associated with irregularity, such as exploitation and exclusion, while improving its **efficiency capacity** to plan and deliver public services (Poveda-Clavijo & Mena, 2024). Thus, the policy appears to have balanced solidarity with governance, including both rights protection and the strengthening of institutional control.

“Not knowing who is within the national territory not only represents a security risk, but also hinders the development and delivery of public policies aimed at integrating and assimilating migrants.”
(Gov-Colombia, 2021a, p2)

Nevertheless, the **ETPV** also served Colombia’s international ambitions through **solidarity narratives** (Semana, 2021a). By adopting a comprehensive **rights-based migration policy**, Colombia positioned itself as a regional leader and model for other countries grappling with Venezuelan migration (Colombia-USA Embassy, 2021b). This **image-building** was crucial for attracting international support and cooperation, reinforcing Colombia’s commitment to global migration governance frameworks in line with the ambitions of President Duque, a **right-wing conservative** politician (Hussein & Nye, 2024, pp. 87-88).

“This status provides access to formal employment, healthcare, education, banking, and state subsidies, and allows legal residence and work, with equal rights and obligations as Colombian nationals.”
(R-9071, 2021, p.5)

International media reports such as BBC (2021): “Colombia and Venezuela: Why Duque is “taking a risk” now with the ambitious measure to regularise Venezuelan migrants”, CNN (2021a): “Iván Duque on Conclusiones about the regularisation of Venezuelans: “We couldn’t continue with the situation as it was.”, and El País (2021): “The regularisation of 1.7 million Venezuelans in Colombia boosts Duque’s international agenda” also highlight a

populist international framing accompanying Duque's announcement of the **ETPV** and its **justification** throughout the implementation stage.

Furthermore, at the policy's **official socialisation events**, Duque repeatedly stated, *"We hope that other countries follow our example"* (Gov-Colombia, 2021b). The move received immediate praise from **high-profile international actors**, including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees; they called it a *"historic gesture"* and *"emblematic for the region, even for the whole world."* (Press-UNHCR, 2021b). Besides, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken (Atlantic-Council, 2021) and other Western leaders also commended Duque, reinforcing the government's efforts to attract **international goodwill** and **support**:

"This act of solidarity in Colombia's Government will enable at least one third of the region's five million refugees and migrants to access services and formally contribute to the Colombian economy."

(António Guterres-UN Secretary-General)

(United Nations, 2021)

The spotlight was a crucial **mechanism** for Duque, whose approval ratings had plummeted to historic lows due to widespread discontent over unemployment, inequality, crime, and unpopular tax reforms, facing mass protests and criticism of his administration's handling of domestic issues (Castel et al., 2024). Duque seemed to have found both a **challenge** and an **opportunity** in the Venezuelan migration crisis:

"Presidential leadership has been characterised by overestimating its political influence, polarising discourse, and appearing disconnected from political and social reality."

(El Espectador, 2021a)

However, by executing Colombia's **humanitarian leadership** through the **ETPV** and consistently attributing the Venezuelan migration influx to Maduro's dictatorship (CNN, 2021b) Duque was able to **instrumentalise** the presence of Venezuelans, shifting the **national** and **international narrative** toward a positive, high-profile initiative that aligned his **government's humanitarian rhetoric** with Western and multilateral partners (Poveda-Clavijo & Mena, 2024).

Another **mechanism** through which Duque reassured the Colombian public concerning strains on public services and competition for resources due to the **ETPV** involved publicising the international funding and the cooperation his government secured with international donors. (Gov-Colombia, 2021c). This **effort** is interpreted as aimed at offsetting weak domestic and declining approval ratings: *"Just as we have made fiscal, social, and diplomatic efforts,*

today we call on world donors for resources to enable this fraternal migration policy to succeed” - President Duque (Gov-Colombia, 2021c). He leveraged the migration response to recast his presidency as one of **regional leadership and humanitarian vision**, distracting attention from internal troubles (Semana, 2021b).

