

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Government through Inaction: The Venezuelan Migratory Crisis in Ecuador

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Abstract

This article analyses strategies for channelling a migrant population out of a country by indirect means. Specifically, we examine the response of the Ecuadorean state to the influx of Venezuelan newcomers since 2015. We argue that this response has been characterised by inaction, rooted not in policy failures or bad governance, but rather in a strategic governmental rationality. We show how migrants are 'herded' out of the country as a result of a form of indirect government that works differently from other 'anti-immigrant' policies like forced deportations or incarceration at the border, and yet produces similar outcomes.

Keywords: Venezuela; Ecuador; migration; governmentality; strategic inaction

Introduction

The United Nations estimates that more than 3.4 million Venezuelans have fled hunger, crime and political persecution in their country since 2015, mostly to other Latin American countries.¹ The scale of the influx has strained many Latin American states' capacity to accommodate migrants and provide services, perhaps nowhere more than in Ecuador, one of the poorest states in the region.² In this article we discuss how the Venezuelan migratory crisis in Ecuador has been governed by Ecuadorean institutional structures. Our aim is to understand how states respond in the face of complex phenomena, such as the sudden flow of migrants whose legal status is difficult to determine and whose living conditions are a source

¹International Organization for Migration (IOM)/United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 'Venezuelan Outflow Continues Unabated, Population Abroad Now Stands at 3.4 Million', 22 Feb. 2019, available at www.iom.int/news/venezuelan-outflow-continues-unabated-population-abroad-now-stands-34-million, last access 20 March 2020.

²The Regional Platform of Coordination for Refugees and Migrants of Venezuela, established by the UNHCR and IOM in Sept. 2018, projects that the Venezuelan 'population in need' in Ecuador will be 350,849 in 2019, second only to Colombia at 640,000, the total population and GNP of which exceed Ecuador's by more than three times each (IOM/UNHCR, 'Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela, January–December 2019', p. 52, available at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67282>, last access 20 March 2020.

of concern, and the compounded political, social and economic repercussions of state actions in response to these issues. Ecuador has been acting as both a recipient of migrants as well as a transit-way for Venezuelans seeking to move to Peru and other Southern Cone countries. Moreover, Ecuador neighbours Colombia, the country with the highest number of Venezuelan refugees (between one and two million, according to International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimations on 8 November 2018) and is therefore easily accessible from a geographical standpoint to Venezuelans in transit as well as those who cannot or choose not to stay in Colombia.

We argue that the Ecuadorean state's main strategy regarding the current Venezuelan migratory crisis is rooted in a specific rationality of government: governing through 'inaction'. At first, 'inaction' may not appear to be a form of government, but rather its absence. However, we employ the term heuristically as a semantic tool for highlighting a particular *governmental rationality* – one characterised by circumvention and indirect action – and not in the literal sense of a lack of action. Our contention is that certain governmental rationalities ought to be seen as acts of government linked to specific strategies adopted *through* the state, that is, by a combination of state actors and resources which are not necessarily coordinated and condensed into a particular set of public policies, but which nonetheless end up enabling conditions conducive to certain outcomes. In short, we contend that the unstated policy of inaction enables the 'funnelling' or 'pushing' of Venezuelans out of Ecuador. This results from a strategic positioning of the state, which is concerned with the right government of things³ – the right disposition of resources, laws and administrative measures so that the conditions for people to act as they 'should' are set in place.

Following William Walters and Jens Henrik Haahr,⁴ we employ a governmentality approach as a form of political analysis. Broadly, our aim is to provide a novel theoretical understanding of why certain states choose inaction over more direct and active interventions in specific areas of public policy. More specifically, we argue that there is a detectable rationality behind inaction in Ecuador: the state and its government has positioned security and administrative measures to direct Venezuelans out of Ecuador, while leaving the actual day-to-day management of the Venezuelan population to non-state actors (civil society organisations (CSOs) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)). Venezuelan migration is generally not governed through direct intervention over the bodies of Venezuelans (like deportation or, at the US border, the explicit policy of separating migrant children from their parents). Thus, there is no Ecuadorean policy on Venezuelan migration to speak of; rather, there is a disposition of things and apparatuses that can be understood strategically to guide a population out of the country without relying on the use of force (although this is not altogether discarded) or other forms of coercion. We conceive of three possible explanations for this: (i) it minimises state obligations to migrants and thus the amount of resources that need

³Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality', in Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (eds.), *The Essential Foucault: Selections from the Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984* (New York: New Press, 2003), p. 235.

⁴William Walters and Jens Henrik Haahr, 'Governmentality and Political Studies', *European Political Science*, 5: 1 (2005), pp. 288–300.

to be allocated to address the problem while; (ii) avoiding a direct violation of human rights conventions (in which the Ecuadorean government has come to invest much symbolic capital in the last decade); and (iii) at least up until recently, evading the political repercussions of declaring Venezuela, long-time ally of Ecuador, as a country in a humanitarian crisis. As we show later, these factors are particularly salient given the need to consolidate power within Ecuador's politically weak government.

In sum, this article attempts to bring conceptual order to a seemingly chaotic situation so as to provide an analytical framework for understanding the response of the Ecuadorean state to the 'crisis' of Venezuelan migration in the region as a particular form of governmentality. In this respect, we also contribute to the field of governmentality studies by introducing the concept of government by inaction to its conceptual repertoire.

The article is organised as follows. After a brief contextual account of the Venezuelan migrant crisis and its specific dynamics in the Ecuadorean case, we lay out a justification for linking the central concepts of the article – namely, inaction and governmentality. The next four sections develop aspects of our conception of the state and its relationship to inaction and governmentality, and its effects on the government of Venezuelan migrants. The final sections present more detailed evidence in support of the article's main argument. We conclude by considering our central argument that inaction is a strategy with governmental effects, not a public policy failure, in light of aspects of the Venezuelan situation that continue to unfold in the present.

The Context: Migration in Ecuador and Governmental Responses

The massive arrival of Venezuelans in Ecuador is one of the most critical issues regarding migration in the country. As many as 1.2 million Venezuelans have entered Ecuador since 2015, of which about 250,000 have stayed (a number that is hard to calculate due to the large number crossing the border every day, whether documented or undocumented).⁵ Up to 5,000 Venezuelans cross into Ecuador daily at the main border point of entry at Rumichaca in the northern highlands, particularly through irregular channels along the extensive, scarcely patrolled border with Colombia in the Amazonian region.⁶ As Ecuador and Venezuela are not neighbouring countries, many Venezuelans arrive exhausted and hungry after a long journey that typically starts by crossing the Venezuelan border on foot to Cúcuta, Colombia, and then making their way by bus (or other means) to the Ecuadorean border at Tulcán, Sucumbíos or Esmeraldas (provinces bordering Colombia). Having successfully crossed, most migrants go to Quito, with Guayaquil, Manta, Machala, Ibarra, Ambato, Cuenca, Loja, and then other major cities, also being significant destinations. They typically go where they know someone, particularly other Venezuelans who have migrated to the country already.⁷

⁵'Lenín Moreno habló sobre Rafael Correa y migración venezolana en CNN', *El Comercio*, 5 Dec. 2018, available at www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/moreno-correa-entrevista-cnn-aristegui.html, last access 20 March 2020.

⁶See, for example, 'Casi 5.000 venezolanos entraron al país por Sucumbíos en junio', *El Universo*, 31 June 2018.

⁷Interview with Daniel Regalado, Venezuelan Citizens representative in Ecuador, 8 April 2018.

In light of this considerable strain on its capacity, the Ecuadorean state has been praised by the UNHCR for maintaining open borders, and for its accommodating stance towards Venezuelans when compared to some other countries in the region, particularly in the Caribbean.⁸ Prior to the Venezuelan influx, Ecuador was already receiving more refugees than any other Latin American country,⁹ nearly all of whom were Colombians fleeing civil conflict.¹⁰ The Ecuadorean state has long taken a more active approach toward Colombian migration – albeit with significant limitations¹¹ – whether in policy initiatives or by deploying the security apparatus of the state to directly control the population (particularly in the Amazonian border region). Nonetheless, although the number of Colombians residing in Ecuador still outnumber Venezuelans, the flow of Venezuelans entering and transiting through Ecuador is much higher and constitutes a larger potential demand on state resources. This is not just for short-term emergency services; there is a large new population in need of state support and social integration. It is thus striking that there is apparently no overarching policy on the part of the Ecuadorean government.

Before continuing, it would be useful to briefly place our argument within the political context of the time-period during which we conducted our research. The second and third waves of Venezuelan migration to Ecuador have been taking place during a period of political change, some of which may help to further understand the decisions taken at state level. Not long after taking power in May 2017, President Lenin Moreno broke relations with former President Rafael Correa and formed internal alliances with local elites. One must bear in mind, however, that Moreno's ascendancy to the presidency was largely linked to Correa's electoral appeal (he ran as a candidate for Correa's party and was his designated successor). In this sense, Moreno was faced with a crucial political problem: how to distance himself from Correa's leadership and politics without creating a political crisis within a relatively fragile political base still faithful to Correa. In other words, Moreno was left with the choice of implementing either sudden or gradual political changes in the face of contradictory political forces. In many respects, the migration issue shows that Moreno opted for the latter. Moreover, Moreno initially refused to break with the discourse of the Left (therefore refraining from calling Venezuela's crisis a humanitarian crisis linked to President Nicolás Maduro's regime) or push for a constitutional amendment to reform the migration regime enacted during the Correa years. In fact, at the early stages of Moreno's regime, his foreign affairs minister was María Fernanda Espinoza, a well-known collaborator of Correa's regime

⁸Interview with Juan Pablo Terminiello, national protection officer, UNHCR Ecuador, 17 April 2018; UNHCR, 'UNHCR chief highlights Ecuador's commitment to solutions for refugees', 5 July 2016, available at www.refworld.org/docid/577cdf654.html, last access 20 March 2020.

⁹UNHCR, 'Global Trends 2015, Table 1. Refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees (refugees and IDPs), stateless persons, and others of concern to UNHCR by country/territory of asylum, end-2015', available at www.acnur.org/fileadmin/scripts/doc.php?file=fileadmin/Documentos/Estadisticas/2016/Global_Trends_2015, last access 20 March 2020.

¹⁰Martin Gottwald, 'Protecting Colombian Refugees in the Andean Region: The Fight against Invisibility', *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 16: 4 (2004), pp. 517–46.

¹¹See, for example, Jeffrey Pugh, 'Universal Citizenship through the Discourse and Policy of Rafael Correa', *Latin American Politics and Society*, 59: 3 (2017), pp. 98–121.

and a crucial player in aiding Julian Assange gain asylum at the Ecuadorean Embassy in London. However, Moreno's lack of personal charisma meant that his political base would have to come from well-established political forces outside of Correa's circle of influence, notably from the Right, hence his alliances with the Partido Social Cristiano (Social Christian Party) and Creando Oportunidades (Creating Opportunities, CREO), wealthy Ecuadorean banker Guillermo Lasso's party. The strategic 'inaction' that we uncovered during our research is explained in part by the political weakness of the Moreno regime, which, during its first three years in power, resulted in a please-all stance towards sensitive political issues such as the Venezuelan question. As we discuss below, although the Ecuadorean government's orientation towards Maduro's regime has slowly changed, the politics of inaction continues, with the exception of the implementation of various coercive but isolated policies, like putting in place new obstacles to migrations such as entry requirements for Venezuelans.

Our findings are drawn from a set of semi-structured interviews with key representatives of important state agencies and CSOs, which aimed to investigate the nature of state strategies towards migrants, and the relationship between the state and non-state agencies. Interviews were conducted with Venezuelans residing in Quito, and with the president of the Venezuela Civil Association in Ecuador, in order to understand how Venezuelan newcomers encounter the state. Finally, we carried out wide-ranging analysis of government documents, CSO reports and press releases, and media reports.¹²

Governmentality and Inaction: A Conceptual Justification

Typically, government and/or governance are defined as direct actions over those who are objects of government. Much of governance, as well as development theory, looks at government through the lens of policy-making successes or failures in the context of contractual relations between cognisant parties, to the neglect of the instances in which the absence of policy has strategic implications. Tania Murray Li usefully defines government as '(1) setting conditions so that people will be inclined to behave as they should, (2) acting on actions, yet (3) not attempting to dictate actions or coerce the population'.¹³ Below we contend that government through inaction fulfils all three aspects. But before we do so, we explain what we mean by 'inaction', and why it is theoretically useful to understand it as a form of governmentality.

This article is about analysing strategies for channelling a migrant population out of a country by indirect means. In this sense, our approach draws upon William Walters' analysis of deportation. In contrast to existing studies of deportation 'in terms of international law' or 'as the subject of policy sciences which seek to make it more efficient and humane', he calls for it to be 'studied as a political [...] practice' or 'as an instrument of population regulation'.¹⁴ Similarly, we

¹²The cut-off date for our research for this article is Jan. 2019.

¹³Tania Murray Li, 'Beyond "The State" and Failed Schemes', *American Anthropologist*, 107: 3 (2005), p. 387.

¹⁴William Walters, 'Deportation, Expulsion and the International Police of Aliens', in Nicholas de Genova and Natalie Peutz (eds.), *The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty, Space and the Freedom of Movement* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 70.

argue that the indirect mobilisation of migrants and ‘irregular migrants’ ought to be studied from a political perspective. This is not to forego the importance of rights and the impact of the legal framework upon migratory dynamics, but rather to see them as part of a wider ensemble of apparatuses that mediate force relations to produce the patterned outcomes we identify. And although in Ecuador governmental strategies have largely withheld from using traditional methods for deporting migrants, like detention and juridical punishment, they nonetheless conduct the population instrumentally through a host of mechanisms that we describe below.

One of the central tenets of a governmentality approach is that the exercise of governmental power is not unidimensional, but tridimensional. It is about asserting the sovereignty of the state, disciplinary actions to conduct populations, and what Michel Foucault called ‘governmental power’, which entails the indirect conduct of populations.¹⁵ Thus, deportation and the coercive measures that often accompany it are a final recourse – hardly ever used against Venezuelan migrants – for those who do not ‘voluntarily’ leave the country. Nonetheless, the net outcome of the governmental strategy of inaction is to render Venezuelan migrants imminently deportable.¹⁶ Since the release of Ministerial Agreement 907, discussed below, there has been an increasing use of fines and voluntary-exit slips, which give recipients 30 days to leave the country voluntarily before being forcibly deported.¹⁷

Clearly, then, the government of migrants cannot be assumed to be a benevolent tactic linked to inaction. The threat of sovereign violence is always there in the background, and the effects of inaction are in a sense consistent with it. However, the outcome of ‘guiding’ Venezuelan migrants through the country and out is an effect of a series of measures that are not directly coercive and, furthermore, ought not to be comprehended as resulting from an explicit or overarching policy that orchestrates them. ‘Inaction’, then, is not ‘doing nothing’, to put it colloquially. Rather, we posit inaction as the gearing up of the state’s apparatuses to strategically configure a specific problem as non-existent, while not foregoing the objectives of governmental interventions.

Moreover, in terms of population regulation, we find that the treatment of Venezuelan migration is, to a significant degree, linked state officials’ concern that state services could face an unmanageable increase in demand. In other words, there is a clear preoccupation to avoid adding pressure to state services (especially healthcare and education) due to an increase in the population demanding such services, particularly at a juncture where the state is seeking to reduce public spending and adopt neoliberal economic restructuring policies. However, weak state capacity is a general background condition for a state like Ecuador, and the analysis remains abstract if left there. More concretely, the question becomes what the state does with its limited resources, and what the strategic logic of this deployment entails.¹⁸

¹⁵Foucault, ‘Governmentality’.

¹⁶Nicholas de Genova, ‘Migrant “Illegality” and Deportability in Everyday Life’, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31: 1 (2002), pp. 419–47.

¹⁷See, for example, ‘Venezolanos en Ecuador: ¡Es muy duro saber que estamos solos y esclavizados!’, *Aleteia*, 19 Aug. 2018, available at <https://es.aleteia.org/2018/08/19/venezolanos-en-ecuador-es-muy-duro-saber-que-estamos-solos-y-esclavizados/>, last access 20 March 2020.

¹⁸In this sense we go beyond studies that treat state capacity as a background constraint to humanitarian work (for example, Julieta Lemaitre, ‘Humanitarian Aid and Host State Capacity: The Challenges of the Norwegian Refugee Council in Colombia’, *Third World Quarterly*, 39: 3 (2018), pp. 544–59).

Finally, by inaction we also mean turning the so-called ‘Venezuelan situation’ into a limited object of knowledge processes. As Mitchell Dean points out,¹⁹ analysing government involves detailing how the act of government is problematised through specific forms of knowledge and expertise. By the same token, not engaging in the production of knowledge about a specific object of government entails failing to construct a coherent policy designed to implement a set of corresponding interventions to improve the situation of Venezuelan migrants. However, this does not mean that government is absent. We contend that the central government’s refusal to engage in the systematic development of knowledge creation regarding the Venezuelan migrant population is a strategic act of negation. In this sense, inaction is produced when either the basic issue is acknowledged and portrayed as an object of governmental knowledge but then negated as a problem requiring resolution, or when it is, at times, simply ignored.

Gearing Up the State for the Control of Populations: Legal and Administrative Measures

To briefly sketch the context for the state’s response (or lack thereof) to the current Venezuelan migration crisis in Ecuador, it is useful to begin with the 2008 Ecuadorean Constitution. The new Constitution granted extensive rights to all migrants regardless of legal status, in principle on a par with national citizens. Immigration, in turn, was framed in terms of labour mobility and Andean and Latin American integration. The Constitution was followed by a short-lived period of exceptional accommodation of foreigners seeking refuge, which resulted in considerable discontentment within the Ecuadorean public. Amidst intensifying security concerns regarding Colombia and a weakening economy, Rafael Correa’s government could not afford to sustain such an ambitious rights-based agenda at home (on the other hand, there was much political capital to be gained by championing the rights of Ecuadorean emigrants abroad).²⁰ Hence immigration policy and practice rapidly became more restrictive.²¹

It was in this context that Venezuelan arrivals to Ecuador swelled, reaching thousands per day in 2017. In this same year, the new Ley Orgánica de Movilidad Humana (Organic Law on Human Mobility, LOMH) was tabled and

¹⁹Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage, 1999), p. 38.