“Duque hopes to regularise most Venezuelans before leaving office. - For Duque, achieving that goal is the “great triumph of a migration policy, as the world deserves in the 21st century.”
(El Espectador, 2022b)

Although the **ETPV** sparked debate across Colombia’s political spectrum, with some opposition factions criticising the policy as a distraction from Colombia’s pressing domestic challenges, and the risks of overburdening public services (El Espectador, 2022c), the policy eventually became embedded in President Duque’s **political motto** (Hussein & Nye, 2024). Over time, the **ETPV** gained broader acceptance and was seen as a **tool** for enhancing Colombia’s international image and securing national support (Poveda-Clavijo & Mena, 2024). By the end of Duque’s term, the leading **left-wing opposition** leader and next president of Colombia, Gustavo Petro, publicly acknowledged the **ETPV** as a positive achievement from Duque's administration.

“I applaud President Duque’s decision regarding Venezuelan migrants. It was an act aligned with international refugee standards and demonstrated timely and positive sensitivity.”
(President Petro - Opposition Leader)
(Semana, 2021c)

Finally, by September 2024, the **ETPV** as **output** had **1.936.251** Venezuelans benefiting from the **Permit**, far surpassing the **762.857** who benefited from the earlier stay programmes (USAID, 2020; R4V, 2025). As for its **outcomes**, the ETPV has been lauded internationally for significantly reducing irregularity among Venezuelans, allowing them access to essential basic services and long-term social protection (Palacios-Sanabria et al., 2022). It is regarded as the region’s most ambitious and practical regularisation effort, setting a **new standard** for migration management.

4.3 Programme Theories Schematisation and Discussion

When comparing the program theories underpinning Peru’s 2019 Humanitarian Visa and Colombia’s 2021 Temporary Protection Statute (ETPV) for Venezuelan migrants, it becomes clear that each policy reflected distinct implementation logics:

Table 5. Program Theory Reconstructions

Program Theory elements	Humanitarian Visa for Venezuelans Peru 20219	Colombian Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan Migrants (ETPV) 2021
Assumptions	Venezuelan migration poses public service delivery capacity, social cohesion, and security issues requiring a state-restrictive approach.	Venezuelan migration represents as a challenge to governance, and institutional capacity hence necessitates a multidimensional, supportive, and state-cooperative approach
Objectives	Reassert state authority over border governance, manage domestic political pressure, and restrict undocumented entry.	Regularize migrants, enhance state capacity for service provision, and foster integration while positioning Colombia in international leadership.
Tools	Legal decrees and official communications establishing new country entry requirements coordinated through consular and migration offices. (Decree 000177-2019 / Oficio N° 2-10/9)	Legal decrees for long-term integration frameworks coordinated and supported by international cooperation agencies. (Decree 216-2021 / Resolution 971-2021)
Mechanisms	Created an externally processed visa with strict documentation requirements, justified through legal and security-based rationales. (Humanitarian Visa - One year, renewable up to 2 years)	Established a broad regularization framework linking documentation to access to essential services, embedded in solidarity grounds. (ETPV- 10 Years Permanence Permit) (RUMV-Registry)
Outputs	Low levels of visa issuance, a surge in irregular entries, and increased asylum claims. (10.588 beneficiaries of Humanitarian Visa by 2020 VS about 248.038 in previous Permit Programs) (Rising Asylum Requests up to 530,000 by 2022)	Mass enrollment in temporary protections, expanded service coverage for migrants, and reinforced Colombia's international partnerships and visibility. (1.936.251 beneficiaries of the ETPV by 2024 VS about 762.857 in previous Permit Programs)
Outcomes	Policy reinforced exclusionary practices, weakened migrant protections, fueled polarized migration debate, and hardened migration regime.	Enhanced migrant inclusion, expanded service coverage, and increased international recognition of Colombia's policy model.
Narrative	Securitization: Migration as a public threat, reinforcing exclusionary narratives.	Solidarity: Migration as a public challenge, reinforcing humanitarian narratives.
Populism Nuance	Populist use of migration to bolster domestic executive authority and calm anxieties during political instability.	Populist use of migration to garner international support and alleviate domestic executive authority dissatisfaction.

As to **assumptions**, Peru's approach was grounded in the belief that unregulated Venezuelan migration threatened Peru's national security and the state's public service delivery capacity. This is evident in official discourse and legal documents (see Table 4), which frequently stress the need to preserve public order and invoke constitutional mandates to control migration and protect the welfare of Peruvians. Moreover, the government's depiction of migration as a source of criminality and instability reveals a *securitisation threat logic* (Ceyhan & Tsoukala, 2002), presenting it as a risk. In contrast, as mentioned in its official documents (see Table 4), Colombia recognises the Venezuelan exodus as a humanitarian phenomenon, implying that an irregular status may translate into vulnerability for migrants, potentially posing challenges to effective state governance. In this *transversal solidarity standpoint* (Garcia & Jørgensen, 2020), rather than viewing migrants as threats, the Colombian state assumed that regularisation would not only protect migrants but also enhance future security and institutional capacity, emphasising the practical benefits of regularisation.

Regarding **objectives**, Peru sought to reassert state control over migration flows and enhance confidence in governance by limiting the entry of undocumented individuals, all while attempting to portray a humanitarian stand. The government's stated aim was to restore order to the migration process, being both *reactive* to public anxieties about crime and *strategic*, allowing the government to channel popular discontent and reinforce executive authority during political instability (Geddes, 2022; Pécout, 2024). On the other hand, Colombia's objectives, although also strategic, implied a rights-based and future-oriented position. It aimed to regularise Venezuelan migrants in *reaction* to the migration influx while *proactively* enabling the state and its institutions to plan and deliver services effectively and to enhance Colombia's reputation (Geddes, 2022; Pécout, 2024). This promotion of an inclusive policy environment was not only intended to turn the migration challenge into an opportunity but also to respond to the desire for achieving domestic institutional consolidation.

Concerning **policy tools** and **mechanisms**, Peru's approach relied on *restrictive* legal instruments (Decree No. 000177-2019) and *coordinated* consular action (Oficio N° 2-10/9) to establish administrative barriers to entry. The *Humanitarian Visa* necessitated extensive documentation and consular processing abroad, yet still being dependent on a centralised communication and authority, effectively sharing the weight of proof and profiling onto migrants and consular officials, resonating with *Type 1 Multilevel Governance* (Hooghe & Marks, 2003). The mechanisms were exclusionary by design, making legal entry difficult for most Venezuelans and effectively channelling migration into irregular or asylum pathways. Colombia, in contrast, implemented its *ETPV* through a *comprehensive* and *inclusive* legal

framework (Decree 216/2021) - (Resolution 971/2021), supported by the coordination with international organisations such as UNHCR and IOM. The mechanisms established broad eligibility, a ten-year protection status, and a national registry (RUMV) reducing migrants' barriers to legal status and prioritising their access to services and protections, all while drawing upon human rights regimes and international standards; a logic close to *Type 2 Multilevel Governance* (Hooghe & Marks, 2003).

The **outputs and outcomes** of these policies further illustrate the impact of their underlying program theories. Peru's restrictive approach (Ceyhan & Tsoukala, 2002) led to a sharp decline in legal entries, a surge in irregular crossings, and only **10,588** Venezuelans being regularised under the *Humanitarian Visa*, compared to over **248,000** under the previous regimes. Besides, the rise in asylum-seeker requests (**530,000**) and increased migration public debate reflected an unintended effect of the exclusionary and securitisation approach. In contrast, Colombia's *ETPV* saw more than one million Venezuelans pre-register for regularisation (**1.936.251**), benefiting from expanded access to services and protections compared to about **762.857** in previous Permit Programs, actions that, along with helping migrants, favourably garnered international attention for its humanitarian expressions (Schwiertz and Schwenken (2020.)