²⁰Ana Margheritis, ‘“Todos Somos Migrantes” (We Are All Migrants): The Paradoxes of Innovative State-led Transnationalism in Ecuador’, *International Political Sociology*, 5: 2 (2011), pp. 198–217; Ana Margheritis and Javier Arcentales Illescas, ‘Ejercicio de los derechos de las personas inmigrantes y refugiadas en Ecuador durante el año 2012’, Repositorio UASB, 2012, available at <http://repositorio.uasb.edu.ec/bitstream/10644/4109/1/Arcentales-Ejercicio.pdf>, last access 20 March 2020.

²¹Thus Presidential Decree 1182 of 2012 instituted new restrictive registration procedures, which have led to increasing risk of refoulement (i.e., deportation to unsafe countries). Even asylum-seeker status became much more difficult to attain, as the decree established a preliminary ‘admissibility process’, where asylum applications are screened for being ‘manifestly unfounded’ or ‘abusive’. See Coalición por las Migraciones y el Refugio, ‘Análisis del Proyecto de Ley de Movilidad Humana’, Quito, 2015; Manuel Góngora-Mera, Gioconda Herrera and Conrad Müller, ‘The Frontiers of Universal Citizenship: Transnational Social Spaces and the Legal Status of Migrants in Ecuador’, Working Paper No. 71, desigualdades.net, 2014, available at www.desigualdades.net/Resources/Working_Paper/71-WP-Gongora-Mera-Herrera-Mueller-Online.pdf?1396440530, last access 20 March 2020.

passed. This legislation is the most comprehensive in Ecuador's history, replacing the disparate legislation and legal instruments previously operating in Ecuador with one overarching legal framework. The LOMH contains extensive rights, thus apparently making good on the constitutional promise; however, as we discuss below, it is very difficult to obtain the legal status necessary to secure those rights. This is particularly so for Venezuelans, who are defined as a population in transit, as well as categorised as economic migrants, and thus as incurring minimal obligations from the state.

This became abundantly evident when on 8 August 2018 the government declared a state of emergency in the provinces of Carchi, Pichincha, and El Oro – the northern and southern border provinces where the vast majority of Venezuelans cross in and out of the country, and the province of the capital, where most Venezuelans pass through or decide to settle. The declaration followed a sustained daily influx of between 4,000 and 5,000 over the first days of August. According to UNHCR figures, more than 30,000 Venezuelans crossed the border during the first week of August.²² In the final section of this article we demonstrate that the state's task in the face of the precipitating crisis was seen as ensuring the secure and humane passage of Venezuelan migrants through its territory to Peru, in a manner consistent with the pattern of government through inaction that we have identified.

In sum, we posit that an analysis of the Venezuelan migrant crisis and the responses given by governments, particularly the Ecuadorean government, must include strategic actions composed of both direct and indirect interventions on migrants – in the context of a population in need of management. Moreover, as we show below, the adoption of formal rights in relation to migration serves to confer upon the state an image of progressiveness; however, these rights have been increasingly inaccessible to Venezuelans. The state is thus able to avoid direct, large-scale interventions on Venezuelans for the most part, while effectively giving rise to conditions that make it more difficult for them to remain in Ecuador.

Inaction as a Strategic Governmentality

Up until about 2013, Ecuador received proportionately few Venezuelan newcomers, comprising mainly professionals who had left Venezuela during Hugo Chávez's regime. From about 2015, the numbers of Venezuelan arrivals increased sharply, and their profile became more mixed, although still consisting of more people with some means. The most recent and ongoing surge in Venezuelan migration has taken place since 2017, and has been dramatic. It is comprised of a wide cross-section of Venezuelan society: skilled and unskilled, particularly unskilled workers previously employed in Venezuela's informal sector; families and single people; people with disabilities, and so on. Most are young adults (the journey often being too risky for older and younger people) who are concerned with sending back remittances to struggling family members in Venezuela, if they can.²³

²² ACNUR: 30.000 ciudadanos venezolanos llegaron a Ecuador en la primera semana de agosto del 2018', *El Comercio*, 10 Aug. 2018, available at www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/acnur-venezolanos-ecuator-puantederumichaca-informe.html, last access 20 March 2020.

²³ Interview with Daniel Regalado, 8 April 2018. According to a Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) survey conducted by the IOM and the Vice-Ministry of Human Mobility in Sept./Oct. 2018, 53.5 per cent

Particularly from the end of 2017, and even more so since the Venezuelan and Colombian elections in May 2018 – which came with threats of closing the border – people have been arriving by any means possible, including by foot.

This most recent influx has clearly strained existing state services in Ecuador, and exposed the dire lack of emergency protection measures. There has been no system for identifying cases in need of protection,²⁴ to begin with, and providing emergency food, housing, medical assistance and other humanitarian assistance has generally been left to CSOs.²⁵ In part this may be due to the strain on state capacity, and the fact that the majority of incomers – particularly young ones – come undocumented.²⁶ But one senses something else afoot when considering a host of seemingly anomalous facts. For example, upon crossing the border, after queuing for as many as three days, people generally do not know their rights in Ecuador, and generally do not have information that allows them to make informed decisions about their legal options. In addition, Misión Scalabriniana reports poor treatment by officials of the Ministry of the Interior.²⁷ In a wider view, it is important to note that Ecuador's poverty is not in itself an explanation for the state's inaction in relation to Venezuelan migration.²⁸ More fundamentally, there is a strategic purpose behind the decision not to make migrants a problem that demands a large amount of resources.

Communications between state agencies on the subject reflect that there is considerable knowledge within the state of the scale of Venezuelan migration and the challenges involved. A memorandum dated 26 March 2018 from the office of the Pichincha Ombudsman, directed to the Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility, MREMH), calls for a coordinated strategy among state agencies to deal with what it considers a humanitarian crisis within Ecuador.²⁹ However, by July 2018 there had still been no response from the ministry. The memorandum echoes

of Venezuelans in Ecuador are male, 88 per cent are young adults between the ages of 18 and 40, and 74.6 per cent are single. The survey was conducted in Rumichaca, Huaquillas and Quito, with a sample of 1,953 Venezuelan newcomers. See IOM, 'DTM Ronda 2 – Monitoreo de flujo humana Ecuador – agosto-septiembre 2018', Sept. 2018, available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/ecuador/dtm-ronda-2-monitoreo-de-flujo-de-poblaci-n-venezolana-ecuador-agosto-septiembre-2018>, last access 20 March 2020.

²⁴Grupo Articulador Ecuador del Plan de Acción de Brasil (GAE-PAB), 'La vulneración de derechos a la población venezolana en su paso por Ecuador y a la población ecuatoriana que desea retornar de Venezuela (caso Ecuador)', May 2018, available at www.misionscalabriniana.org.ec/sitio/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Vulneraci%C3%B3n-de-derechos-a-poblaci%C3%B3n-venezolana-Informe-de-Ecuador-para-CIDH.pdf, last access 20 March 2020.

²⁵Daniel Regalado, correspondence with authors, 10 April 2018. The recent state of emergency does not fundamentally contradict this claim, as discussed at more length in the final section of the article.

²⁶Interview with Mónica Barreno, Asociación Solidaridad y Acción, 5 April 2018.

²⁷Misión Scalabriniana, 'Ante el masivo desplazamiento de población venezolana se requiere una respuesta desde el enfoque de derechos', March 2018, available at www.misionscalabriniana.org.ec/sitio/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Comunicado-urgente-tras-visita-a-Rumichaca-marzo-2018-1.pdf, last access 20 March 2020.

²⁸State officials often invoke this explanation. See, for example, President Moreno's statement in General Secretariat of Communication of the Presidency, 'Ecuador garantiza cumplimiento de los derechos humanos a migrantes venezolanos', 16 Aug. 2018, available at www.comunicacion.gob.ec/ecuador-garantiza-cumplimiento-de-los-derechos-humanos-a-migrantes-venezolanos/, last access 20 March 2020.

²⁹Interview with Patricio Benalcázar, Province of Pichincha Ombudsman, 6 April 2018.

the UNHCR and Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in their position that most Venezuelans are ‘in need of international protection’, and their call for adequate procedures for determining the status of migrants on a case-by-case basis. It also calls for the provision of humanitarian assistance corresponding to newcomers’ immediate situation of need, and points to a longer-term need for social and economic assistance. The MREMH has neglected to address this call and, indeed, apparently has no clear policy on the matter, as is evident from our research into the ministry’s policies and confirmed by the national director of Asylum Access Ecuador (AAE).³⁰ This means that other actors working with the population have not been empowered to deal with the issue, or to coordinate their efforts.³¹

Meanwhile, seemingly above the constraints corresponding to rights-based governance, the Ministry of the Interior deals with the problem of Venezuelan migration as one of security, but is generally secretive about its operations. At times its interventions are public and visible, such as occasional round-ups of Venezuelan migrants,³² or blocking entry at the border due to stringent documentation requirements. Such actions are no doubt meant to convey strong state resolve in controlling the movements and settlements of migrants in the country, and deterring future migration. However, its aims are not thereby typically served through a coordinated policy on the Venezuelan issue, but rather are brought about through the strategic placement of state apparatuses. For example, once migrants enter into detention, only the police and the Ministry of the Interior have access to them. The office of the Pichincha Ombudsman is able to obtain information and exercise some oversight once it identifies a pattern of abuse and raises the possibility of a larger scandal; however, this is on a case-by-case basis.³³ In short, human rights concerns are confronted, and often subsumed, within the security imperative of the state – where security is to be understood not only as containing, neutralising or eliminating threats to ‘the nation’, but as guarding order. Although the general conflict of priorities within the state is not surprising, the lack of any semblance of an overarching regulatory framework for overseeing and coordinating operations between state bodies is striking.