Finally, as to the **narratives and populist nuances**, in the Peruvian case, migration was presented as a public threat with humanitarian language strategically deployed through the *communicative sphere* (Schmidt, 2008) to justify *securitising and restrictive narratives* (Ceyhan & Tsoukala, 2002), thereby legitimising exclusionary practices and reinforcing the role of public executive authority. This approach was consistent with the dynamics of **right-wing populism** (Mudde, 2017; Gagnon et al., 2018), where migration through *lay narratives* (Smellie & Boswell, 2024) of fear and nationalism was instrumental for gaining **domestic** political purposes. In contrast, Colombia's narrative emphasised *solidarity* (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2020), using both the *coordinative and communicative sphere* (Schmidt, 2008), presenting migration as a humanitarian duty and an opportunity for national leadership and social development. Here, inclusive *lay and technocratic narratives* (Smellie & Boswell, 2024) were employed to promote domestic consensus and enhance migrants' integration, thus migration policy became instrumental in building legitimacy and support on both **domestic and international fronts**, combining expressions of both **right-and left-wing populism** (Mudde, 2017; Gagnon et al., 2018).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

As discussed, international migration is increasingly influenced by greater access to mobilisation pathways, socio-economic motivations, and the differing political-ideological contexts and governance regimes through which states manage and respond to the reception of migrants.

In South America, the large-scale displacement of Venezuelans has posed a significant regional governance challenge, with countries reacting through divergent policy approaches. Colombia and Peru, which have received the highest numbers of Venezuelan migrants, have shifted between exclusionary and restrictive approaches and more inclusive and humanitarian responses. These dynamics are rooted not only in public governance responses but also in politicised narratives and policy assumptions, moving the debate over migration management from a state-led governance sphere into public contestation and populist sentiment.

By identifying and analysing Peru's 2019 and Colombia's 2021 policy responses to Venezuelan migration and reconstructing the program theories underlying such policies, this thesis sought to answer: *To what extent is populism reflected in the way Peru (2019) and Colombia (2021) have responded to Venezuelans in their migration policies?* To answer this, it is necessary to address each sub-question.

5.1. Answers to the Research Questions

- *Which migration policies have Peruvian and Colombian authorities implemented regarding Venezuelan migration?*

The divergence between Peru's 2019 and Colombia's 2021 migration responses must be understood after the 2016 suspension of Venezuela from the MERCOSUR Residence Agreement (MRA) and its transitional measures. With Venezuela's suspension, Peru and Colombia were no longer bound to accept Venezuelan migrants under the same regional obligations. Both countries adopted transitional regularisation mechanisms reflecting regional solidarity and coordination principles. Peru implemented the **PTP** permit from 2017 to 2019, and Colombia introduced the **TSP** permit between 2017 and 2020. After this transitional phase, both countries moved toward more autonomous, domestically defined migration responses: Peru's 2019 **Humanitarian Visa** and Colombia's 2021 **Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan Migrants (ETPV)** (see chapter 4 for details).

- ***Which narratives are exhibited in the programme theory of such policies?***

Reconstructing the program theories behind Peru's and Colombia's migration policies revealed differing narrative frameworks, each shaping how migration was problematised and legitimised.

In Peru, the narrative embedded in the **2019 Humanitarian Visa** policy was predominantly **securitising** (Ceyhan & Tsoukala, 2002). Official documents and authorities presented Venezuelan migration as a risk to national security, public order, and public service capacity. References to crime, lack of documentation, and the potential strain on public services positioned migrants as a threat. These elements were reinforced by exclusionary constitutional justifications invoking national defence and internal order. While humanitarian appeared in the visa's name, it mainly tempered the restrictive policy shift rather than signalling a genuinely inclusive approach.

By contrast, the programme theory of Colombia's **2021 ETPV** was constructed around a **solidarity** narrative (Schwiertz & Schwenken, 2020; Garcia & Jørgensen, 2021). The statute drew on constitutional values of dignity and equality, referencing Colombia's obligations under international human rights instruments. Migration was presented as a social reality requiring multidimensional legal and institutional management for integration. The ETPV enhanced Colombia's international standing while addressing state interests in migration governance and controlling domestic public dissatisfaction.

- ***How have Colombian and Peruvian authorities justified their migration policies through populism?***

In Peru, the **securitisation logic** was legitimised through **politicised lay narratives** (Smellie & Boswell, 2024), often conveyed via highly mediated public statements that linked Venezuelan migration with crime, instability, and loss of national control. These narratives positioned the state as the protector of public order and sovereignty, appealing to widespread anxieties among the Peruvian population. Politically powered remarks by President Vizcarra and members of Congress invoked themes consistent with **right-wing populism** (Gagnon et al., 2018), presenting migration as a threat and legitimising increased control and deportations. Venezuelan migration became instrumentalised as a political scapegoat, a visible target through which authorities could signal responsiveness to citizen concerns and consolidate political support. By externalising blame and portraying migrants as the source of insecurity, officials deflected attention from broader governance challenges.

In Colombia, a **solidarity-based** approach was legitimised through **politicised technocratic and lay narratives** (Smellie & Boswell, 2024), illustrating the practical aspects of organised migration management for efficient public service delivery and strong institutional capacity. The state was portrayed as a humanitarian actor acting responsibly in a regional crisis. Public statements by President Duque positioned the policy as both a moral duty and a strategic act of statecraft, emphasising Colombia's commitment to international norms, constitutional values, and orderly migration management. These dynamics resonated with populist rhetoric from **both right and left populism** (Mudde, 2017; Gagnon et al., 2018), presenting the government as the embodiment of national virtue and the protector of Colombians and displaced Venezuelans. Through media coverage, donor engagement, and endorsement by multilateral institutions, the Duque administration leveraged the ETPV to improve Colombia's global image and attract foreign aid, migration serving to stabilise domestic political tensions, restore public confidence, and reaffirm state authority.

Taking everything together and referring back to the main research question: ***To what extent is populism reflected in the way Peru (2019) and Colombia (2021) have responded to Venezuelans in their migration policies?***

Populism was evident in both Peru's and Colombia's migration responses, but in distinct and strategically targeted ways. In Peru, the **securitisation narrative** was mobilised primarily within the domestic arena, highlighting **right-wing populist** expressions. The *Humanitarian Visa* projected state control and reassured citizens of orderly migration management, while humanitarian language masked its restrictive nature to avoid backlash. In Colombia, the **solidarity narrative** functioned within a strategically planned **right-wing and left-wing** populist scheme. While **domestically**, authorities emphasised national security and controlled migration, which are characteristic of **right-wing** populist appeals, internationally, the *ETPV* was portrayed as a **humanitarian initiative** aligned with global standards and constitutional values, often resonating with **left-wing** expressions. This approach aimed to improve Colombia's international reputation and secure foreign investment while reassuring Colombian citizens that the ETPV would not jeopardise Colombians' resources and national interests.

5.2 Discussion

This thesis advances the literature on migration and populism by identifying a pattern of populist strategy that extends beyond exclusionary outcomes. It demonstrates that populism can also be deployed to generate international support and legitimacy, as seen in Colombia's

approach. Here, populist rhetoric consolidated domestic political standing and positioned the country as a humanitarian leader, attracting global recognition and resources. This supports the growing assumption that populism, although it instrumentalises migration policy, may not always be divisive or restrictive, revealing its versatility in serving broader political purposes, including those with positive or constructive dimensions. It shows that populism can draw upon sentiments from both right and left, manifesting through supportive, inclusive, and nation-branding strategies (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017).

Another significant contribution demonstrates how states use discursive strategies to legitimise and socialise migration policies. The Peruvian case illustrates how humanitarian language was strategically employed to disguise the restrictive intent of visa requirements, presenting exclusionary measures as benevolent or necessary for protection. This foreshadows a broader trend in governments using rhetorical devices or symbolic gestures to obscure policy decisions' true meaning and intentions, shaping public perception and facilitating controversial measures (Destradi & Plagemann, 2019; Cadier, 2023). Recognising these strategies underscores the importance of critically examining official narratives and the potential dissonance between policy rhetoric and actual outcomes.