The Multiple Parts of the State in Action and Inaction

There are at least three salient actors involved in the attention to Venezuelans in the Ecuadorean state: the executive branch (particularly the MREMH and the Ministry of the Interior), the office of the Ombudsman, the police/army and local governments (mainly province-level governments). We find that there are three main stances within these state institutions. First, the executive branch, which is largely in charge of foreign policy and migratory policies, has led the ‘inaction’ position.

³⁰Interview with Lilia Granja, national director of AAE, 5 April 2018.

³¹Interviews with Giovanna Tipán Barrera, director of community development, GAD Pichincha, 19 April 2018; and Xavier Gudiño Valdiviezo, director of strategic litigation, AAE, 17 April 2018.

³²Reubicar a grupo de venezolanos que se encontraba en el norte de Quito’, *Diario Las Américas*, 18 Nov. 2018, available at www.diariolasamericas.com/america-latina/reubicar-grupo-venezolanos-que-se-encontraba-el-norte-quito-n4166736, last access 20 March 2020.

³³Interview with Patricio Benalcázar, 6 April 2018.

Table 1. Chronology of Events Referred To in this Article

Date	Event
2008	New Ecuadorean Constitution, favouring universal citizenship, is passed
2015	Venezuelan migration increases sharply
2017	Venezuelan migration reaches thousands per day
6 February 2017	Organic Law of Human Mobility passed
May 2018	Venezuelan and Colombian elections. Further acceleration of migration
24 May 2017	Lenín Moreno becomes president
4 June 2018	Release of National Plan for Human Mobility
8 August 2018	Government declares state of emergency in Carchi, Pichincha and El Oro
19–20 January 2019	Femicide in Ibarra, followed by xenophobic mob attacks against Venezuelans in the city
22 January 2019	Government announces new requirement for apostilled criminal records for Venezuelans

Source: Author's elaboration.

Second, the *gobierno autónomo descentralizado* (provincial government, GAD) of Pichincha (the province where the vast majority of Venezuelan migrants are) has maintained an active policy of humanitarian aid, and the office of the Ombudsman has maintained a relatively consistent defence of the rights of migrants. Third, the police (and to a lesser extent the military) have provided, as can be expected, the role of enforcers of an incipient migratory 'policy'. However, police interventions, while noteworthy, have been relatively scarce. According to our interviews with the Pichincha Ombudsman, Venezuelan migrant representatives and several key CSO representatives, the use of police force has been selective and relatively infrequent.

The major player within this ensemble of disparate actors has been the executive branch, which has made most strategic decisions regarding Venezuelan migrants. Nonetheless, the power of the state cannot be reduced to the actions of the executive branch. It is the ensemble of the various apparatuses of the state that produce certain 'state effects'. And while it is true that the different components of the state have not produced an adequate ensemble of governmental policies to face the migratory crisis, our contention is that, instead of a policy failure, the contradictions within the state ought to be understood as making sense from the perspective of state power.

Negation as a Form of Inaction: Economic Migrants in Transit – a Problem that Doesn't Exist

Despite the huge spike in the entry of Venezuelans in the last few years, they are characterised as transient, temporary 'visitors' who are moving through Ecuador rather than staying to create new lives there. In a public interview, the MREMH undersecretary of international protection and assistance to migrants, Alfonso

Morales, stated that Venezuelans do not usually resort to refugee status, as Colombians do, because 98 per cent of them 'are not considered to be in a condition of requiring international protection', although he conceded that they can be considered to have been 'in a very precarious economic situation' that forced them to move.³⁴

Likewise, a recent illustration of inaction is to be found in the Plan Nacional de Movilidad Humana (National Plan for Human Mobility, PNMH) released on 4 June 2018, which is meant to give effect to the LOMH, with policies to be implemented over four years. In its 51 pages, it dedicates one small paragraph to the phenomenon of Venezuelan migrants:

In recent years there has been an important migratory flow of Venezuelan citizens, as a result of the economic and political situation that the country is currently experiencing. Most Venezuelan citizens have left their country for economic reasons and because of a lack of employment. According to the Ministry of the Interior's statistics of migratory movements, two out of every three Venezuelan citizens who enter Ecuadorean territory – the vast majority by land – continue their trip to countries to the south, while one decides to stay in Ecuador for some time.³⁵

Strikingly, this characterisation of Venezuelans appears next to tables representing Venezuelans as the first- and second-highest population to have entered the country in the first three months of 2018 and in 2017 respectively,³⁶ and a pie chart illustrating that most recipients of Ecuadorean visas from 2017 to 2018 (by February) were Venezuelans. Further evidence of the neglect of Venezuelans in the PNMH is the absence of attention to the transit category – the only one of the 'dimensions of human mobility', namely 'emigration, immigration, transit, return, people in need of international protection, and victims of the crimes of human trafficking and illicit trafficking of migrants', that is afforded no discussion space. The estimate of three-quarters of Venezuelans being in transit is derived mainly from comparing statistics of arrivals with departures from Ecuador. Leaving aside the shortcomings of this method (principally, that it fails to take stock of irregular entry and exit), our concern is that some critical questions are not raised, such as how much time do they spend in Ecuador and under what conditions? Addressing such questions would be an integral part of a policy about Venezuelan migration.

More importantly still, the question that is not posed in the PNMH, or in official discourse in general, is why do so many Venezuelans leave Ecuador? Our interviews with Venezuelans in Quito confirmed that many would prefer to remain in Ecuador.³⁷ The majority who do stay do so because they have family, friends or

³⁴'Ecuador acoge más refugiados que toda América Latina', *La Hora*, 20 June 2018, available at www.lahora.com.ec/quito/noticia/1102165248/ecuador-acoge-mas-refugiados-que-toda-america-latina, last access 20 March 2020.

³⁵MREMH, *Plan Nacional de Movilidad Humana* (Quito: MREMH, 2018), p. 22.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷This is corroborated by the IOM survey, which found that while only 30 per cent of respondents at Rumichaca wanted to stay in Ecuador, in Quito the figure was 90 per cent. See IOM, 'Monitoreo de flujo humana', p. 7.

a business partner in Ecuador. By contrast, the majority of Venezuelans who leave do so because of what is generally described as an impossible-to-comply-with series of legal requirements and administrative steps, and a general sense that the government is indifferent to their struggles.³⁸ These subject dispositions are in themselves concrete effects of the governmentality of inaction. Our focus reveals how the ordering of things, without an orchestrated set of policies for directly intervening in the lives of Venezuelan migrants, can also have effects that have strategic significance for the state and concrete impacts on the lives of migrants.

To be sure, news that Ecuador is an unwelcoming place for Venezuelans now reaches them before they arrive. A survey by Misión Scalabriniana in March 2018 of about a hundred Venezuelans at the Rumichaca border found that:

[...] the vast majority of people want to go to other countries, not because Ecuador is not an option for them, but rather because ‘they have already heard’ from their compatriots who have been in Ecuador that regularisation processes are almost impossible: because of their high costs, because of the complexity of the procedures and because much of the documentation required by the Ecuadorean state is impossible to obtain in Venezuela.³⁹

One of the most obvious testaments to the state’s inactive stance towards Venezuelans in Ecuador is that about half of them are in a condition of irregularity.⁴⁰ Irregularity is produced through restrictive migration practices, which mainly take the form of onerous documentation demands for obtaining visas, deterring migrants at the border, as well as occasional harassment by local police.⁴¹ As we discuss below, migrants also have much difficulty subsisting as they wait to obtain their visas, due to prohibitions on employment and access to state services from Venezuela (consular services) as well as Ecuador.

Before outlining the challenges for Venezuelans in obtaining Ecuadorean visas, it may be useful to briefly consider the Colombian case in order to stage a contrast. It is estimated that Colombia has permanently taken in about one million Venezuelan migrants.⁴² The Colombian government’s active policy has been to gear up state

³⁸Interview with Daniel Regalado, 8 April 2018.

³⁹Misión Scalabriniana, ‘Ante el masivo desplazamiento’. See also ‘Ecuador es un país de paso para mayoría de venezolanos’, *El Universo*, 19 Feb. 2018, available at www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2018/02/19/nota/6630208/ecuador-es-pais-paso-mayoria-venezolanos, last access 20 March 2020. Difficulties in obtaining documents from Venezuela include exorbitant fees in relation to wages, bureaucratic obstruction, bribes by mafias within the administrative service, direct political interference, and ‘no paper’ (or polycarbonate sheets) for printing passports (‘¿Por qué es tan difícil sacar el pasaporte en Venezuela?’, *El Espectador*, 12 Feb. 2018).

⁴⁰Interview with Xavier Gudiño Valdiviezo, 17 April 2018. The IOM Survey found that 75 per cent of Venezuelan migrants in Quito and 64 per cent in Guayaquil do not have regular status (IOM, ‘Monitoreo de flujo humana’, p. 5).

⁴¹De Genova and Peutz (eds.), *The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty*; de Genova, ‘Migrant “Illegality”’; Simon Behrman, ‘Legal Subjectivity and the Refugee’, *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 26: 1 (2014), pp. 1–21.