The study also highlights the critical role of international regimes in shaping migration governance (Lietaert & Pécout, 2024). The suspension of Venezuela from the MERCOSUR Residence Agreement ushered in divergent national responses, even among countries with strong regional and cultural proximity. This highlights the importance of studying supranational frameworks, beyond the mainstream Global North's ones, in fostering coordinated approaches to migration crises and demonstrating how their absence can lead to fragmented and nationally driven policies.

5.3 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Despite the aforementioned contributions, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, while the thesis identified previous research suggesting a correlation between Peru's imposition of the *Humanitarian visa* and the subsequent increase in asylum applications by Venezuelan migrants, it does not provide a direct, in-depth quantitative or qualitative analysis sufficient to establish causality. The observed shift towards asylum claims is a significant finding that recommends further research to disentangle the specific mechanisms, migrants' motivations, and external factors influencing this trend. This can be done by combining surveys, in-depth interviews with Venezuelan asylum seekers, and statistical analysis of asylum application trends to determine a direct correlation.

Second, the research is limited to Peru and Colombia, which, while central to the regional context, may not fully capture the diversity of migration policy responses across South America. Therefore, it recommends an exhaustive examination of additional national contexts within the region by undertaking comparative analyses of the variety of migration governance strategies implemented after the MERCOSUR agreements, the influence of differing political and cultural environments, and how other regional frameworks, or their absence, have shaped policy outcomes. A suggestion would be to include countries like Ecuador, Chile, and Argentina, which have experienced similar influxes of Venezuelan migration.

Third, another limitation concerns exploring the media's role in framing migration. While the thesis acknowledges the importance of politically motivated public statements and populist narratives, it does not deeply investigate how media coverage may influence perceptions of migration, criminality, or the rise of xenophobia. This suggests that media actors may play a role in reinforcing or challenging segregationist attitudes. A recommendation is made for conducting media framing and discourse analysis on the impact that sensitising stories can have on Venezuelan migration management.

Finally, while Colombia's migration policy has remained continuous, Peru's approach has undergone significant changes, with new measures and policy shifts in recent years. This evolving landscape means that the findings related to Peru may not fully reflect the most current policy environment, and the dynamic nature of migration governance in the region warrants ongoing attention. Therefore, future research should closely monitor and analyse these policy developments to capture the implications of recent changes and to assess how evolving strategies continue to shape the experiences of Venezuelan migrants in the region.

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Appendix (C): Coding Table

Media Reports Content Analyses: Peru

In Vivo Quote	Open Code	Axial Code (Operationalised Terms)	Selective Code	Narrative	Populism
"After welcoming them with open arms, it is only logical we ask for a visa."	"national identity" "our people" "protect Peruvians"	"our people" "national identity" "welfare for our people"	Nativist Expressions	Securitisation	Right-Wing Populism
"Peruvians are being displaced by foreigners in the labor market."	"resource competition" "economic displacement" "criminals" "foreigners must leave" "bad migrants"	"state burden" "welfare for our people" "resource competition"	Nativist Expressions		
"Good or bad Venezuelans, they all have to leave Peru."	"denial of rights" "legal exclusion" "humanitarian facade"	"criminals" "illegal migrant" "law and order"	Nativist Expressions		
"Illegally rejecting Venezuelans seeking protection."	"restricted entry" "border management"	"zero tolerance" "no same rights" "forced returns"	Exclusionary Policies Expressions		
"Hundreds of Venezuelans await entry despite the restrictions."	"migrant bottlenecks" "border filtering"	"biometric & visa controls" "travel bans" "forced returns"	Exclusionary Policies Expressions		
"Children sleep at the border due to lack of visa."	"vulnerable groups" "excluded" "children at risk"	"detention centers" "no same rights" "border security"	Exclusionary Policies Expressions		
"The Humanitarian Visa is only granted with passport and criminal record."	"documentation as barrier" "criminal record checks"	"biometric & visa controls" "border security" "criminals"	Exclusionary Policies Expressions		
"Peru will require passport and visa from Venezuelans."	"sovereignty" "border control" "threat framing"	"law and order" "sovereignty" "border security"	Nativist Expressions		
"Measures will be evaluated to regulate migration."	"policy evaluation" "migration management" "service delivery capacity" "institutional overload" "public service saturation"	"bureaucrats" "failed leadership" "law and order"	Anti-Elite Expressions		
"We are protecting Peruvians."	"national identity" "our people" "protect Peruvians"	"our people" "national identity" "welfare for our people"	Nativist Expressions		

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In Vivo Quote	Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Code	Narrative	Populism
"A humanitarian response to the mass arrival of Venezuelan migrants."	"mass influx" "moral duty" "solidarity"	"community and solidarity" "universal rights" "dignity"	Open Migration Expressions	Solidarity	Right and Left-Wing Populism
"Mass regularisation for more than 1.7 million."	"legalisation" "inclusion at scale"	"regularization" "free movement" "same rights"	Open Migration Expressions		
"A historic decision of responsibility and solidarity."	"solidarity" "historical responsibility"	"nation branding" "development" "community and solidarity"	Inclusive Policies Expressions		
"The statute will not jeopardise Colombians' resources."	"domestic reassurance" "resource protection"	"resource allocation" "welfare programme access" "national development"	Inclusive Policies Expressions		
"This measure allows us to know who is here."	"documentation" "visibility" "legal control"	"regularisation" "access to services" "state-led governance"	Inclusive Policies Expressions		
"The international community must support this policy."	"global cooperation", "international legitimacy"	"human rights" "international cooperation" "global example"	Anti-Oligarch-Capitalist Expressions		
"Colombia leads hemispheric migration policy."	"regional influence" "norm-setting"	"nation branding" "development" "community and solidarity"	Inclusive Policies Expressions		
"Petro applauds Duque's migration policy."	"political unity" "cross-partisan endorsement"	"democratic rights" "integration" "equality"	Inclusive Policies Expressions		
"An unprecedented measure for the region."	"exceptional response" "historic moment"	"redistribution" "moral duty" "human rights"	Anti-Oligarch-Capitalist Expressions		
"This reinforces our democracy, it does not endanger it."	"democratic resilience" "stability reassurance"	"institutional stability" "democratic rights" "national development"	Inclusive Policies Expressions		

Appendix (D): Concepts' Operationalisation

Variable	Definition	Operationalizations	Methods
Populism (x) “A thin-centred ideology appealing to “the people against a perceived elite,” (Mudde, 2017)	Right-wing populism (a): Immigration is undesired. Elites are to blame for failing to protect the people. It advocates for restrictive and exclusionary policies. Left-wing populism (b): Immigration is a result of systemic injustices. It emphasizes anti-oligarch-capitalist critiques while advocating for inclusive and rights-based policies.	a) Nativist expressions “anti-multiculturalism” “border-security” “state-burden” “criminals” “illegal-migrant” “invasion” “invaders” “law-and-order” “national-identity” “national-security” “our-people” “sovereignty” “traditional-values” “welfare-for-our-people” Anti-elite expressions “bureaucrats” “corrupt-establishment” “enemies-of-the-people” “failed-leadership” “liars” “lobbyist” “poppets” “political-non-correctness” “the-elites” “traitorous-politicians” Exclusionary policies expressions “asylum-caps” “biometric-&-visa controls” “border-walls” “no-same-rights” “deportation” “detention-centres” “forced-returns” “merit-based-migration” “travel-bans” “zero-tolerance” “aliens” b) Open migration expressions “community-and solidarity” “dignity” “no-detention” “free-movement” “no-borders” “our-neighbours” “regularisation” “universal-rights” “brain-gain” “additional-talent” “development” “diversity” Anti-Oligarch-Capitalist expressions “capitalist-oligarchy” “greed-and social-policy” “forced-displacement” “human-rights” “anti-imperialism” “inequalities-injustices” “neoliberal-exploitation” “private-interests” “redistribution” “the-disadvantaged” “the-elite” “the-privileged society” “wealth-disparity” Inclusive policies expressions “no-discrimination” “cultural-enhancement” “democratic-rights” “education,-healthcare-and-work-access” “family-reunification” “nation-branding” “pathway-to citizenship” “protections” “resettlements” “same-rights” “social-assistance” “social-benefits”	Content Analysis