⁴²‘En cifras: todo lo que debe saber sobre la migración venezolana’, *El Tiempo*, 28 Nov. 2018, available at www.eltiempo.com/mundo/venezuela/cifras-de-la-migracion-venezolana-en-colombia-septiembre-de-2018-290680, last access 20 March 2020.

agencies to respond to the specificities of the Venezuelan case. For example, it recognises that many migrants from Venezuela remain in ‘irregular’ condition because of their inability to obtain documentation from their own consulate to initiate the process of legalisation in Colombia. As of August 2018, the Colombian state began issuing the *Permiso Especial de Permanencia* (Special Permit for Permanence, PEP), thus initiating a drive to regularise ‘at least 442,462 Venezuelan people in an irregular situation who had been registered through the Administrative Registry of Venezuelan Migrants in Colombia’.⁴³ In this sense, Colombia (like Peru and Chile) has attempted to create conditions for migrants to stay. This policy response entails a series of connected actions that the government has taken to: (i) openly declare its critical position towards Nicolás Maduro’s regime; (ii) frame the Venezuelan migratory crisis as rooted in economic and medical/sanitary conditions; and (iii) set up permanent programmes for Venezuelans to adapt to life in Colombian society, and importantly, allow for work permits to be issued to nearly one million Venezuelans and educational programmes for their families.⁴⁴ We are not necessarily suggesting that Colombia is a template or exemplary case of good migration policy; there are several obstacles for Venezuelan migrants in Colombia as well. It does, however, provide a counterpoint to Ecuador’s reactive measures to address the ‘crisis’ and its general strategy of herding Venezuelans to Peru.

The Juridical Framework, and Legal Rights-Based Specificities of the Venezuelan Case

In Ecuador, the story of inaction and its exclusionary consequences begins with accommodation. One of the cardinal principles of the Ecuadorean migration regime has been ‘open borders’,⁴⁵ where everyone who enters is entitled to a tourist visa (visa category T3), as long as they present some form of identification, such as an identification card, a birth certificate (for minors) or a passport. This visa allows for regular status to conduct tourist or transit activities for 90 days, and is renewable for a further 90 days. During this period the newcomer is not allowed to engage in any employment or commercial activity.⁴⁶ Anyone wanting to stay beyond the 180-day window faces a labyrinthine process to obtain legal status, and in the very likely event that they are not able to secure status within this window, they face precarious conditions associated with irregular status, as well as a considerable fine if they intend to regularise their status. The open-border policy has been challenged with documentary requirements, such as during the state of emergency;

⁴³Organization of American States, ‘CIDH saluda medidas adoptadas por Colombia para regularización migratoria y acceso a derechos de personas venezolanas’, press release, 17 Aug. 2018, available at www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2018/184.asp, last access 20 March 2020.

⁴⁴Más de 820.000 venezolanos quedan regularizados’, *El Tiempo*, 2 Aug. 2018, available at www.eltiempo.com/politica/gobierno/santos-firmo-decreto-para-regularizar-a-venezolanos-251280, last access 20 March 2020.

⁴⁵The border is most open in the central highlands, where the majority of Venezuelans cross, and where most cross-border economic activity occurs.

⁴⁶MREMH, ‘Emisión de Visa de Turismo (90 días)’, available at www.cancilleria.gob.ec/emision-de-visa-de-turismo-90-dias/, last access 20 March 2020.

however, in practice officials have continued to allow Venezuelans to enter through both regular and irregular channels.⁴⁷

The UNHCR has called for extending refugee status and other forms of international protection to many Venezuelans under the parameters of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees of 1984;⁴⁸ however, the acceptance rate of Venezuelan applications for refugee visas in Ecuador is extremely low. According to the UNHCR, from 2015 to February 2018 in Ecuador, 2,232 applications for asylum were filed by Venezuelans, of which only 1,530 were filed in 2017. According to Foreign Ministry personnel, of the total number of applications only six of these were admitted to proceedings.⁴⁹ This is negligible, at less than 0.3 per cent, especially when one considers that thousands of Venezuelan migrants cross the border every day. Compare this to the acceptance rate for Colombians of more than 30 per cent.⁵⁰ Perversely, the low acceptance rate of Venezuelans is taken as evidence by government officials that they are not in need of international protection.⁵¹

The main avenue open to Venezuelans seeking regular status is pursuing temporary work and residence visas (rather than refugee visas). The application requirements are the same for all migrants; however, for most Venezuelan migrants the costs are exorbitant, and documentary application requirements are all but impossible to meet.⁵² Here we note another series of 'administrative' measures worth emphasising from a governmentality perspective, relating directly to how the state selectively positions 'things' within a strategic framework: due to fines, paperwork expenses, reduced office hours, impossible-to-meet deadlines, hidden expenses and other paperwork, most Venezuelans find it impossible to comply with visa application requirements.⁵³ To begin with, Venezuelans do not qualify for the Mercado Común del Sur (Southern Common Market, MERCOSUR) visa, unlike Colombians, for whom the application costs only US\$50. That leaves only more expensive options, principally the Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (Union of South American Nations, UNASUR) visa, which costs US\$250,

⁴⁷'Exigencia de pasaporte desata paso irregular de venezolanos a Ecuador', *El Universo*, 21 Aug. 2018, available at www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2018/08/21/nota/6915947/exigencia-pasaporte-desata-paso-irregular-venezolanos, last access 20 March 2020; 'Venezolanos ingresan al país sin el pasado judicial', *El Norte*, 30 Jan. 2019, available at www.elnorte.ec/carchi/ingresan-al-pais-sin-el-pasado-judicial-DC307360, last access 20 March 2020.

⁴⁸UNHCR, 'Venezuela Situation: Responding to the Needs of People Displaced from Venezuela. Supplementary Appeal, January–December 2018', March 2018, available at http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Venezuela%20Situation%202018%20Supplementary%20Appeal_0.pdf, last access 20 March 2020; interview with Juan Pablo Terminiello, 17 April 2018. Concerning the refugee status determination (RSD) process, someone who has been forcibly displaced must approach the relevant authorities within 90 days of arriving. Once screened for admissibility (against the claim being fraudulent or unfounded), the applicant formally becomes an 'asylum-seeker', and proceeds to gather the necessary documentation for the refugee visa. If rejected, a person has 15 days to leave the country or appeal. However, very few Venezuelans get to this stage of having their application brought to the point of a decision.

⁴⁹GAE-PAB, 'La vulneración de derechos'.

⁵⁰World Data, 'Asylum applications and refugees in Ecuador', available at www.worlddata.info/america/ecuador/asylum.php, last access 20 March 2020.

⁵¹Ecuador acoge más refugiados que toda América Latina', *La Hora*, 20 June 2018.

⁵²Basic documents needed include passport, birth certificate, etc. We discuss additional requirements later in this article.

⁵³Interview with Daniel Regalado, 8 April 2018; interview with Lilia Granja, 5 April 2018.

equivalent, at current exchange rates, to over ten years of minimum wage salary for a Venezuelan worker. The other main options are the temporary resident visa from Venezuela, established under a bilateral agreement in 2010, and the temporary resident visa for professionals, technicians, technologists and artisans (which requires the submission of a professional title), each of which costs US\$400.⁵⁴ In a similar vein, one of the issues that makes the case of Venezuelan migrants special is the notorious difficulty that they have in obtaining Venezuelan documents from the Venezuelan consulate in Quito in order to apply for an Ecuadorean visa – of any kind. And even though Ecuador’s government has acknowledged the issue, it has largely ignored it or shirked responsibility. In an interview with *El Comercio*, vice-minister of human mobility, Santiago Chávez, buries the matter in putative procedural complexity:

[...] I understand that Venezuelan citizens on some occasions don’t have enough means to pay for the visas. From the point of view of the Chancellery, we would like to bring down the costs. We will probably try to do so in the future, but this is not our competence – or at least, not only ours. This is a theme that we have to discuss at the Table on Human Mobility, and we especially have to collaborate with another entity, the Ministry of the Interior, to arrive at a [...] resolution for an eventual reduction of costs. [...] [T]he Chancellery tries to maintain the equilibrium – and more than anything the internal equilibrium between entities of the Ecuadorean state that have distinctive competences relative to human mobility – and at the same time listen to the Ecuadorean population, consider evident national interests, and logically attempt to ensure that there is congruence with the difficult situation that is going on with the Venezuelans.⁵⁵

The vice-minister goes on to acknowledge that, while Venezuelans ‘often arrive only with what they have on them’, the government cannot ‘exempt citizens entering the country from any requirements’, and effectively concludes that it is doing all it can towards some eventual resolution of the problem.

The difficulties in obtaining visas do not end with the costs. In addition to the difficulty of obtaining documentation from Venezuela, there is little chance of obtaining an interview in the allotted time. Interviews are to be booked on a virtual system; however, depending to a significant extent upon the discretion of officials, appointments are generally booked at least three months in advance.⁵⁶ This means that exceeding the 180-day limit, and becoming irregular, is very likely. If someone initiates the process, they are not fined; nonetheless, many do not know this, and

⁵⁴Applying for any of these visas involves an additional US\$50 application fee, and requires presentation of a valid passport (with an immigration stamp of entry into the country), an original certificate of criminal record and demonstrated legal means of livelihood on the part of the applicant and his or her dependent family group. Moreover, all these visas expire after two years, and then need to be renewed at the same cost.

⁵⁵Video interview with Santiago Chávez, vice-minister of human mobility, *El Comercio*, 7 Aug. 2018, available at www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/visa-venezolanos-cancilleria-santiago-chavez-migracion.html, last access 23 March 2020.

⁵⁶GAE–PAB, ‘La vulneración de derechos’.

assume that they will have to save up to pay the fine as a matter of course in applying for the visa.

This raises the issue of penalties. The Ecuadorean legal system makes it almost impossible to avoid 'migratory offences' and punitive measures, beginning with financial penalties. Ministerial Agreement 907, released in April 2018, sets out a series of fines that range from the payment of one to 15 unified basic salaries for being in irregular condition (i.e., overstaying the tourist visa or any other visa term), or contravening regulations established by the LOMH. Policing and fining has intensified since the enactment of Ministerial Agreement 907, but it still pales in comparison to the scale of Venezuelan migration and potentially punishable offences. Its function is arguably mainly to communicate a potential threat, and thus to persuade migrants to continue their journey to the southern border. Perhaps more importantly, these measures convey a message to Ecuadorean citizens – among whom xenophobic sentiment is on the rise⁵⁷ – that the government is attempting to stem the tide of migrants.

As shown here, there are many aspects of the system that place absurd expectations upon migrants for regularising their status. However, the dysfunctional nature of the system, we argue, ought to be seen as functional for the regulation of populations: the system is not supposed to work well from the perspective of a rights-based approach, but works well as a governmental device which plays a role in what we have called the strategic positioning of state apparatuses to 'funnel' migrants out of Ecuador. Viewed as such, a seemingly chaotic set of 'policies' becomes a discernible strategic state issue.

Social and Economic Integration Left Wanting: The Contradictory Faces of the State

The situation becomes more untenable for Venezuelans when one considers that not only irregular migrants, but also asylum-seekers, those on a tourist visa, and those who are applying for other visas, have no rights to employment, and uncertain rights to healthcare. Regarding the former, the LOMH, Section 2, Article 54 requires temporary residents to demonstrate lawful means of subsistence; yet Ecuadorean law impedes the ability to secure such means. For example, on 24 January 2018, the Ministry of Labour issued Ministerial Agreement MDT-2018-006,⁵⁸ which requires employers to verify compliance with the rights of migrant workers in Ecuador. The implementation mechanism designed by the ministry includes obligations for employers to register all their foreign workers on a Ministry of Labour online platform, the data of which is shared with the MREMH. Nonetheless, employers often seek to evade such visibility and potential fines for paying below-minimum wage.

⁵⁷Santiago Ripoll, Lizbeth Navas-Alemán and contributors, 'Xenofobia y discriminación hacia refugiados y migrantes venezolanos en Ecuador y lecciones aprendidas para la promoción de la inclusión social', *Social Sciences in Humanitarian Action*, Nov. 2018, available at www.socsciencinaction.org/resources/xenofobia-y-discriminacion-hacia-refugiados-y-migrantes-venezolanos-en-ecuador-y-lecciones-aprendidas-para-la-promocion-de-la-inclusion-social/, last access 20 March 2020.

⁵⁸Ministry of Labour, Ministerial Agreement MDT-2018-006, 24 Jan. 2018, available at www.trabajo.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/mdt-2018-0006_derechos_laborales_de_los_migrantes_extranjeros_en_el_ecuador.pdf, last access 20 March 2020.

As Venezuelan newcomers wait for their official visa appointments, many seek informal work as street vendors, although this is increasingly sanctioned. For example, in Quito people are required to obtain a licence from the municipality to work as a vendor/hawker,⁵⁹ as well as comply with a whole series of restrictions and qualifications; however, Venezuelans/persons with a tourist visa or irregular status cannot obtain the licence, and thus are vulnerable to police raids, confiscations and fines.⁶⁰ Moreover, according to Giovanna Tipán Barrera of the GAD Pichincha, there are no protocols in the municipality for granting licences.⁶¹ Due to their precarious legal standing and irregular status, migrants are vulnerable to exploitation – working for far lower wages and longer hours than nationals. They may accept employment without a contract, or obtain a contract but then be paid less or denied payment for not having status.⁶² Migrants may be offered housing, food and a salary, but then work long days for less than minimum salary, and may have their payment postponed under threat of being reported for their ‘illegal’ situation.⁶³ They can become targets of extortion efforts by criminal gangs, and women are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and becoming victims of human trafficking.⁶⁴

Migrants’ precarious situation is compounded in relation to healthcare. Migrants do receive a substantial provision of emergency healthcare services,⁶⁵ as is consistent with the objectives of ensuring that they do not get caught up in the process of their transit through the country, and minimising the impact of any illnesses and other health considerations upon the Ecuadorean population.⁶⁶ However, although Venezuelans on a tourist visa are legally entitled to public healthcare, this is typically not adequate, particularly given that the medical conditions of many have been aggravated due to the absence of medication and basic care in Venezuela,

⁵⁹Article 8[1] of Metropolitan Ordinance 208, Quito.

⁶⁰Interviews with five anonymous Venezuelan vendors in Quito in April 2018.

⁶¹‘8.617 venezolanos laboran en el sector privado de Ecuador de manera formal’, *El Comercio*, 16 Sept 2018, available at www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/venezolanos-sectorprivado-contratos-ecuador.html, last access 20 March 2020.

⁶²Daniela Célieri, ‘Situación laboral y aporte económico de inmigrantes en el norte de Quito, Ecuador: Una primera aproximación cuantitativa para dialogar sobre política pública’ (Quito: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES-ILDIS), 2019), pp. 14–15.

⁶³Daniel Regalado, ‘Ecuador tramita 50.000 visas de trabajo para Venezolanos’, cited by *Ecuador Chequea*, 24 Aug. 2018, available at www.ecuadorchequea.com/2018/08/24/venezolanos-trabajo-ecuador-migrantes-empleo/, last Access 20 March 2020; ‘Venezolanos en Ecuador: ¡Es muy duro saber que estamos solos y esclavizados!’, *Aleteia*, 19 Aug. 2018.

⁶⁴UNHCR, ‘ACNUR aumenta su respuesta tras la declaratoria de emergencia en Ecuador’, 10 Aug. 2018, available at www.acnur.org/noticias/briefing/2018/8/5b6e24b34/acnur-aumenta-su-respuesta-tras-la-declaratoria-de-emergencia-en-ecuador.html, last access 20 March 2020; Martha Cecilia Ruíz, ‘Reinforcing National Borders in the Context of Regional Integration: Female Migration and Sexuality in the Andean Subregion’, *Revista Social*, 64 (April 2018), pp. 42–54.

⁶⁵See, for example, ‘Cerca de 300 extranjeros son atendidos a diario en la zona norte’, *El Norte*, 13 Feb. 2019, available at www.elnorte.ec/imbabura/cerca-de-300-extranjeros-son-atendidos-a-diario-en-la-zona-DJ319533, last access 20 March 2020.

⁶⁶On the general health situation in Venezuela, see IACHR, ‘Democratic Institutions, the Rule of Law and Human Rights in Venezuela: Country Report 2017’, OEA/Ser.L/V/II. Doc.209/17, 31 Dec. 2017, pp. 228–34. On the impact of this situation in the region, see UNHCR, ‘Venezuela Situation’; Joe Parkin Daniels, ‘Venezuela in Crisis’, *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*, 19: 1 (2019), p. 257.

compounded by the physical and psychological strain of being thrown into precarious conditions, typically for protracted periods. In Ecuador, Venezuelans are often the last in line to receive healthcare,⁶⁷ and are often not provided with continuous and more substantial care to address their medium- and long-term needs, including chronic or severe conditions, psychological trauma, and so on. According to Tipán Barrera, people who are not able to access healthcare visit the GAD Pichincha office daily, with needs ranging from aspirin to antiretrovirals.⁶⁸ Daniela Célleri reports that, while the Human Mobility Unit of the GAD Pichincha attends to some 100 people a day, and refers emergency cases to the 11 ambulatory health centres of the Pichincha Mission, the second- and third-level care required by many newcomers exceeds the capacities of the local government.⁶⁹

Moreover, we often see policies and legislations working at cross purposes. Despite the assertion that migrants have the same rights as Ecuadoreans, and the MREMH's stated commitment to addressing the health needs of migrants, the law also qualifies and limits migrant rights. Thus Article 53(7) of the LOMH requires that every person entering the country 'must have public or private health insurance for the time of their stay in Ecuador, except the people who are mobilised in the zones of border integration, as foreseen in the international instruments ratified by Ecuador'.⁷⁰ This was given effect by several executive decrees that required health insurance of foreign persons entering Ecuador, except for those without international protection. The latest commencement date for implementing this order was 10 September 2018;⁷¹ however, in August the health insurance requirement was dropped for all 'tourists', which technically includes Venezuelans.⁷² Nonetheless, the repeated attempts by the government to impose new requirements for health insurance – as with its successive requirements of identification documents – sent a clear message that it would not try to alleviate the conditions for Venezuelans to remain, and probably much to the contrary.