Migration Policies and their Program Theory (y) “The total set of causal and normative assumptions underlying a migration policy”. (Hoogerwerf,1990; Leeuw, 2003)	Humanitarian Narratives (a): Portrays migrants as vulnerable individuals deserving rights-based protections, emphasizing solidarity and inclusive policies. Exclusionary Narratives (b): Portrays migrants as existential threats, using fear to justify securitarian and restrictive policies.	a) Solidarity from above expressions: “capacity-building” “central-management” “open-arms” “temporal-protection” “national-solidarity” “national-authority” “resource-allocation” “national-development” “nationa-duty-and-obligation” “state-led-migration-governance” “policy-harmonization” “regional-regimes” “top-down” Solidarity from below expressions: “alliances” “bottom-up” “collaboration” “communal-effort” “cooperation” “dignity” “equality” “generosity” “human-rights” “integration-initiatives” “mutual-aid” “participation” “social-protection” “welfare-programme-access” b) Securitization of migration expressions • “Socio-economic threat”(economy, employment, welfare state, and environment) • “Securitarian threat”(sovereignty, borders, and national security) • “Identitarian threat”(national identity and demographics) • “Political threat”(ant-immigrant rhetoric, racism, and xenophobia)	Content Analysis
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Appendix (E): Sources for Analysis

Country	Source	Definition
Situational Migration Background		
Peru and Colombia	UNHCR-OIM-IFRC	These are coordination mechanisms established to address the Venezuelan migration and refugee crisis.
	The Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (R4V)	This is a coordination platform comprised by about 200 organizations (including UN Agencies, civil society, and NGOs) that coordinate their efforts towards Venezuelan Migration in Latin America and the Caribbean.
Policy Documents		
Peru	Humanitarian Visa for Venezuelans (2019) - Resolution 000177-2019-MIGRATIONS. - Oficio OF.RE (MIN) N° 2-10/9 (30- May 2019) <i>(Peruvian Government)</i>	The 2019 humanitarian visa requirement marked Peru's shift from Mercosur-aligned policies (via temporary permits - (PTP), 2017–2018) to independent migration regulations. Implemented on 15 June 2019, it required Venezuelans to obtain visas at consulates (with passports/criminal records), aiming to manage inflows after earlier PTP programs.
Colombia	Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan Migrants (ETPV) (2021) - Decree 216 of March 1, 2021, - Resolution 971 of 2021. <i>(Colombian Government)</i>	The 2021 Temporary Protection Status for Venezuelan Migrants (ETPV) marked Colombia's shift from Mercosur-aligned approaches (via Special Stay Permits (TSP), 2017–2020) to independent migration governance. Implemented via Decree 216/2021, the ETPV granted 10-year residency/work permits to Venezuelans arriving before January 2021, aiming to regularise inflows and ensure long-term integration.

Media Outlets : 43 outlets in total (23 Peru – 20 Colombia)		
Peru	- El Comercio - La República - El Peruano - Peru Government - Others.	The dominant conglomerate and state-affiliated outlets inside Peru and Colombia provide political and social insights on the debate behind the migration measures implemented by authorities before, during and after execution (three months frame), while also offering critical reporting on migration, and governance trends, making them vital for this thesis research on investigation populist nuances.
Colombia	- El Tiempo - El Espectador - Semana - Colombia Government - Others.	
Peru and Colombia	- BBC in Spanish - CNN in Spanish - El Pais (Spain) - Al Jazeera - NGOs : International Amnesty, New Humanitarian, and Others.	Furthermore, by adding the media outlets shaping debate outside Peru and Colombia leverage is added for an international analysis and regional contextualization of the debate sparked by both countries' measures on the Venezuelan driven migration debate.