The quality and extent of healthcare provision is dependent upon coverage under health insurance. However, Article 51 of the LOMH provides that in order to obtain public health insurance under the Instituto Ecuatoriano de Seguridad Social (Ecuadorean Social Security system, IESS), one needs formal employment, something Venezuelans can only obtain with an employment or residency visa. Moreover, as per Article 30 of Decree 111, health insurance continues to be a requirement for obtaining residency or work visas. Although this can be obtained

⁶⁷Bolívar Urquiza Tenesaca and Juan Carlos Muyulema Allaica, 'Inmigración y Estado de bienestar. Una aproximación al caso ecuatoriano', *Revista Dilemas Contemporáneos: Educación, Política y Valores*, 6: 2 (2019), article no. 43.

⁶⁸Interview with Giovanna Tipán Barrera, 19 April 2018.

⁶⁹Célleri, 'Situación laboral y aporte económico', p. 21.

⁷⁰LOMH, Article 53(7), 23 Oct. 2018, available at www.cancilleria.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/ley_de_movilidad_humana_oficial.pdf, last access 20 March 2020.

⁷¹Executive Decree 446, 16 July 2018, available at www.cancilleria.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/decreto_ejecutivo_446.pdf, last access 20 March 2020. Earlier versions of this requirement are found in Executive Decrees 310, 378 and 446.

⁷²'Ecuador elimina seguro de salud a turistas que ingresen al territorio continental', *El Comercio*, 21 Aug. 2018, available at www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/eliminacion-seguro-turistas-extranjeros-ecuador.html, last access 20 March 2020.

cheaply from local cooperatives, the coverage provided is very minimal.⁷³ The IOM survey cited earlier found that 90 per cent of recent Venezuelan newcomers in Ecuador have no health insurance.⁷⁴

It is of course entirely possible to view disparities in work and healthcare as policy failures, but we submit that the sheer weight of administrative requirements that encumber access, compounded with official disregard for social discrimination, is better understood in terms of strategic inaction. As one government official (who preferred to remain anonymous) put it, 'the government plays dead-end until [Venezuelans] decide to continue south'.⁷⁵

'Crisis' and Governmentality

The state of emergency from August 2018 has been repeatedly renewed. The MREMH website indicated, both in August 2018 and in later renewal periods, that it would initiate a greater coordination of state services. It would augment its migratory control personnel and step up security measures. In turn, the Ministry of Health would increase the number of medical personnel, and the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion 'will make available a team of social workers and psychologists, especially for vulnerable groups (boys, girls, adolescents and women)'. International agencies such as the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, the IOM and the UNHCR would be enlisted for humanitarian assistance; they 'will provide tents and supplies such as food rations, personal hygiene kits for children and women, water', and 'will provide information to citizens'.⁷⁶

However, there are a few things to note: First, the increased influx is categorised as constituting a 'humanitarian crisis' rather than a social and economic one. In spite of the apparent contradiction with the official position on the nature of Venezuelan migration, the government did not entertain affording 'international protection', and instead opted to portray the contemporary crisis as an extraordinary or 'unusual situation'⁷⁷ – a momentary aberration. Second, the services are framed as short-term emergency measures, not ones geared towards longer-term migratory policy (including the social and economic integration of Venezuelans). Third, these measures are clearly reactive; they are arguably intended to mitigate the potential negative social and political repercussions of failing to address the suffering of migrants, or of a xenophobic backlash (something which has taken place in the city of Ibarra, where hundreds of Venezuelan migrants were attacked by

⁷³For example, in Ibarra the Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito Mujeres Unidas (CACMU) provides insurance for as low as US\$1 (see www.cacmu.fin.ec/web/seguro-de-salud/#1530557147576-a946d959-83f7, last access 20 March 2020).

⁷⁴IOM, 'Monitoreo de flujo humana', p. 10.

⁷⁵Personal correspondence with authors, 22 April 2018.

⁷⁶MREMH, 'Ecuador declara estado de emergencia al sector de Movilidad Humana en Carchi, Pichincha y El Oro, para la atención de los flujos migratorios inusuales de ciudadanos venezolanos', 8 Aug. 2018, available at <https://www.cancilleria.gob.ec/ecuador-declara-estado-de-emergencia-al-sector-de-movilidad-humana-en-carchi-pichincha-y-el-oro-para-la-atencion-de-los-flujos-migratorios-inusuales-de-ciudadanos-venezolanos/>, last access 20 March 2020.

⁷⁷'ACNUR: 30.000 ciudadanos venezolanos', *El Comercio*, 10 Aug. 2018; video interview with Santiago Chávez, *El Comercio*, 7 Aug. 2018.

locals, and many forced to leave the city, as we discuss below). They are thus also designed to minimise the impact on Ecuador's image as a beacon of rights for migrants. Finally, given that no change in the structural ordering of the state appears to be imminent, the ultimate objective appears to continue to be to channel the movement of Venezuelans through Ecuador, as can be noted by the frequent reiteration in official and media reports that most Venezuelans are headed to Peru, and that the main problem is to assure their passage. This impression is further confirmed by the selection of the provinces in which a state of emergency has been declared: Tulcán, the port of first entry; Pichincha, the next stop for most incomers is Quito; and El Oro, the final destination in Ecuador, on the border with Peru. Ensuring that people are adequately fed and resourced to make this trip is necessary if they are not to get caught up somewhere in Ecuador in the course of their transit. To this effect, the government set up what it calls a 'humanitarian corridor', and assigned 35 buses to transport people from Ecuador's northern border to its southern border with Peru.⁷⁸ Medical professionals and 'technicians' were posted at key points along the route to provide medical attention, vaccinations, 'instruction materials and toys for children, areas for resting with specialised personnel for care, [and] hydration points'.⁷⁹ We posit that these measures should be understood as strategic inaction, where the state, through the right disposition of things (making temporary accommodations available, providing basic, temporary humanitarian attention to migrants and so on), sets things up so that the right choice for migrants is to leave. This is further corroborated by a document the MREMH released during the emergency for distribution to migrants.⁸⁰ It includes a full-page map entitled 'Information for a safe trajectory', with arrows pointing southwards from Ipiales (Colombia) to Tulcán through Quito and Guayaquil to Huaquillas, and out to Tumbes (Peru), and subsequent pages provide information on accommodation, 'safe transport', and so on.

With the state of emergency declaration, the Ecuadorean government required valid passports from Venezuelans entering Ecuador.⁸¹ When this order was stayed by the High Court on 24 August 2018, the government responded by imposing that identification cards for Venezuelans be apostilled⁸² – certified by a secretary of state as legitimate and authentic in accordance with the Hague Apostille Convention. As

⁷⁸Corredor humanitario en Ecuador acercó a migrantes venezolanos a Perú', *El Universal*, 25 Aug. 2018, available at www.eluniversal.com/internacional/18706/ecuador-abre-corredor-humanitario-para-venezolanos-que-migran-hacia-peru, last access 23 March 2020.

⁷⁹MREMH, 'Ecuador declara estado de emergencia', 8 Aug. 2018.

⁸⁰MREMH, 'Folleto informativo sobre derechos, obligaciones y servicios para personas en situación de movilidad humana en las fronteras norte y sur' ('Information brochure on rights, obligations and services for people in situations of human mobility on the northern and southern borders'), 4 Oct. 2018, available at www.cancilleria.gob.ec/folleto-informativo-sobre-derechos-obligaciones-y-servicios-para-personas-en-situacion-de-movilidad-humana-en-las-fronteras-norte-y-sur/, last access 20 March 2020.

⁸¹See 'Ecuador exigirá a venezolanos presentación de pasaporte para ingresar al país', *El Universo*, 16 Aug. 2018, available at www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2018/08/16/nota/6908318/ecuador-exigira-venezolanos-presentacion-pasaporte-ingresar-pais, last access 3 April 2020. This is subject to certain exemptions; 'Se establecen cuatro excepciones para el requerimiento de pasaportes a ciudadanos venezolanos', *El Comercio*, 19 Aug. 2018, available at www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/establecen-cuatro-excepciones-requerimiento-pasaportes.html, last access 23 March 2020.

⁸²Ecuador exigirá a los venezolanos un "certificado de validez" de su cédula', *El Comercio*, 24 Aug. 2018.

this is exceedingly difficult for Venezuelans to obtain from the Venezuelan government, it has predictably resulted in a rise in irregular migration, which, as we have demonstrated, is itself met by inaction.

Ecuador's changing position vis-à-vis the Venezuelan government away from the political affinity of the Correa era, and a changed regional political environment in relation to the Venezuelan issue, has led to the state adopting new initiatives in the international realm that have given the impression of a proactive stance, but in fact have proved to maintain the status quo ante. The government also led several regional meetings with the aim of developing a new strategy to manage Venezuelan migration in Latin America.⁸³ This resulted in the International Cooperation Framework for the National Response to Venezuelan People on the Move in Ecuador, in which a series of mechanisms for coordinating activities between state agencies, CSOs, international agencies and civil society actors are outlined with the objective to 'ensure a safe, orderly and regular migration that guarantees the rights of people on the move without affecting the host populations'⁸⁴ – in line with the politics of inaction discussed in this article. These initiatives have thus far not translated into a significant change in domestic policy towards Venezuelans.

After Venezuelan Communications Minister Jorge Rodríguez criticised President Lenín Moreno for exaggerating the scale of Venezuelan migration, both countries expelled senior diplomats. Moreover, as of early 2019 the Ecuadorean government has informally joined the Lima Group in openly declaring its opposition to Maduro's government. Notwithstanding the rapidly changing dynamics of the Venezuelan political landscape, the Ecuadorean government continues to sidestep its responsibilities towards the migratory crisis. A striking example is the government's stance in relation to xenophobic attacks on Venezuelans in the northern city of Ibarra following the murder of a pregnant Ecuadorean woman in the street by a Venezuelan man on 19 January 2019.

After a video of the event was widely circulated by social media, President Moreno tweeted that 'We have opened our doors, but we will not sacrifice anyone's safety', and that 'he had arranged for the immediate formation of brigades to control the legal situation of Venezuelan migrants on the streets, at the work place and the frontier [the border with Colombia]'.⁸⁵ Many critics claimed that this helped to fuel – if not catalyse – mob violence against Venezuelan migrants,⁸⁶ who were hounded, beaten, stoned and forced to flee the city later that day.⁸⁷ The government

⁸³José Valencia: "La regularización costará sobre los USD 4 millones", *El Comercio*, 21 Aug. 2018.

⁸⁴MREMH, 'International Cooperation Framework for the National Response to Venezuelan People on the Move in Ecuador', Dec. 2018, available at www.cancilleria.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2018/12/international_cooperation_framework.pdf, last access 23 March 2020.

⁸⁵President Lenín Moreno, via Twitter, 20 Jan. 2019, available at https://twitter.com/Lenin/status/1087051666669617153?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1087206121650180097&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Factualidad.rt.com%2Factualidad%2F302746-ecuador-ibarra-hombre-apunalar-novia-embarazada, last access 23 March 2020.

⁸⁶José María León Cabrera, 'La xenofobia en Ecuador empuja a migrantes venezolanos a salir del país', *New York Times*, 1 Jan. 2019, available at www.nytimes.com/es/2019/01/28/ecuador-ibarra-venezolanos/, last access 23 March 2020.

⁸⁷'El lente y la pluma de migración venezolana en Ecuador', *Plan V*, 14 Feb. 2019, available at www.planv.com.ec/historias/sociedad/venezolana-ibarra-la-xenofobia-real-no-nos-quieren, last access 23 March 2020.

of Ecuador proceeded to announce that Venezuelans would be asked to produce criminal clearance records upon entering Ecuador (something that Venezuelans can find online) but with the condition that they be apostilled.⁸⁸ Unlike the visa requirements discussed above, which apply to all migrants but impose undue difficulties on Venezuelans, this consisted of direct discriminatory measures against Venezuelans that did not apply to migrants of other nationalities.

Here the government took an essentially reactive stance towards an inflammatory incident, stoked public outcry and thereby contributed to the precarious situation that Venezuelans find themselves in. It further introduced new administrative measures that – even if they are likely to be legally defeated in due course – send a clear message that Venezuelans should stay in Colombia or keep moving.⁸⁹ The response does not constitute a larger policy involving the creation of new programmes and the orchestration of actions by state organs, but rather consists of opportunistically abetting emergent forces in a manner that serves its overall ends.

Conclusion

In this article we have sought to understand the reasons behind Ecuador's stance towards Venezuelan migration. We argue that Ecuador's approach can be understood as a form of strategic 'inaction'. Inaction in this sense does not consist of, strictly speaking, the lack of action. It figuratively highlights that Ecuador's response to the Venezuelan crisis is not a question of public policy failure, miscalculation or ineptitude, but instead that the state's apparatuses have been geared up to strategically configure a specific result: herding Venezuelans out of the country. We have shown that strategic 'inaction' entails portraying a problem as non-existent, which has meant minimising humanitarian obligations and averting political confrontations both at home and abroad. Moreover, we argue that although there is demonstrably a significant base of knowledge within the Ecuadorean state about Venezuelans, this knowledge is not systematised in such a way as to inform a coherent set of policy interventions. Such strategic avoidance is enabled by officially defining Venezuelan migration as transitory in nature, and therefore only in need of temporary services. Venezuelans are also categorised as economic migrants, thus evading state obligations in terms of international human rights accords.

Furthermore, while portraying a problem as non-existent, Ecuador has sought to maintain a reputation of accommodating migrants and refugees with a highly progressive policy based on human rights. However, as we show in this article, Ecuador's legal framework was redrawn in a way that combines a nominal expansion of some migrant rights with a diminution of the ability to access regular status

⁸⁸'Requisito complicará el flujo de migrantes en Ecuador', *El Comercio*, 22 Jan. 2019, available at www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/requisito-complica-flujo-migrantes-venezolanos.html, last access 23 March 2020.

⁸⁹The border has been blocked at Rumichaca, leading to increased irregular entry and little effort by state officials to stop this. It has also led to protests by migrants, who, for days on end without food or water, refuse to leave the checkpoint until they are granted entry, stating that they are seeking only transit to Peru, with no intention of remaining in Ecuador. See 'Migrantes bloquean Rumichaca por tercera ocasión en menos de 72 horas', *La Hora*, 19 Feb. 2019, available at www.lahora.com.ec/carchi/noticia/1102223546/migrantes-bloquean-rumichaca-por-tercera-ocasion-en-menos-de-72-horas-, last access 23 March 2020.

and meet the administrative requirements to stay in Ecuador, particularly for Venezuelans. Ecuador's 'open borders' policy provides newcomers with a tourist visa for a limited period upon entering the country, during which they must survive without any legal right to employment. At the same time, they must attempt to secure temporary work and residence visas before the tourist visa expires. Nonetheless, the former are prohibitively expensive for Venezuelans and come with requirements for documentation from Venezuela that in most cases are all but impossible to meet, not to mention a series of bureaucratic obstacles within Ecuador. Consequently there is a high likelihood of falling into a condition of irregular migratory status, with no rights to employment and uncertain rights to healthcare and other social benefits. Although the state seldom employs direct force on Venezuelan persons, they are rendered imminently deportable due to their precarious legal status.

In sum, we argue that Ecuador's stance towards Venezuelan migration is best understood from the perspective of state theory and governmentality, rather than through an analysis of public policy failures or rational-choice approaches. We show that inaction is an effect of a series of governmental rearrangements, whereby leaving Ecuador becomes an apparent choice made by Venezuelans themselves. This objective has been accomplished not so much by concerted and direct governmental interventions involving the coordination of state entities, as by the reconfiguration of the state's incentives, minor rules and the occasional use of force. Inaction highlights how governmental actions, through state mechanisms, create 'chaotic' conditions inimical to Venezuelans' settling in Ecuador. Since completing this article, Ecuador has come to demand a visa for Venezuelan newcomers, but – consistent with its overall strategy of government through inaction – still has not put in place a discernible system to regularise Venezuelans already living in Ecuador without legal status.

Moving beyond the Venezuelan migration case, Ecuador has entered into a wider political crisis after the massive popular protests of October 2019 in response to austerity measures adopted by the Moreno government. The government has responded to the protests by setting up dialogue tables to respond to indigenous peoples' demands by generating extensive public policy. The initial timeline for coming up with a mutually agreeable proposal between indigenous peoples and the government was 48 hours (between 13 and 15 October 2019); however, few results have been achieved and negotiations remain stalled as this article goes to print. The government has not come up with a coherent policy to address the crisis, and has rather largely ignored indigenous peoples' concerns. It instead has gone behind their backs to present a bill to Congress that makes strategic changes to certain state regulatory apparatuses and institutions. This reflects not only that Ecuador's government is out of touch with the reality on the ground, but also that the state governs by circumvention, procrastination and denial – in short, by strategically negating the crisis.

Recent political unrest of course resulted in large part from ineffective government. The ensuing response is designed to facilitate an image of a progressive and accommodating government in order to shore up sufficient authority to retain power, but otherwise neglects to address the causes of unrest. Thus the wider significance of our argument comes into view: a weak state reacts to successive crises

through a series of ill-conceived measures designed to contain or deflect their potential effect on the structure and composition of political power, all the while exacerbating underlying conditions for crisis.

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Spanish abstract

Este artículo analiza las estrategias utilizadas para canalizar por medios indirectos a una población migrante fuera de un país. Específicamente examinamos la respuesta del estado ecuatoriano a la llegada de venezolanos desde 2015. Señalamos que tal respuesta se ha caracterizado por inacción, enraizada no en fallas en las políticas o mal gobernanza, sino en una racionalidad gubernamental estratégica. Mostramos cómo los migrantes son ‘pastoreados’ fuera del país como resultado de una forma de gobierno indirecto que funciona de forma diferente a otras políticas ‘anti-inmigrantes’ como deportaciones forzadas o encarcelamiento en la frontera, aunque produce resultados similares.

Spanish keywords: Ecuador; Venezuela; migración; gobernabilidad; inacción estratégica

Portuguese abstract

Este artigo analisa as estratégias utilizadas para canalizar, por meios indiretos, populações migrantes para fora de um país. Especificamente, examinamos a política do Equador, desde 2015, para lidar com imigrantes Venezuelanos recém chegados. Argumentamos que essa política tem sido caracterizada pela falta de ação, cuja causa não são falhas políticas ou má governança, mas sim uma racionalidade governamental estratégica. Mostramos como imigrantes são ‘conduzidos’ para fora do país por uma forma de governança indireta que funciona de forma diferente doutras políticas de ‘anti-imigração’ como deportações forçadas ou encarceramento nas fronteiras, embora obtém resultados muito parecidos.

Portuguese keywords: Equador; Venezuela; migração; governamentabilidade; falta de ação estratégica

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